



Press Release

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DHS ANNOUNCES PREDEPARTURE SCREENING OF INTERNATIONAL PASSENGERS AND FIRST STEP TOWARD SECURE FLIGHT

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced today steps that will strengthen aviation security through uniform and consistent passenger prescreening against government watch lists. DHS is publishing two regulations which will initiate these changes: (1) *Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) Predeparture Final Rule*, which enables DHS to collect manifest information for international flights departing from or arriving in the United States prior to boarding; and (2) *Secure Flight Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM)*, which lays out DHS plans to assume watch list matching responsibilities from air carriers for domestic flights and align domestic and international passenger prescreening. Both programs carry out 9/11 Commission recommendations.

“Stopping known threats before they board an aircraft, whether domestically or internationally, is a critical security measure,” said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. “This enables our frontline personnel to get key passenger information prior to boarding. This information will better identify individuals who may pose a known or suspected threat to aviation or national security. These programs will improve the passenger experience by establishing a more consistent vetting process and better resolution for misidentified passengers.”

Congress mandated that DHS’ Customs and Border Protection (CBP) establish a requirement to receive advance information on international passengers traveling by air prior to their departure, as part of the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA). Today, CBP requires commercial carriers to provide APIS and certain Passenger Name Record (PNR) data arriving in or departing from the United States. The final APIS predeparture regulation will require air carriers to transmit manifests 30 minutes prior to departure of the aircraft or provide manifest information on passengers as each passenger checks in for the flight, up to the time when aircraft doors are secured. Receiving both APIS and PNR data at least 30 minutes before a plane departs allows DHS to perform security checks against federal watch lists prior to passenger boarding, taking this responsibility from carriers and eliminating potential flight diversions due to watch list concerns. For vessels departing from foreign ports bound for the United States, current requirements to transmit passenger and crew arrival manifest data between 24 to 96 hours prior to arrival will remain unchanged, but requires vessel carriers to transmit

APIS data 60 minutes prior to departure from the United States. The APIS final rule follows an NPRM published in the Federal Register on July 14, 2006.

With the publication of the NPRM, DHS is also taking significant steps toward the implementation of the Secure Flight program, which would conduct uniform prescreening of passenger information against federal government watch lists for domestic and international flights. Currently, air carriers are responsible for checking passengers against government watch lists.

Under Secure Flight, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will receive information on each passenger, as well as certain non-traveling members of the public requesting access to areas beyond the screening checkpoint. TSA would determine if passenger data matches the information on government watch lists, and transmit matching results to aircraft operators. TSA will begin an operational testing period this fall using data from air carriers who volunteer to participate. Air carriers will continue conducting watch list checks during testing for domestic flights, and TSA will compare the results of its watch list matching with air carrier results to ensure the validity of the Secure Flight system. DHS encourages the submission of comments on the Secure Flight NPRM, and will publish a final rule and other notices in the Federal Register prior to implementation of the Secure Flight program.

DHS plans to integrate the watch list matching function for international flights into Secure Flight, resulting in one DHS system responsible for prescreening all aviation passengers. This system would provide air carriers with consolidated data submission requirements. This effort has been overseen by the Screening Coordination Office, created by Secretary Chertoff last year, to coordinate and integrate various screening efforts overseen by DHS.

By establishing a more consistent and uniform prescreening process, DHS will strengthen a key layer of security, enhance its ability to stop terrorists before they get to the passenger screening checkpoint, and reduce potential misidentification issues. Currently, any passengers who believe they have been delayed or denied boarding, entry into the United States at a port of entry, or have been subject to additional screening or inspection may seek redress through the DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) at www.dhs.gov/trip. DHS TRIP provides a single portal for travelers to seek redress for adverse screening experiences and to resolve possible watch list misidentification issues.

The APIS final rule and the Secure Flight NPRM are currently available at www.dhs.gov and will soon be published in the Federal Register. Once published, persons wishing to comment on the Secure Flight NPRM may access the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal at www.regulations.gov and follow the instructions for submitting comments. Submissions must include the agency name and docket number "TSA-2007-28572."

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