Office of Intelligence and Analysis
Homeland Security

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Joint Homeland Security Assessment

(U//FOUO) Fraudulent Identification: Terrorist and Criminal Intent

12 March 2007

(U) Scope

(U//FOUO) This Joint Homeland Security Assessment provides law enforcement and other public safety officials with situational awareness concerning international and domestic terrorist groups' use of fraudulent or counterfeit identification documents. These documents can be used to apply for authentic official identification, to open bank and credit card accounts, to establish residency, and to purchase real estate and weapons.

(U) Key Findings

(U//FOUO) Terrorists and criminals seek fraudulent U.S. identification documents in an effort to enter and exit the country, use financial institutions, and create aliases to mask their true identities.

(U//FOUO) Fraudulently obtained birth certificates, social security cards, and similar documents can be used to acquire legitimate state driver's licenses and U.S. passports for illicit purposes.

(U) Forgery-Prone and Counterfeit-Prone Documents

(U//FOUO) Terrorist organizations place a premium on clandestine international mobility, relying on an array of identity fraud techniques. The types of documents and identification most useful to terrorists and susceptible to fraud include the following:

- Birth certificates
- Social Security cards
- Driver's licenses
- Passports
- Military IDs
- Baptismal certificates
- Employer IDs
- Green cards
- Residency certificates
- Visas

(U//FOUO) Birth certificates are the primary source of true identification and are required to obtain U.S. passports and many states' driver's licenses. Birth certificates, however, do not require photographs or fingerprints, and are easy to create, duplicate, or forge. The myriad of issuing authorities and the lack of uniformity make it difficult to detect fraudulent birth certificates. Residency, baptismal, and marriage certificates also are easy to obtain fraudulently.

- (U) Seven of the nineteen 11 September 2001 al-Qa'ida hijackers used fraudulent Virginia residency certificates to obtain genuine Virginia driver's licenses and other documents. The 19 hijackers also eventually were able to obtain driver's licenses fraudulently from California, Florida, and New Jersey.

- (U) Millennium plot bomber Ahmed Ressam obtained a Canadian passport in the name of Benni Antoine Noris using a forged Catholic baptismal certificate.

(U//FOUO) Terrorist organizations also seek to obtain less-common identifying documents that they can use to obtain access to possible targets.

- (U) In 2000, U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) agents created counterfeit law enforcement credentials and identifications using commercially available software. Using these credentials and identifications, they performed penetration tests at various U.S. Federal buildings and two U.S. airports. A copy of the GAO report on these tests was later found in an al-Qa'ida cave in Afghanistan.

(U) Acquisition Methods

(U//FOUO) Terrorists and criminals use a number of methods to acquire fraudulent identification. Stolen blank or insider-derived original documents such as birth certificates are a means to create a fictitious identity or to legitimatize a person's status in the United States. Identification documents and cards can be created with off-the-shelf computer software and printed on high-resolution printers; this technique makes visual detection more difficult for law enforcement and border security officers. Physical

alteration of authentic stolen or duplicate documents is another commonly used method to obtain legitimate documentation. Identity thieves also request certified copies of original documents, claiming the originals were lost or stolen.

— (U) A deputy registrar of New Jersey's Hudson County Clerks Office pled guilty in 2004 to fraud and related activity in connection with a scheme to create fraudulent birth certificates for illegal migrants. The investigation of this deputy registrar was initiated when a non-U.S. citizen applied for a U.S. passport using a fraudulently-obtained birth certificate.

(U) Protective Measures

(U) Because of the increasing immigration and customs security measures in the United States and many other countries, high-quality altered passports and counterfeit identity papers are valued commodities to illicit travelers. Additionally, individuals possessing the skills to manufacture or alter such documents also are valued highly.

(U) DHS/Customs and Border Protection (DHS/CBP) has implemented several new systems to continue to improve protective measures at U.S. ports of entry, and many states are developing or have implemented new procedures to identify fraudulent documentation.

— (U) The Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System allows DHS/CBP officers to quickly check national fingerprint databases to identify wanted criminals.

— (U) DHS/CBP has several initiatives under way to improve detection technology, make travel documents more secure, and make passenger screening more accurate and efficient.

— (U) DHS/CBP is developing a "model port" design to help standardize all new enhancements to document processing at ports of entry.

(U) Reporting Notice:

(U) DHS and the FBI encourage recipients of this document to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity to the local FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force and the National Operations Center (NOC). The FBI regional phone numbers can be found online at http://www.fbi.gov/contact/fo/fo.htm, and the NOC can be reached by telephone at 202-282-8101 or by e-mail at NOC.Common@dhs.gov. For information affecting the private sector and critical infrastructure, contact the National Infrastructure Coordinating Center (NICC), a sub-element of the NOC. The NICC can be reached by telephone at 202-282-9201 or by e-mail at NICC@dhs.gov. Each report submitted should include the date, time, location, type of activity, number of people and type of equipment used for the activity, the name of the submitting company or organization, when this information is available, and a designated point of contact.

(U) For comments or questions related to the content or dissemination of this document, please contact the DHS/I&A Production Management staff at IA.PM@hq.dhs.gov.

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