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EASTERN BORDER TRANSPORTATION COALITION

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SUBJECT: US customs and border protection receives $3m in funding to test biometric exit app

SOURCE: Stephen Mayhew, Biometricupdate.com, 1/12/15

The Department of Homeland Security released a $39.7 billion appropriations bill last week that includes $3 million specifically for testing out a biometric exit app that would be implemented by Customs and Border Protection, according to a report by Homeland Security Today.

An explanatory note added to the bill states that $3 million of the $10.7 billion allocated for CBP will go toward funding a biometric exit mobile application demonstration at two airports.

The $10.7 billion in funding represents an increase of $118.7 million above the FY 2014 enacted level.

The notion of implementing an exit system at all US ports of entry was first introduced in 1996 as part of the "Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act". Since the 9/11 attacks, three related laws were passed which took into account the 9/11 Commission's recommendations for fingerprint and facial data to be used for biometric identification methods.

"The funding in this bill is targeted to critical security and law enforcement efforts that keep our nation and people safe, and ensure the laws of the land are strongly enforced," said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Hal Rogers.

A day after the bill was released, Republican representative Candice S Miller introduced legislation that "requires the Secretary of Homeland Security to establish a biometric exit data system".

The legislation comes almost a year and a half after Miller introduced the Biometric Exit Improvement Act of 2013, which also recommended the CBP to develop a biometric exit data system.

In a Gallup poll conducted in January 2013, only 36 percent of Americans were satisfied with the current immigration situation in the U.S.

Supporters of a biometric exit system said the technology would meet the federal government's long-held goals of gathering accurate and timely data on all those individuals who overstay their visas.

The U.S. is currently using the US-VISIT system, which gathers and analyzes biometric data by the Office of Biometric Identity Management. The data is crosschecked with a database to monitor all individuals that are classified as terrorists, criminals, and illegal immigrants.

In June 2014, the U.S. Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Department of Homeland Security approved funding legislation that totals US$47.2 billion for the 2015 fiscal year, a US$643 million increase above the level enacted in the 2014 fiscal year.