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Office of Congressional Affairs
202.344.1760

Michael J. Yeager,
Assistant Commissioner

Kim M. Lowry,
Deputy Assistant Commissioner

Branch Chiefs

Joe Croce
– Budget & Appropriations

Angie LaTour
– Strategic Planning & Outreach

Stephanie Talton
– Border, Air & Marine Operations
– Field Operations & Intelligence

Chase Wollenhaupt
– Trade & Agriculture



Vigilance



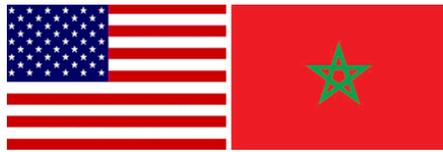
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U.S., Morocco Sign Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement



The Moroccan Minister of Economy and Finance joined Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Rand Beers to sign a bilateral Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement (CMAA) that will provide a partnership and legal framework for information sharing and cooperation between Customs administrations of the United States and the Kingdom of Morocco. The bilateral agreement is

a valuable tool for U.S. Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in cooperation with the Moroccan Administration of Customs and Indirect Taxes of the Ministry of Economy and Finance to prevent, repress, and investigate customs offenses. The agreement, signed on November 21, 2013, marks a significant milestone in collaboration between the two countries.

For additional information, please visit the [CBP Website](#) or contact the Office of Congressional Affairs.

CBP Signs Partnership Agreements for Expanded Services



CBP Acting Commissioner Thomas S. Winkowski (fourth from right) and Acting Deputy Commissioner Kevin K. McAleenan (far right) with reimbursable fee agreement program stakeholders.

On December 19, 2013, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) finalized the agreements for five public-private partnerships during an official signing ceremony. Under authority from the *Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013*, CBP created a reimbursable fee agreement program to increase CBP's ability to provide new or enhanced services on a reimbursable basis to support growth in cross-border trade and travel.

The entities selected for these partnerships are Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport; The City of El Paso, Texas; South Texas Assets Consortium; The City of Houston Airport System; and Miami-Dade County. These locations will cover the entirety of CBP air, land and sea operations.

"The utilization of public-private partnerships is an important component of CBP's strategy to optimize resources," said CBP Acting Commissioner Thomas S. Winkowski. "Together with our private sector partners, we can better facilitate trade and travel to continue to grow our local and national economies."

The reimbursable services proposals were reviewed and ranked based on criteria including: impact on current CBP operations, health and safety issues, community and economic benefits, and the feasibility of instituting the agreements in a timely manner. These agreements will not replace existing services, and new services can include all customs and immigration inspection-related matters.

The reimbursable services authority is a key component of CBP's Resource Optimization Strategy, and will allow CBP to provide new or expanded services at domestic ports of entry reimbursed by the partner entity. This will have a positive impact on the Nation's economy – particularly through a reduction in wait times.

For additional information, please visit the [CBP Website](#) or contact the Office of Congressional Affairs.



U.S. Border Patrol Chief Michael J. Fisher at a December 12 Hearing.

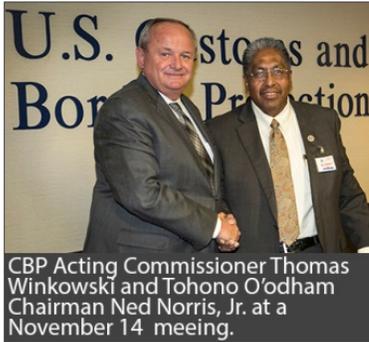
On the Hill: Credible Fear and Asylum

On December 12, 2013, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) U.S. Border Patrol Chief Michael Fisher testified before the House Committee on the Judiciary, for a hearing titled, "Asylum Abuse: Is it Overwhelming our Borders?" Chief Fisher, in a joint written statement with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Deputy Director Daniel Ragsdale and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service Deputy Director Lori Scialabba, outlined the expedited removal process and the role of CBP officers and agents at and between U.S. ports of entry.

"The expedited removal process is a critical tool for effective border management," stated the witnesses. "The credible fear screening process that identifies individuals potentially in need of protection in the larger expedited removal framework affords those border efficiencies while ensuring U.S. compliance with its international treaty obligations relating to non-refoulement."

The full written statement is available on the [CBP Website](#).

CBP and DHS Officials Meet with Tohono O'odham Nation Leaders



CBP Acting Commissioner Thomas Winkowski and Tohono O'odham Chairman Ned Norris, Jr. at a November 14 meeting.

Several tribal council members of the Tohono O'odham Nation met recently with U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Acting Commissioner Thomas S. Winkowski and officials from the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency and Immigration and Customs Enforcement on November 14, 2013, at CBP's Washington, DC, headquarters. The leaders discussed issues of mutual concern, such as maintenance of roads near the Southwest border and emergency management programs.

"We have a very close working relationship with you folks today," said Tohono O'odham Chairman Ned Norris Jr. "We extend our leadership to work with you to make sure the border is as secure as we can."

U.S. Border Patrol agents patrol areas on and near the tribal lands daily. They are often instrumental in saving lives during inclement weather when flooding is a recurrent issue.

"The Border Patrol is extremely helpful when we can't access our village to make sure our members are safe," Norris said.

To address local concerns and provide an open forum to their members, the tribal council announced that they will hold the first town hall meeting for the tribe to discuss issues with local border patrol representatives. Acting Commissioner Winkowski was pleased with the town hall opportunity and said that CBP will work to keep a dialog open with the tribe to address issues of mutual concern.

Through a multi-layered outreach effort, CBP and the Tohono O'odham interact in southwest Arizona to ensure border security while respecting the culture and vision of the tribe. These efforts have resulted in an enhanced ability to conduct CBP operations in and around the Tohono O'odham Nation.

For additional information, please contact the Office of Congressional Affairs.

CBP to Expand Filing of Joint Customs Declarations

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will broaden the definition of "members of a family residing in one household" to include long-term same-sex couples and other domestic relationships. The final rule was published in the Federal Register on December 18, 2013, and would become effective 30 days after publication. The final rule would allow more returning U.S. citizens, residents and international visitors to file a joint customs declaration for items acquired abroad.

The regulation change will create less paperwork for people who are traveling together as a family and will streamline passenger processing, thereby increasing efficiency for CBP, airline personnel and the traveling public.

CBP expects this process streamlining to save up to \$2.8 million annually in personnel time while maintaining the highest standards of security.

"Domestic relationship" would be defined to include:

- foster children, stepchildren, half-siblings, legal wards, other dependents, and individuals with an in loco parentis or guardianship relationship.
- two adults who are in a committed relationship including, but not limited to, long-term companions and couples in civil unions or domestic partnerships where the partners are financially interdependent, and are not married to, or a partner of, anyone else.

"Domestic relationship" does not extend to roommates or other cohabitants not otherwise meeting the above definition.

"Members of a family residing in one household" will continue to encompass relationships of blood, adoption and marriage.

The Final Rule is available on FederalRegister.gov. For additional information, including what this change will mean to travelers, please visit the CBP Website or contact the Office of Congressional Affairs.



Registration Open: 2014 East Coast Trade Symposium

On Wednesday, December 18, 2013, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) opened registration for the forthcoming 2014 East Coast Trade Symposium. The 2014 East Coast Trade Symposium will be held March 6-7, 2014 at the Washington Hilton Hotel in Washington, DC. This year's theme is "Increasing Economic Competitiveness through Global Partnerships and Innovation. Please visit the CBP Website for additional information and online registration.

CBP Enforcement News



CBP Officers Recover Stolen 1959 Porsche

Houston, TX - U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers assigned to the Houston Seaport recently recovered a stolen 1959 Porsche 365A nearly three months after it was reported stolen from Los Angeles, CA. At the time of the theft, the car's owner was in the process of restoring the vehicle, which in its present condition is valued at more than \$40,000.

— Visit the CBP Newsroom for the full story.



Border Patrol Agents Arrest Sex Offender

Eagle Pass, TX - On December 12, 2013, U.S. Border Patrol agents assigned to the Eagle Pass South Station, patrolling near the Carrizo Springs Checkpoint on U.S. Highway 277, encountered an undocumented immigrant. During processing, agents discovered that the illegal alien had been previously deported from the United States and criminal records checks revealed the individual had a 2006 conviction for sexual assault-child and was sentenced to four years of incarceration.

— Visit the CBP Newsroom for the full story.

The Office of Congressional Affairs (OCA) serves as the single point of contact within CBP for communications between CBP and Congress.

OCA is committed to addressing any question or concern you may have related to CBP's complex mission. Please contact us:

Phone: (202) 344-1760; Fax: (202) 344-2152; E-mail: OCAInquiry@cbp.dhs.gov.

Please visit CBP's Congressional Resources webpage for Frequently Asked Questions, News and Events, and other CBP Resources.