

**STATEMENT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR STEVEN C. McCRAW
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OFFICE OF INTELLIGENCE**

**BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, EMERGING THREATS,
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
JUNE 18, 2003**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. On behalf of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, I would like to express my gratitude for affording us the opportunity to speak to you on this important topic. My name is Steve McCraw, and I am the Assistant Director of the FBI's Office of Intelligence.

The Subcommittee invited us here today to examine the process of revoking visas and locating those who may have entered the country prior to the revocation of their visa. I will address the issues which pertain to the FBI.

First, I would like to publicly acknowledge the outstanding support the FBI has received from the Department of Homeland Security, particularly the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (BICE), from information sharing to the dedication of full-time personnel to the Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTF) throughout the U.S. I would also like to publicly thank the Department of State (DOS) for its demonstrated commitment to sharing information.

Although this hearing is focused on the revocation of visas, the underlying issue is information sharing, which we believe is the cornerstone of prevention. To this end, the Director has approved an integrated Information Sharing Plan that constitutes an unprecedented commitment to sharing detailed and relevant information to the widest extent possible, with our law enforcement and Intelligence Community partners.

The FBI has written procedures in place for notifying the appropriate personnel to

take specific actions on all DOS cables concerning visa matters, to include Security Advisory Opinions (SAO) and visa revocations. These procedures include requiring that the cables be uploaded into the FBI's Electronic Case File, thereby becoming available for full text retrieval. This process of uploading incoming cables began during the later part of 1998 as a manual process and was revised in June 2002 to allow for the automatic uploading of the cables in an efficient manner. The cables are also printed and routed to the appropriate investigative divisions. Furthermore, information from the cable is parsed and placed in a server for transfer to the FBI's National Name Check Program. Parsed information is run against the FBI Universal Indices. The searches seek all instances of the individual's name and approximate date of birth, whether a main file name or reference. By way of explanation, a main file name is that of an individual who is the subject of an FBI investigation, whereas a reference is someone whose name appears in an FBI investigation. References may be associates, witnesses, co-conspirators, or victims whose name has been indexed for later retrieval. The names are searched in a multitude of combinations, switching the order of first, last, middle names, as well as combinations with just the first and last, first and middle, and so on. It also searches different phonetic spelling variations of the names, especially important considering that many names in our indices have been transliterated from a language other than English. If there is a match with a name in a FBI record, it is designated as a "hit", meaning that the system has identified a possible match with the name being checked, but then a person must research the file or files to determine if derogatory information exists. Less than 1% of the requests are identified with an individual with possible derogatory information. These requests are forwarded to the appropriate FBI investigative division for further analysis. If the investigative division determines there is no

objection to the visa request, the request is returned to the name check dissemination desk for forwarding to the DOS. If there is an FBI objection to the visa request, the investigative division will prepare a written SAO and forwards it to the DOS. In reviewing these visa requests, the FBI has identified individuals attempting to enter the United States who are of serious concern to the FBI.

On May 27, 2003, the General Accounting Office (GAO) provided the FBI a copy of its draft report "Border Security: New Policies and Procedures Needed to Fill Gaps in the Visa Revocation Process" (320172/GAO-03-798). We have reviewed the draft report and believe that the report does not fully explain the system the FBI has in place to track known or suspected terrorists who enter the United States whether or not they have a visa. The FBI has a comprehensive process that leverages the unique capabilities of the Foreign Terrorists Tracking Task Force (FTTTF) to address all individuals identified by DOS and the Intelligence Community as associated with terrorism, including those whose visas have been revoked.

As you are aware, in October of 2001, the President directed the Attorney General to create the FTTTF, whose primary objective is to bar terrorists from entering the United States and to track down those who do enter the country. On a regular basis, the FTTTF supports the FBI's Counterterrorism investigations, the National Joint Terrorism Task Force (NJTTF), the 66 JTTFs nationwide, as well as BICE and FBI field offices in locating known or suspected terrorists and their supporters. To do so, the FTTTF utilizes public and proprietary data sources in order to find an "electronic footprint" of known or suspected terrorists.

It is important to note that a visa revocation alone is not a reliable indication that an individual is associated with terrorism. For example, 105 of the 240 revoked visas contained in

the GAO report were done so for no other reason than delays in reviewing files for derogatory information. Subsequently, the files were reviewed and no information was found that would have prevented the individuals from legally entering the United States.

I would like to conclude by saying that the nature of the Terrorist, Foreign Intelligence and Criminal threats facing our nation continues to evolve and so does the FBI. We have made significant strides toward enhancing our operations, both domestically and overseas, and depend upon valuable partnerships with the Law Enforcement and Intelligence Community.