



# BIOMETRIC SCREENING PROGRAMS



# Bureau of Consular Affairs Biometric Programs

## Current Programs

- BioVisa Program – 10 Fingerprint Enrollment of Visa Applicants
- Facial Recognition Checks for Visas

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## Programs Under Development

- Facial Recognition for Passports

## Concepts Being Piloted

- Iris Recognition for Visas

# BioVisa & US-VISIT

- In 2003, in collaboration with US-VISIT, DOS began the BioVisa Program.
- The program started with the collection of two fingerprints that were checked against the DHS IDENT system.
- By 2007 this program had transitioned completely to a ten print collection with checks against both IDENT and the FBI's IAFIS system.

# Facial Recognition and Visas

- Facial Recognition checks have been used in visa processing since 2003.
- Our program began with checks against limited classes of visa applicants and has grown into the largest facial recognition system in the world.

# Facial Recognition and Visas

- In addition to watchlist checks, new visa photos are run against our visa records to search for potential identity fraud.
  - We have large holdings of visa record photos that predate fingerprint collection.
  - There are 78 million photos in our enrolled database.
- In FY 2009 we expanded our FR program to include all new visa application photos.

# Next Steps in Facial Recognition

- We did over 5 million FR checks of visa applications in FY 2009 and we are poised to significantly expand this number.
- We are launching a program of facial recognition checks for passport applications, now in a pilot phase.

# Facial Recognition and Passports

- The systems and infrastructure we have developed to do facial recognition checks of visas can be adapted to perform checks of passport photos.
- As with visa photographs, the FR checks can perform two main tasks:
  - Checks against watchlists that have associated photographs
  - Checks against the enrolled database to detect identity fraud.



# Facial Recognition and Passports

- In the past five years passport application numbers have doubled over the volume seen a decade ago.
- In FY 2009, 13.48 million passports were issued. In FY 2008, 16.2 million and in FY 2007, 18.38 million.
- Adding facial recognition checks into our passport procedures will significantly increase the size of our FR program.

# Facial Recognition and Passports

- Our pilot operations will allow us to assess the impact of FR procedures on passport processing and on the systems and human resources we use for FR.
- Our goal is a program to check all new applications against a sufficient range of records to produce significant benefits in fraud detection and watchlist coverage.

# Iris Recognition and Visas

- We have begun a pilot visa processing operation that uses iris recognition.
- This pilot is being run in cooperation with the Department of Defense, which holds iris enrollment records that can facilitate visa processing.
- The pilot will allow us to assess the technological and operational impacts of using iris recognition in visa processing.