



DHS Signs Agreement on Enhancing Cooperation in Preventing and Combating Crime with the Republic of Korea

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U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Deputy Secretary Paul A. Schneider and U.S. Department of Justice Deputy Assistant Attorney General Bruce Swartz signed an agreement today on enhancing cooperation in preventing and combating crime with Ambassador Lee Tae-sik.

"I commend Korea for its collaboration and taking this important step toward joining an expanded and more secure Visa Waiver Program," said Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Paul A. Schneider. "This agreement will enable law enforcement officers on both countries to share information to combat crime and enhance our ability to prevent criminal and terrorist travel."

DHS and the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade signed a Memorandum of Understanding in April regarding the Republic of Korea's candidacy for the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) that required, among other things, an agreement between the countries on information sharing for certain criminal activity.

The security enhancements outlined in the first declaration represent important requirements of the modernized VWP. They include better information sharing about international travel and border screening, improvements in information exchange on known and suspected terrorists, timely and comprehensive reporting of lost and stolen passports, and enhancements to airport and aviation security.

The agreement is the final substantive step by the Republic of Korea to fulfill its requirements for designation as a member of the VWP.

The VWP allows travelers from a number of countries to visit the United States for short tourist or business trips without the requirement of obtaining a visa. Twenty seven countries currently participate in the VWP. DHS intends to expand the VWP to South Korea, as well as six other countries, on November 17.

The Administration sought authority to reform the VWP for years, and the Congress passed legislation last year allowing for an expansion to a number of additional countries, including South Korea. The legislation requires that candidate countries cooperate with the United States to share information in security and law enforcement-related areas.

This legislation also mandates certain improvements to the VWP for all participating countries, such as a requirement that travelers first obtain an online approval to travel under the newly established Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). Of the more than 285,000 ESTA applications filed so far, over 99.6 percent have been approved, the vast majority within moments. For additional information about the new ESTA requirement, please visit <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov>.

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