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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-03-908T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The National Strategy for Homeland Security calls for preventing the entry of foreign terrorists into our country and using all legal means to identify; halt; and where appropriate, prosecute or bring immigration or other civil charges against terrorists in the United States. GAO reported in October 2002 that the Department of State had revoked visas of certain persons after it learned they might be suspected terrorists, raising concerns that some of these individuals may have entered the United States before or after State's action. Congressional requesters asked GAO to (1) assess the effectiveness of the visa revocation process and (2) identify the policies and procedures of State, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) that govern their respective actions in the process.

What GAO Recommends

GAO makes recommendations to the Department of Homeland Security, in conjunction with the Departments of State and Justice, to develop specific policies and procedures for the interagency visa revocation process to ensure that when State revokes a visa because of terrorism concerns, the appropriate units within State, INS, and the FBI are notified immediately and that proper actions are taken.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-908T.

To view the full product, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4128 or fordj@gao.gov.

BORDER SECURITY

New Policies and Procedures Are Needed to Fill Gaps in the Visa Revocation Process

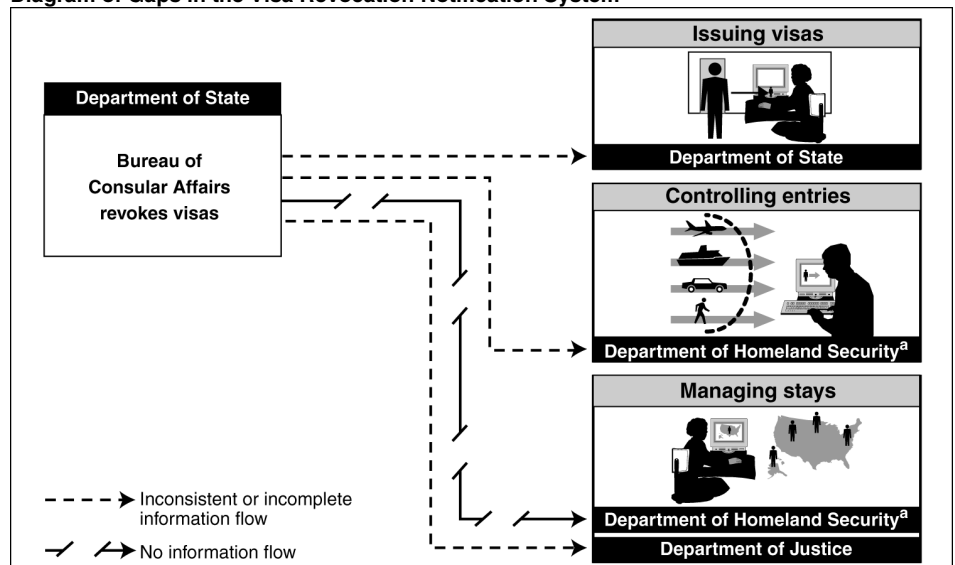
What GAO Found

Our analysis shows that the visa revocation process was not being fully utilized as an antiterrorism tool. The visa revocation process broke down when information on individuals with revoked visas was not shared between State and appropriate immigration and law enforcement offices. It broke down even further when individuals had already entered the United States prior to revocation. INS and the FBI were not routinely taking actions to investigate, locate, or resolve the cases of individuals who remained in the United States after their visas were revoked. In our review of 240 visa revocations, we found that

- appropriate units within INS and the FBI did not always receive notifications of all the revocations;
- names were not consistently posted to the agencies' watch lists of suspected terrorists;
- 30 individuals whose visas were revoked on terrorism grounds had entered the United States and may still remain; and
- INS and the FBI were not routinely taking actions to investigate, locate, or resolve the cases of individuals who remained in the United States after their visas were revoked.

These weaknesses resulted from the U.S. government's limited policy guidance on the process. None of the agencies have specific, written policies on using the visa revocation process as an antiterrorism tool.

Diagram of Gaps in the Visa Revocation Notification System



Sources: GAO and Art Explosion.

^aOn March 1, 2003, INS's various functions transferred to the Department of Homeland Security.