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- [Africa & Middle East](#)
- [Asia & Oceania](#)
- [Europe](#)

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Americas

Regional Workshop on Travel and Identity Document Security and Issuance Systems

Posted on Tuesday, 11-07-2006

United States - IOM and the OAS/Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism are this week holding a workshop for government officials from 14 Caribbean nations.

During the three-day workshop, IOM and international experts will share their knowledge and provide training to enhance migration officials' ability to detect and prevent the use of fraudulent and counterfeit travel documents, foster regional and international cooperation and exchange of information, and strengthen overall security while facilitating legitimate transit and travel throughout the region.

"Over the last decades, the notion of security and the nature of security threats have broadened as challenges to both have become more complex. The current international climate and the increasing threat and mobility of international terrorism, has put state security concerns at the forefront of the discussion on the international movement of persons. With national economies depending on the brisk movement of tourism and trade, states need to ensure that their border security will not be compromised while facilitating legitimate travel," said Nidia Casati, IOM Senior Migration Advisor in Washington.

The Cricket World Cup, scheduled for early 2007, will significantly increase movements of persons in the region. The host countries expect some 100,000 visitors during the sporting event. For small island nations with limited manpower and resources, expediting the entry and exit of legitimate visitors while at the same time keeping vigilant for anyone posing a threat to their security, will be a major challenge.

The organizers of the workshop will also provide an overview of the need to upgrade the security features of national passports and ID documents, including but not limited to, biometric identifiers, to make it difficult to forge and/or alter documents.

The participating countries will be encouraged to promptly implement the ICAO Minimum Security Standards for Handling and Issuance of Passports to improve the reliability and effectiveness of the process, while further reducing the potential for misuse of legitimate travel documents for criminal purposes. The sessions will also include discussions on the need to promptly report lost and stolen documents to Interpol's Automated Search Facility/Stolen Travel Document Database, to ensure that such documents will not be used by others.

Current border and travel document security/issuance systems differ widely within the participating countries as does the technology available to detect and deter incidences of identity fraud (impostors traveling with valid passports/visas) or altered/fraudulent documents.

The trainers will present an overview of common immigration standards in the areas of pre-arrival, entry, stay and departure and effective inspection and

examination of travel documents at points of entry.

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