

Fact Sheet: APIS

Preventing Terrorists from Boarding International Flights and Vessels Destined for or Departing from the U.S.

Overview

A new predeparture Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) requirement allows the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to review passenger information prior to boarding for commercial flights arriving into or departing from the United States and for commercial vessels destined for or departing the United States.

Purpose

The advance transmission of this information, coupled with Passenger Name Record (PNR) data, will provide DHS the ability to identify potential threats and coordinate with carriers and foreign law enforcement to prevent the boarding of a person of interest.

APIS

The Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) is a widely used electronic data interchange system that allows carriers to transmit traveler data to CBP. APIS data includes passenger information that would be found on the face of a passport, such as full name, gender, and country of passport issuance. The current APIS requirements were established in April, 2005, with the publication of the APIS Final Rule. The APIS program is recognized by commercial carriers and the international community as the standard for passenger processing and enhanced security in the commercial air and vessel environment. During Fiscal Year 2006, CBP processed a record 87 million passengers arriving from abroad by air.

Transmission

Air carriers may transmit predeparture APIS information either:

- Using the APIS Batch Transmission, in interactive or non-interactive form, that requires air carriers to transmit the complete manifest for all passengers 30 minutes prior to departure.
- Using the APIS Quick Query mode that allows air carriers to transmit in real time as each passenger checks in for the flight prior to boarding.

Under both options, the carrier will not permit the boarding of a passenger unless the passenger has been cleared by CBP.

For vessels departing from foreign ports bound for the U.S., current requirements to transmit passenger and crew arrival manifest data between 24 to 96 hours prior to arrival will remain unchanged, but requires vessel carriers to transmit APIS data 60 minutes prior to departure from the United States.

History

Prior to 9/11, the U.S. Customs Service, now part of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) received advance passenger information from air carriers on a voluntary basis. APIS requirements were first implemented under the Aviation and Transportation

Security Act (ATSA) of 2001 and the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Reform Act of 2002. As a result of 9/11 Commission recommendations, Congress mandated that DHS establish a requirement to receive advance information on international passengers traveling by air and sea, prior to their departure in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA).

What's New

CBP already requires the transmission of APIS data for commercial carriers arriving in or departing from the United States. The announcement of a predeparture requirement simply changes the time within which the APIS data must be transmitted. There is also a new benchmark definition, for the air environment. In addition, the definition of departure is being clarified. It no longer means “push-back” from the gate and now is “securing of the aircraft doors.”

Privacy

Extensive discussions have been conducted between CBP and air and vessel carriers to identify best practices, ensure both carrier and CBP systems are communicating properly, and to ensure the highest level of privacy protection.