

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

October 3, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
Department of State

The Honorable Rodney Scott
Commissioner
Customs and Border Protection

Dear Secretary Rubio and Commissioner Scott:

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (DHS OIG) recently released a report that found that, “between March 2020 and March 2024, the Department of State (DoS) issued more than 12 million nonimmigrant U.S. visas without conducting in-person interviews or collecting fingerprints.”¹ The report noted that during that same period, “U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) frontline officers at U.S. ports of entry conducting inspections were unaware that some foreign nationals had not been fully screened by DoS, thereby missing an opportunity to conduct enhanced screening and inspection prior to admission to the United States.”² These disturbing findings raise serious questions about DoS’s and CBP’s awareness of and ability to track the recipients of the 12 million nonimmigrant visas.

DoS and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) have shared responsibility with respect to visa issuance.³ DoS, which is responsible for issuing visas to foreign nationals entering the United States, requires nonimmigrant visa applicants aged 14 through 79 to be interviewed by a consular officer prior to the issuance of a visa.⁴ The DHS OIG report noted that, “the Secretary of State may waive this requirement for travelers in certain visa categories or if the Secretary deems such waivers to be in the national interest or necessary because of unusual or emergent circumstances.”⁵ CBP’s Office of Field Operations is “responsible for verifying identification documents, collecting biometrics, and confirming biographic information of travelers arriving at U.S. ports of entry.”⁶

¹ CBP Has Not Evaluated the Security Risks of Interview-Waived Nonimmigrant U.S. Visa Holders, Dep’t of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General, Sept. 30, 2025, <https://www.oig.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/assets/2025-09/OIG-25-50-Sep25-Redacted.pdf> at 1.

² *Id.*

³ *Id.* at 3.

⁴ *Id.* at 2.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.* at 3.

The DHS OIG report noted that starting in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, “DoS sought DHS concurrence to waive requirements to conduct in-person interviews and collect fingerprints for applicants seeking certain limited types of nonimmigrant visas.”⁷ According to the report, “DHS agreed to these waivers for [the certain limited types] of nonimmigrant visa applicants for DoS to maintain visa processing with limited staffing during the COVID-19 pandemic.”⁸

The DHS OIG report included a table showing different visa categories with interview and fingerprint waivers by calendar year.⁹ In 2020, DHS OIG could only find data showing interview and fingerprint waivers for two types of visa categories: temporary agricultural worker and temporary non-agricultural worker.¹⁰ In 2021, DHS OIG found data showing interview and fingerprint waivers for five visa categories.¹¹ From 2022-2024, DHS OIG found data showing interview and fingerprint waivers for twelve visa categories.¹² The DHS OIG report generally described the types of visas that were issued with waivers as:

1. “Student and exchange visitor visas;”
2. “Visas requiring an employer/agent to file a petition with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to allow temporary workers for specific purposes;” or
3. “Visas with temporary legal work authorization in agriculture, construction, forestry, landscaping, hospitality, and other industries.”¹³

According to the report, in February 2025, DoS announced it would be rescinding the waiver authorities for fingerprinting and interviews for nonimmigrant visas.¹⁴ The DHS OIG report alleged that for the millions of foreign nationals issued visas under the waivers, “CBP has not conducted comprehensive risk assessments on persons admitted to the United States under the expanded interview waiver program, which precludes CBP from knowing whether persons were accurately identified and fully screened prior to admission.”¹⁵ Because certain visas can be valid for 5 years and extended for up to 10 years, the DHS OIG report indicated that a visa holder who did not undergo thorough vetting could “continue to travel to and present themselves for admission to the United States through early 2035.”¹⁶

The fact that millions of nonimmigrant foreign nationals obtained a U.S. visa without undergoing the usual vetting process poses a significant national security risk. In order to

⁷ *Id.* at 4.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.* at 20.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.* at 5.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 12.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 1, 11.

¹⁶ *Id.*

determine what actions DoS and CBP have taken or will take to address this vulnerability, please provide my office a briefing on the matter and be prepared to address the following questions:

1. What steps are being taken to identify and locate the individuals that obtained a nonimmigrant visa without being interviewed or fingerprinted?
2. Are there any efforts to interview and fingerprint the individuals that obtained the nonimmigrant U.S. visas during the waiver period?
 - a. If so, how many of the millions of individuals identified in the DHS OIG report have been interviewed or fingerprinted to date?
3. Which countries were the aforementioned nonimmigrant foreign nationals from?
4. How many individuals that obtained a nonimmigrant visa without being interviewed or fingerprinted were previously denied entry into the United States? For each denial, please identify the date it occurred, the reason, and the individual's country of origin.
5. How many visas issued to individuals who were not interviewed or fingerprinted during the waiver period have expired?
 - a. How many of these visa holders applied for an extension?
 - b. How many extensions have been granted? How many extensions have been denied?

Please provide this briefing as soon as possible. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Chairman
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

cc: The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations

The Honorable Joseph Cuffari
Inspector General
Department of Homeland Security

Arne Baker
Acting Inspector General
Department of State