

# Press Release

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## **DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY ANNOUNCES EXPANDED BORDER CONTROL PLANS**

(Washington, DC) Aug. 10, 2004 - Today, Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security Asa Hutchinson announced plans to expand control of the United States borders through increased use of immigration laws to combat illegal entry between the ports of entry while facilitating travel for legitimate Mexican visitors.

This will be accomplished by:

- 1) Expanding the use of expedited removal from the ports-of-entry to locations along the U.S. border, and
- 2) Increasing the amount of time a border crossing card will allow a cardholder to remain in the U.S.

“We want to send a clear message that those individuals who follow legal immigration procedures will benefit while those who choose to break our nation’s immigration laws will be promptly removed from the U.S.,” said Under Secretary Hutchinson.

### **Expedited Removal**

While expedited removal has been effectively used at official ports of entry in the U.S. since 1997, it has not been applied on the land borders between the ports of entry. The expansion of expedited removal processing will allow DHS to speed the removal of illegal aliens who are caught while attempting to enter the United States by fraudulent means or while attempting to elude Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Border Patrol agents. This new procedure will only apply to those caught within 100 miles of the Mexican or Canadian borders, and only if they are apprehended within their first 14 days in the U.S. The expanded use of expedited removal is primarily directed at those illegal aliens who are not citizens of Mexico or Canada.

When a person is apprehended and placed in expedited removal proceedings by a CBP Border Patrol agent, he or she generally will be detained and removed to his or her

country of origin as soon as circumstances allow. They will not be released into the U.S. in most cases, and will not be provided a hearing before an Immigration Judge unless he or she is determined to have a credible fear of return to his or her country.

Any person who expresses an intention to apply for asylum, or a fear of persecution or torture, or a fear of return to his or her home country will be referred to a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) asylum officer for a "credible fear" interview. If the person is found to have a credible fear, he or she will be removed from the expedited removal process and may seek protection in a removal hearing before an Immigration Judge.

### **Border Crossing Card**

DHS also has decided to expand the time restriction on border crossing cards (BCCs) used by Mexicans to enter the U.S. for temporary visits. This decision was closely coordinated between Secretary for Homeland Security Tom Ridge and Mexican Secretary of Government Santiago Creel. Current rules limit the BCC holder to visits of up to 72 hours within the border zone of 25 miles along the border in Texas, New Mexico, and California and 75 miles of the border in Arizona. Cardholders are exempt from US-VISIT processing for their short, border-zone visits. In order to travel in the U.S. for longer periods or outside of the border zone, a cardholder must obtain an I-94 form (Record of Entry/Departure), which allows travel throughout the U.S. for up to six months.

The forthcoming rule will extend the time limit for BCC visitors from 72 hours to a period of 30 days. As a result of this change, only BCC holders applying for entry of more than 30 days or travel outside of the border zone would be processed through US-VISIT at the time they apply for an I-94 form. This would begin prior to the implementation of US-VISIT at the 50 busiest land border ports-of-entry, scheduled to begin on Dec. 31, 2004.

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