

# US-VISIT UPDATE



Homeland  
Security

November 14, 2007

## BIOMETRICS HELP IDENTIFY, APPREHEND AND DETER ILLEGAL MIGRANTS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced today that in the first year of operation, its biometrics-at-sea program has been a success and accomplished its intended goals. In its first 12 months, the program collected biometric data from 1,368 migrants, prosecuted 90 of those migrants, and helped reduce the flow of illegal migration by nearly 50 percent in the waters between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.

"The Coast Guard is charged with securing America's borders along more than 95,000 miles of coastline," said Rear Adm. Wayne E. Justice, Director of Response Policy. "The use of biometric technology is an effective tool which will help increase maritime domain awareness through the positive identification of those we interdict. This collaborative effort is helping to deter illegal migration by applying consequences through successful prosecution."

This program, initiated last November, is an information-sharing effort between US-VISIT and the U.S. Coast Guard to address the challenge of identifying illegal migrants who are interdicted at sea. The pilot program provides the Coast Guard with the technical capability to digitally capture fingerprints from illegal migrants apprehended at sea. The Coast Guard then uses satellite technology to immediately compare the migrant information against US-VISIT's data, which includes information about wanted criminals, immigration violators and those who have previously encountered government authorities.

Until now, the Coast Guard did not have the technology to accurately identify illegal migrants interdicted in the most highly traveled areas, namely around Puerto Rico. The success of the program has significantly advanced the effort to develop

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colleagues who may be  
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effective mobile solutions for biometric collection and analysis, and represents another step in the department's comprehensive strategy to secure the nation's borders.

*Representatives from many federal agencies and offices have joined together to make this program possible, including DHS's U.S. Coast Guard, US-VISIT, Customs and Border Protection, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the U.S. Attorney's Office in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Embassy in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.*

*The U.S. Coast Guard is a military, maritime, multi-mission service within the Department of Homeland Security dedicated to protecting the safety and security of America.*

*US-VISIT provides biometrics-based identity management services to entities throughout the U.S. government.*