



# NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION THREAT INTELLIGENCE CONSORTIUM

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## Situational Awareness Bulletin

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### Airport Biometric Programs Enhance Security and Boarding Process

***Airports in the National Capital Region are implementing biometric facial verification programs for international flights to enhance security and meet federal guidelines.*** According to US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) <sup>1</sup>, these biometric programs can identify attempts by inadmissible criminals or other foreign nationals to illegally enter the United States with stolen, purchased or “borrowed” passports.

- CBP notes that it partners with airports and airlines to use biometrics for Biometric Exit. Working with CBP, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA), which operates Washington Dulles International Airport and Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, developed and implemented its own facial recognition traveler verification for Biometric Exit last July. There are currently 22 airlines at Dulles and one airline at Reagan using the technology.
- MWAA’s biometric technology uses a mobile tablet camera at the boarding gate to capture a passenger’s image for comparison with CBP’s database of passenger photos. The process is fast, accurate, intuitive and secure, and the system requires no added infrastructure or staffing resources.
- For biometric entry, CBP’s Simplified Arrival biometric program has been implemented at 16 US airports. Their biometric technology is installed at passport control at Arrivals and scans the passenger’s face while CBP officers review the passenger’s travel documents. CBP biometric systems aid the officer in their screening techniques but are not meant to replace the officer’s regular screening methods, which aren’t affected if systems are down.



Source: Security comparing passport photo with real-time photo of passenger at passport control. AFP, 2018

***In late 2018, there were three incidents when the CBP biometric entry program alerted Washington Dulles International Airport CBP officers that passengers’ real-time biometric photographs did not match the passports they were using.***

- October 1: A woman arriving from Ghana used a US passport in an attempt to gain admission as a returning citizen. A search revealed she was from Cameroon and not a US citizen. She was arrested for misuse of a passport.
- September 8: A woman arriving from Ghana used a US passport in an attempt to gain admission as a returning citizen. This incident is under investigation.

<sup>1</sup> US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of Intelligence, CBP National Targeting Center, and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority assisted with coordination on this product.

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- August 22: A man arriving from Brazil used a French passport, but a search revealed his Republic of Congo identification card concealed in his shoe. This incident is under investigation.

***Biometric verification can also speed up the travel process for passengers.*** Processing at the departure gate only takes a few seconds while a photo is taken and matched to passport and visa photos on file.

- MWWA has begun integrating its facial recognition solution with airlines' departure control systems. This integration enables the passenger to go directly to the aircraft without having to display their boarding pass, translating to a fully paperless process at the boarding gate.

**Additional Resources:**

- [Customs and Border Protection Biometric Program FAQ](#)
- [Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority Biometric Program](#)
- [Transportation Security Agency's Biometric Program](#)