



DHS Reaches Agreement with Ireland on Aviation Preclearance

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff signed an agreement today on new aviation preclearance security operations with Irish Minister of Transport Noel Dempsey. The agreement broadens U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) operations in Shannon and Dublin, Ireland, to include full preclearance of commercial and private air passenger flights destined for the United States.

"We are continually working to identify and mitigate threats before they can reach our shores," said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. "This agreement will move the screening of certain commercial and private air passenger flights overseas, and as a result make the entry process into the U.S. more secure and efficient upon arrival."

The original agreement, signed in 1986, on pre-inspection at Dublin and Shannon airports was limited only to the inspection of commercial flights for immigration controls. It did not apply to customs and agricultural clearances. Since that time, the U.S. government has placed CBP officers at those airports to conduct immigration pre-inspection of all flights destined for the U.S.

The new agreement is broader in scope, and includes customs, immigration and agricultural laws, as well as the screening of aircraft for radiological and nuclear threats. In the coming months, passengers and crew on all commercial and private aircraft destined from the U.S. from Ireland will be precleared prior to departure.

Commercial airline passengers who have undergone pre-clearance may also benefit from quicker domestic and international connections within the U.S., by having their checked luggage automatically transferred between flights by the air carrier without needing to claim their luggage. In addition, private aircraft flying through Ireland may use CBP preclearance facilities to fly to any airport within the U.S., without having to stop at a pre-designated Airport of Entry for custom's clearance before to continuing to their final destination.

CBP is working with airport authorities in both Dublin and Shannon on the construction of preclearance facilities that meet CBP design specifications. Full prescreening operations are planned to start in Shannon in 2009 and Dublin in 2010.

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