Bureau of Consular Affairs
Biometric Programs

Current Programs

- BioVisa Program – 10 Fingerprint Enrollment of Visa Applicants
- Facial Recognition Checks for Visas
Bureau of Consular Affairs
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Programs Under Development

- Facial Recognition for Passports
- Iris Recognition for Visas

Concepts Being Piloted
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 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.