



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY **OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL**

OIG-25-29

July 1, 2025

FINAL REPORT

CBP Has Inconsistent Processes for Identifying Special Interest Aliens and Did Not Complete Requests for Interviewing [REDACTED] Aliens (REDACTED)





OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 | www.oig.dhs.gov

July 1, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Rodney S. Scott
Commissioner
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

FROM: Joseph V. Cuffari, Ph.D. **JOSEPH V CUFFARI**
Inspector General

SUBJECT: *CBP Has Inconsistent Processes for Identifying Special Interest Aliens and Did Not Complete Requests for Interviewing [REDACTED] Aliens - For Official Use Only // Law Enforcement Sensitive*

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JOSEPH V CUFFARI
Date: 2025.07.01
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Attached for your action is our final report, *CBP Has Inconsistent Processes for Identifying Special Interest Aliens and Did Not Complete Requests for Interviewing [REDACTED] Aliens*. We incorporated the formal comments provided by your office.

The report contains three recommendations aimed at improving CBP's screening processes. Your office concurred with one recommendation and did not concur with two recommendations. Based on information provided in your response to the draft report, we consider recommendations 2 and 3 open and unresolved. As prescribed by Department of Homeland Security Directive 077-01, *Follow-Up and Resolutions for the Office of Inspector General Report Recommendations*, within 90 days of the date of this memorandum, please provide our office with a written response that includes your (1) agreement or disagreement, (2) corrective action plan, and (3) target completion date for each recommendation. Also, please include responsible parties and any other supporting documentation necessary to inform us about the current status of the recommendation. Until your response is received and evaluated, the recommendations will be considered open and unresolved.

Based on information provided in your response to the draft report, we consider recommendation 1 open and resolved. Once your office has fully implemented the recommendation, please submit a formal closeout letter to us within 30 days so that we may close the recommendation. The memorandum should be accompanied by evidence of completion of agreed-upon corrective actions.

Please send your response or closure request to OIGInspectionsFollowup@oig.dhs.gov.

OIG Project No. 23-062-ISP-CBP

Consistent with our responsibility under the *Inspector General Act*, we will provide copies of our report to congressional committees with oversight and appropriation responsibility over the Department of Homeland Security. We will post a redacted version of the report on our website.

Please contact me with any questions, or your staff may contact Thomas Kait, Deputy Inspector General for Inspections and Evaluations, at (202) 981-6000.

Attachment



DHS OIG HIGHLIGHTS

CBP Has Inconsistent Processes for Identifying Special Interest Aliens and Did Not Complete Requests for Interviewing █████ Aliens

July 1, 2025

Why We Did This Evaluation

We conducted this evaluation to review CBP's screening of Central Asian aliens who entered the United States with assistance from smuggling networks from June to October 2023.

What We Recommend

We made three recommendations to ensure CBP develops and implements an agency-wide policy for identifying and screening SIAs and establishes processes for completing interview requests and disseminating FCMs.

For Further Information:

Contact our Office of Public Affairs at (202) 981-6000, or email us at: DHS-OIG.OfficePublicAffairs@oig.dhs.gov.

What We Found

U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) inconsistent processes for identifying special interest aliens (SIAs) created disparities in █████ alien screening. In July 2023, CBP's Office of Field Operations (OFO) San Diego Field Office and the U.S. Border Patrol (Border Patrol) Yuma and El Centro sectors had a process to identify and provide additional screening of SIAs, yet San Diego sector did not. This inconsistency occurred because CBP did not have an agency-wide policy stating whether to identify aliens from certain countries as SIAs. As a result, aliens from countries with links to terrorism entered at least one CBP region that did not provide additional screening.

We found that Border Patrol San Diego sector agents did not consistently conduct and document interviews of █████ aliens. From July 12, 2023, to July 17, 2023, Border Patrol San Diego sector task force officers (TFOs) — assigned to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force — requested agents interview █████ aliens. Agents told us there were too many █████ aliens in custody matching TFOs' requests to interview before releasing them. The agents also did not consistently document interviews, per sector policy. On July 21, 2023, CBP's Office of Intelligence issued a focused collection message (FCM) requesting Southwest border personnel interview █████ aliens, but it was not disseminated to agents in San Diego sector until 5 days later, potentially missing opportunities to identify aliens who posed a potential risk to national security and to collect information about smuggling networks.

Further, the OFO San Diego Field Office could not determine whether officers completed TFOs' July 14, 2023 request to search █████ aliens' phones. The officers documented phone searches for about half of the █████ aliens who matched TFOs' request. CBP does not know if the others had phones or had broken phones because the San Diego Field Office does not document whether arriving aliens have phones in their possession.

CBP Response

CBP concurred with recommendation 1 but did not concur with recommendations 2 and 3. We consider recommendation 1 resolved and open and recommendations 2 and 3 unresolved and open.



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Abbreviations

CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FCM	focused collection message
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
MOU	memorandum of understanding
OFO	Office of Field Operations
OI	Office of Intelligence
POE	port of entry
SIA	special interest alien
TFO	task force officer



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Background

U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Office of Field Operations (OFO) manages U.S. ports of entry (POEs), where officers perform immigration and customs functions, inspecting all individuals arriving in the United States to verify identity and purpose of travel. Between POEs, CBP's U.S. Border Patrol (Border Patrol) detects and interdicts people suspected of entering the United States without inspection. OFO and Border Patrol are generally responsible for short-term detention of aliens¹ who are inadmissible to or deportable from the United States or subject to criminal prosecution.

CBP's authority to protect the United States includes screening,² arresting, and coordinating with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to remove aliens who threaten national security. Toward that end, OFO officers and Border Patrol agents collect biographical and biometric information and conduct record checks to determine whether available information indicates a potential national security threat. Officers and agents review the results of the record checks and coordinate with ICE to place aliens who may pose a threat in long-term detention facilities ICE manages, or release aliens who do not pose a threat while they await immigration removal proceedings.

If aliens' record checks do not initially reveal derogatory information, OFO officers and Border Patrol agents may conduct additional screening, such as interviews³ or phone searches,⁴ to further assess whether the aliens pose a threat. Reasons for further assessment may include:

- **Special interest alien (SIA) screening:** OFO officers and Border Patrol agents may conduct additional screening of SIAs, defined by the Department of Homeland Security as a "foreign national originating from a country [...] identified as having possible or established links to terrorism."⁵ In these instances, officers and agents

¹ DHS defines an alien as "a person not a citizen or national of the United States." *Instruction Manual 262-12-001-01, DHS Lexicon Terms and Definitions, 2018 Edition, Rev. 4, April 23, 2018, p. 36.*

² DHS defines screening as "physical and/or information-based examination or review of cargo, people and their belongings." *Instruction Manual 262-12-001-01, DHS Lexicon Terms and Definitions, 2018 Edition, Rev. 4, April 23, 2018, p. 656.*

³ In this report, we use the term "interviews" to refer to CBP asking aliens questions to determine whether they pose a threat. We do not use the term "interviews" to refer to CBP speaking with aliens while processing them into custody.

⁴ When permitted by law and policy, CBP may search aliens' phones and other electronic devices to determine admissibility or identify other violations of law enforced or administered by CBP. We previously audited and issued reports on CBP's electronic device searches, including *CBP's Searches of Electronic Devices At Ports of Entry*, [OIG-19-10](#), and *CBP Continues to Experience Challenges Managing Searches of Electronic Devices at Ports of Entry*, [OIG-21-63](#).

⁵ *Instruction Manual 262-12-001-01, DHS Lexicon Terms and Definitions, 2018 Edition, Rev. 4, April 23, 2018, p. 687.* The Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans confirmed this is DHS' SIA definition. However, DHS' public website defines SIAs as aliens "who, based on an analysis of travel patterns, potentially poses a national security risk to the United States



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maintain a list of countries posing terrorism concerns and screen those aliens whose country of origin matches the list to determine if the individual is a threat.

- **Task force officer (TFO) requests:** OFO officers and Border Patrol agents assigned to Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Joint Terrorism Task Forces,⁶ known as TFOs,⁷ may learn about a threat related to certain aliens and request their colleagues conduct additional screening of the aliens. After conducting additional screening, officers and agents notify the TFOs when they identify aliens who may relate to the threat.
- **Focused collection messages (FCMs):** CBP Office of Intelligence (OI) officials may issue FCMs requesting OFO officers and Border Patrol agents conduct additional screening of certain aliens during a specific timeframe to collect information on smuggling networks, foreign terrorist affiliation, and other information. Officers and agents document significant information in reports that OI officials analyze, subsequently advising CBP leadership on how to respond to the threat.

CBP encountered more than a fourfold increase of [REDACTED] aliens⁸ arriving at the Southwest border — from approximately 3,000 [REDACTED] aliens in fiscal year 2022 to approximately 13,000 in FY 2023. According to CBP, smuggling networks scheduled [REDACTED] aliens' flights to Latin America, and then organized their travel by land through Baja California, Mexico. Subsequently, [REDACTED] aliens often arrived at the U.S. border in San Diego and nearby areas. These aliens scheduled appointments with the CBP One™ application⁹ to apply for admission at POEs within the OFO San Diego Field Office, or illegally crossed the border and encountered Border Patrol agents in San Diego, El Centro, and Yuma sectors.

or its interests." It is unclear why DHS' website incorrectly states DHS defines SIAs by analyzing travel patterns, rather than country of origin. <https://www.dhs.gov/archive/news/2019/01/07/mythfact-known-and-suspected-terrorist-special-interest-aliens>.

⁶ FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Forces include personnel from U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies, including CBP, who work together to combat terrorism. There are approximately 200 Joint Terrorism Task Forces throughout the country. <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/terrorism/joint-terrorism-task-forces>.

⁷ TFOs engage in several joint law enforcement activities focused on national security, including conducting interviews, gathering evidence, and collecting and sharing information.

⁸ For this report, "[REDACTED] aliens" refer to individuals who migrated from [REDACTED] to the United States.

⁹ In October 2020, CBP developed CBP One™ to serve as a single portal for a variety of CBP services. The CBP One™ Appointment feature allowed aliens seeking admission into the United States to submit advance information and schedule appointments at POEs along the Southwest Border, including OFO San Diego Field Office POEs. In January 2025, CBP ended the CBP One™ Appointment feature.



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Figure 1. Map of CBP locations across the border from Baja California, Mexico



Source: DHS Office of Inspector General analysis of CBP and publicly available documents.

In July 2023, CBP and the FBI became concerned that the smuggling networks responsible for the increase of [REDACTED] migration could pose a national security threat to the United States.¹⁰ As a result, TFOs and OI officials requested that OFO officers and Border Patrol agents in San Diego and nearby areas conduct additional screening to gather more information from these aliens and help CBP and the FBI disrupt the potential threat.

We conducted this evaluation to review CBP's screening of Central Asian aliens who entered the United States with assistance from smuggling networks from June to October 2023. We focused specifically on CBP's screening of [REDACTED] aliens in July 2023 because of CBP officials' concerns that smuggling networks responsible for the increase of [REDACTED] migration could pose a national security threat.¹¹

Results of Evaluation

CBP's inconsistent processes for identifying SIAs created disparities in [REDACTED] alien screening. In July 2023, OFO San Diego Field Office, Border Patrol Yuma sector, and Border Patrol El Centro sector had a process to identify and provide additional screening of SIAs; Border Patrol San Diego

¹⁰ CBP and the FBI are generally concerned that foreign terrorist organizations could exploit smuggling routes to facilitate the movement of terrorists or use smuggling activities to fund terrorism operations.

¹¹ This evaluation focused on CBP's additional screening efforts initiated in July 2023 responsive to concerns about [REDACTED] aliens' smuggling networks. This evaluation did not review all CBP efforts to screen [REDACTED] aliens, and CBP's processes for screening these aliens changed over time as it learned more about the threat.



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sector did not. This inconsistency occurred because CBP did not have an agency-wide policy stating whether to identify aliens from certain countries as SIAs. As a result, aliens from countries with links to terrorism entered at least one CBP region that did not provide additional screening.

We found that Border Patrol San Diego sector agents did not consistently conduct and document interviews of [REDACTED] aliens. TFOs requested Border Patrol San Diego sector agents interview [REDACTED] aliens from July 12, 2023, to July 17, 2023. Agents told us there were too many [REDACTED] aliens in custody matching these requests to interview before releasing them. The agents also did not consistently document their interviews, per sector policy. On July 21, 2023, OI issued an FCM requesting Southwest border personnel interview [REDACTED] aliens, but it was not disseminated to agents in San Diego sector until 5 days later, potentially missing opportunities to identify aliens who posed a potential risk to national security and to collect information about smuggling networks.

Further, OFO San Diego Field Office could not determine whether officers completed the TFOs' July 14, 2023 request to search [REDACTED] aliens' phones. The officers documented phone searches for about half of the [REDACTED] aliens who matched TFOs' request, but the others may not have had phones or had broken phones. The OFO San Diego Field Office does not document whether arriving aliens have phones in their possession.

See Appendix B for a timeline of CBP's additional screening efforts of [REDACTED] aliens.

CBP's Inconsistent Processes for Identifying SIAs Created Disparities in [REDACTED] Alien Screening

In July 2023, OFO San Diego Field Office, Border Patrol Yuma sector, and Border Patrol El Centro sector maintained a list of countries with possible or established links to terrorism and had processes in place to prioritize SIAs for interviews and phone searches and transfer those who may have posed a threat to ICE for long-term detention. In contrast, the Border Patrol San Diego sector did not maintain a list, nor did it did prioritize these SIAs for interviews and phone searches to determine whether they were a threat.

When CBP became concerned that smuggling networks responsible for the increase of [REDACTED] migration could pose a national security threat, OFO San Diego Field Office and Border Patrol Yuma sector already had [REDACTED] on their lists for identifying SIAs; Border Patrol El Centro Sector added [REDACTED] to its list to begin providing additional screening of [REDACTED] aliens. According to a Border Patrol Yuma sector agent, leadership within each Border Patrol sector has the flexibility to decide on the list of countries agents use to identify SIAs.

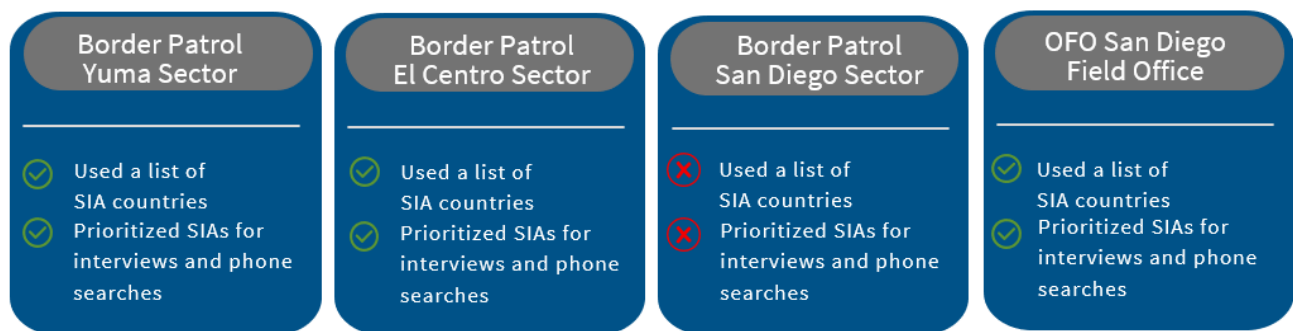


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Conversely, in July 2023, Border Patrol San Diego sector did not have a process for identifying SIAs, nor did it prioritize [REDACTED] aliens for interviews and phone searches.¹² This occurred because CBP does not have an agency-wide policy stating whether sectors or field offices should determine whether aliens from countries with possible or established links to terrorism are SIAs. Although CBP has an agency-wide list of countries with possible or established links to terrorism, it has not updated this list since 2016. Even if it updated the list, CBP sectors and field offices do not use this list for screening purposes to identify SIAs. Instead, OI uses this list to write intelligence reports on aliens from these countries.

Figure 2. CBP Processes for Identifying SIAs in the San Diego Area in July 2023



Source: DHS OIG analysis of CBP processes

As a result of inconsistent processes for identifying SIAs, CBP applied different levels of screening to [REDACTED] aliens depending on where they entered the United States. During the first half of 2023, 7,553 [REDACTED] aliens arrived at the Southwest border; Border Patrol encountered 4,933 of them (65 percent) at the Border Patrol San Diego sector, which had no process for identifying SIAs. Without consistent processes to identify SIAs, aliens from countries with links to terrorism entered at least one CBP region that does not provide additional screening. A Border Patrol San Diego sector supervisor told us that in July 2023, when he learned about concerns related to [REDACTED] migration, he reviewed his sector's alien encounter data and noticed it released thousands of [REDACTED] aliens without prioritizing them for interviews and phone searches.

Despite not prioritizing [REDACTED] aliens for interviews and phone searches, Border Patrol San Diego sector still had opportunities to further screen these aliens to respond to national security concerns through other methods, including TFOs' requests and an OI FCM. This did not consistently happen in the sector.

¹² While Border Patrol San Diego Sector previously had a process to identify SIAs, a supervisory agent told us the sector does not use it anymore because agents encounter too many SIAs to interview all of them. The agents we spoke with confirmed they did not have a process to identify SIAs in July 2023. However, the agents conducted interviews and phone searches when aliens' record checks revealed derogatory information.



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Border Patrol San Diego Sector Agents Did Not Consistently Conduct and Document Interviews of [REDACTED] Aliens

In July 2023, TFOs requested that Border Patrol San Diego sector agents interview [REDACTED] aliens, but the agents did not interview all matching this request. In addition, OI issued an FCM requesting that Southwest border personnel interview [REDACTED] aliens, but Border Patrol San Diego Sector TFOs did not disseminate the FCM to agents who conduct interviews until 5 days after receiving the FCM. As a result, the sector missed opportunities to identify aliens who pose a potential risk to national security and collect and analyze information about their smuggling networks.

Border Patrol San Diego Sector Agents Did Not Interview All [REDACTED] Aliens Matching TFO Requests

From July 12, 2023, to July 17, 2023, Border Patrol San Diego Sector TFOs requested that Border Patrol San Diego agents interview certain [REDACTED] aliens, specifically:

- On July 12, TFOs asked agents to interview all [REDACTED] aliens.
- On July 13, TFOs altered the guidance, asking agents to interview [REDACTED] aliens who did not arrive [REDACTED].
- On July 17, TFOs ended its request for agents to interview [REDACTED] aliens.

TFOs advised agents to ask aliens [REDACTED] and to notify TFOs [REDACTED]. A TFO told us these interviews would help CBP narrow the number of aliens to those who may pose a threat. After identifying [REDACTED] aliens [REDACTED] TFOs coordinated [REDACTED] to conduct additional screening, [REDACTED].

TFOs told us agents did not interview all [REDACTED] aliens matching their requests because of the large number of [REDACTED] aliens in custody. Per *National Standards on Transport, Escort, Detention, and Search*,¹³ CBP generally should not hold aliens in custody longer than 72 hours. CBP must interview the aliens before releasing them; therefore, it has limited time to interview aliens. Border Patrol San Diego leadership tried to interview aliens within this timeframe by transferring those encountered at different stations to the San Diego sector's centralized processing center and sending additional agents there to complete the interviews. Despite this effort, one TFO said

¹³ CBP, *National Standards on Transport, Escort, Detention, and Search* (TEDS), Oct. 2015, Section 4.1, *Duration of Detention*. TEDS states that every effort must be made to hold detainees for the least amount of time required for their processing, transfer, release, or repatriation, as appropriate and as operationally feasible. For DHS authority to detain individuals, see 6 U.S.C. § 211(c)(8)(B) and 6 U.S.C. § 211(m)(3).



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the volume of [REDACTED] in custody was “huge” and the attempt to interview all within the limited timeframe was “not sustainable.”

We could not determine how many aliens CBP interviewed or how many previously [REDACTED] because agents did not consistently document whether they interviewed these [REDACTED] aliens. A supervisory agent told his agents to document TFOs’ requested interviews in a CBP system of record, as required by San Diego sector policy, so they could review the [REDACTED] aliens’ responses. However, the CBP systems of record only contained responses for 5 of 207 (2 percent) [REDACTED] aliens matching the TFOs’ requests. In addition to the responses for the five in CBP’s system of record, the agents also emailed other [REDACTED] aliens’ responses to the TFOs without documenting them. Ultimately, a supervisory agent told us the sector identified approximately 45 to 60 [REDACTED] aliens who previously [REDACTED], but also noted, “this is an estimate” because the sector did not keep an “official tracker.”

Border Patrol San Diego Sector TFOs Did Not Disseminate OI’s FCM for [REDACTED] Alien Interviews in a Timely Manner

On July 21, 2023, OI officials drafted a 3-month FCM requesting that CBP Southwest border personnel interview [REDACTED] aliens about the smuggling networks that facilitated their movement and document significant information in reports for OI analysis. OI officials initially planned to issue this FCM on July 25, 2023, but an FBI agent asked OI officials to issue it sooner so CBP could immediately begin the interviews that day (a Friday) and continue them throughout the weekend. Following this request, OI officials finalized the FCM on July 21, 2023, and emailed it to senior CBP officials, including a TFO who coordinates with other TFOs across the Nation, asking them to “disseminate further to the appropriate” personnel.

While the CBP TFO forwarded the FCM to a Border Patrol San Diego sector TFO on this date, the sector TFO did not share it with Border Patrol San Diego sector agents conducting interviews.¹⁴ The sector TFO explained that he did not need to disseminate the FCM because it was an OI document and CBP personnel can access OI documents in a CBP system of record for intelligence reporting. However, OI officials told us CBP personnel generally should disseminate FCMs to the appropriate officers and agents. One official said OI is “formalizing guidance and procedures for FCMs.”

On July 25, 2023, a senior OI official told other OI officials that CBP personnel were not generating many reports referencing the FCM. OI planned to use these reports to provide “vital information” to senior leadership, such as whether the aliens may be affiliated with a foreign terrorist organization. CBP may have missed opportunities to collect and analyze this information. The senior official asked OI to confirm whether sectors and field offices received the FCM and to

¹⁴ The CBP TFO also forwarded the FCM to an OFO San Diego TFO on July 21, who distributed it to officers conducting interviews the same day.



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inform sectors and field offices that the FCM was “a priority.” On July 26, 2023, another OI official informed a Border Patrol San Diego supervisory agent about the FCM, who forwarded it to agents who conduct interviews.

OFO San Diego Field Office Cannot Determine Whether It Completed TFOs’ Request to Search █████ Aliens’ Phones

From July 14, 2023, to October 10, 2023, OFO San Diego Field Office TFOs requested that officers search the phones of █████ aliens who arrived █████. The TFOs told officers to review the █████ aliens’ contact lists for numbers provided by the FBI related to a threat and call a TFO after finding one of these numbers on a phone. After identifying one of these numbers in a phone’s contact list, a TFO contacted ICE to place the █████ alien in long-term detention.

During this timeframe, the officers documented phone searches in a CBP system of record for 213 out of 461 (46 percent) of █████ aliens who arrived █████. A supervisory officer told us it is possible the remaining █████ aliens may not have had phones or had broken phones; we could not verify this because the OFO San Diego Field Office does not document whether arriving aliens have phones in their possession. As a result, we could not determine whether the officers searched the phone of all █████ aliens who matched the TFOs’ requests.

Our prior unannounced inspections of CBP holding facilities also found CBP personnel did not consistently document aliens’ property, including an alien’s phone,¹⁵ and recommended CBP leadership provide training on CBP’s policies and guidance for property. The U.S. Government Accountability Office additionally issued a recent report calling for CBP to improve its handling of personal property.¹⁶ Following OIG and GAO oversight, CBP issued Directive 5240-010, “Short-Term Holding Facilities Handling, Storage, Transference, and/or Return of Detainee Personal Property” in August 2024; we therefore are not issuing a new recommendation related to OFO San Diego Field Office’s documentation of aliens’ phones.

¹⁵ In *Results of Unannounced Inspections of CBP Holding Facilities in Yuma and Tucson Areas*, [OIG-23-29](#), we reported on inconsistent management of alien personal property and religious items across the facilities we inspected. In *Results of Unannounced Inspections of CBP Holding Facilities in the Laredo Area*, [OIG-23-62](#), we found that three of four facilities we inspected did not accurately document property. In one instance, a CBP inventory form did not document an alien’s phone. In *Results of July 2023 Unannounced Inspections of CBP Holding Facilities in the Rio Grande Valley Area*, [OIG-24-20](#), we also found that two facilities we inspected did not consistently document detainees’ property.

¹⁶ *Southwest Border: Additional Guidance and Monitoring Needed to Improve CBP’s Handling of Personal Property*, [GAO-24-106540](#), April 23, 2024.



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Conclusion

As a result of inconsistent processes for identifying SIAs, CBP screens aliens differently depending on where they enter the United States. Smuggling networks can use this disparity to bring aliens to areas that receive less screening. Without a CBP-wide policy for identifying SIAs, CBP will continue to inconsistently screen aliens from countries with possible links to terrorism.

While TFOs and OI officials may warn about possible threats and request remedial action, CBP personnel may not thwart threats unless they are aware of and adhere to requests to provide additional screening to aliens. While Border Patrol San Diego sector does not identify [REDACTED] aliens as SIAs, it did receive requests to interview [REDACTED] aliens. However, Border Patrol San Diego sector agents did not consistently complete these interviews because of the [REDACTED] alien surge and limited timeframe CBP holds aliens in custody. The sector missed opportunities to identify aliens who may pose a threat to national security and collect and analyze information about related smuggling networks.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: We recommend the CBP Office of Intelligence develop and issue policy for identifying and screening SIAs.

Recommendation 2: We recommend the CBP Border Patrol Intelligence Division develop and issue guidance on the prioritization and tracking completion of TFO interview requests.

Recommendation 3: We recommend the CBP Border Patrol develop and implement a process for timely disseminating FCMs to agents conducting interviews.

Management Comments and OIG Analysis

CBP provided management comments on a draft of this report. We included the comments in their entirety in Appendix C. We also received technical comments from CBP on the draft report; we revised the report as appropriate. In its management comments, CBP concurred with recommendation 1, which we consider resolved and open. CBP did not concur with recommendations 2 and 3, which we consider unresolved and open.

Prior to providing its management comments to the draft report, CBP had multiple opportunities to raise questions or concerns over our recommendations during the stages of our standard report review process. This included a Notice of Findings and Recommendations preview document; two opportunities to provide technical comments; and two conference calls, one for the Notice of Findings and Recommendations, and one for the exit conference. We discussed the recommendations extensively during our meeting on the Notice of Findings and



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Recommendations, and refined the recommendations based on the discussion. At no time during our discussions did CBP express an intent to non-concur with two recommendations.

A summary of the CBP response and our analysis follows.

CBP Response to Recommendation 1: Concur. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] CBP sent us documentation related to this recommendation and requested we consider this recommendation resolved and closed, as implemented.

OIG Analysis: We consider these actions responsive to the recommendation, which is resolved and open. CBP provided documentation of [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We will close this recommendation when CBP provides documentation that it has implemented [REDACTED]

CBP Response to Recommendation 2: Non-concur. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] TFOs function under the direction of their chain of command and focus on enforcing immigration, customs, and other Federal laws at the border, including preventing terrorists from entering the United States. CBP stated TFOs do not direct operations and establishing guidance to prioritize their interview requests would set a requirement and process for which TFOs are not intended or empowered to perform. CBP provided [REDACTED] and requested we consider this recommendation resolved and closed.

OIG Analysis: We do not consider these actions responsive to the recommendation, which is unresolved and open. CBP's [REDACTED] does not apply to our recommendation, which addresses internal Border Patrol processes. For example, TFOs may learn about a threat related to certain aliens, including threats posed by terrorists attempting to enter the United States, and request their colleagues conduct additional screening of the aliens. We reported that Border Patrol agents assigned as TFOs were concerned about a potential threat, and requested other Border Patrol agents conduct interviews to help narrow the number of aliens to those who may have posed a threat. We found that Border Patrol agents did not interview all aliens matching the TFOs' requests in July 2023. To ensure Border Patrol can thwart future threats, we recommend Border Patrol Intelligence Division develop a process internal to Border Patrol to prioritize and track Border Patrol completion of TFO interview requests. We will close this



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recommendation when Border Patrol Intelligence Division develops and issues guidance on prioritizing and tracking completion of TFO interview requests.

CBP Response to Recommendation 3: Non-concur. CBP stated [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

CBP provided [REDACTED] and requested we consider this recommendation resolved and closed.

OIG Analysis: We do not consider these actions responsive to the recommendation, which is unresolved and open. Although CBP described [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the accompanying, unrelated [REDACTED] documentation [REDACTED] does not reference [REDACTED]. Additionally, we found that Border Patrol agents did not use [REDACTED] during the timeframe evaluated. We will close this recommendation when Border Patrol provides current documentation it has implemented a process for timely disseminating FCMs to agents conducting interviews.



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Appendix A: Objective, Scope, and Methodology

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General was established by the *Homeland Security Act of 2002* (Pub. L. No. 107–296) by amendment to the *Inspector General Act of 1978*.

Our objective was to review CBP’s screening of Central Asian aliens who entered the United States with assistance from smuggling networks. We focused specifically on CBP’s screening of [REDACTED] aliens because of CBP officials’ concerns that smuggling networks responsible for the increase of [REDACTED] migration could pose a national security threat. This evaluation focused on CBP’s additional screening efforts initiated in July 2023 responsive to concerns about [REDACTED] aliens’ smuggling networks. This evaluation did not review all CBP efforts to screen [REDACTED] aliens, and CBP’s processes for screening these aliens changed over time as it learned more about the threat.

We conducted 31 interviews with CBP, ICE, and DHS’ Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans officials about the screening and release of Central Asian aliens and SIA policies and processes.

We reviewed CBP officials’ correspondence and other documents concerning the screening and release of [REDACTED] aliens; SIA processes; and interview, phone search, and FCM processes. We also analyzed data from CBP systems related to [REDACTED] alien interviews and phone searches.

We conducted our evaluation under the authority of the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, 5 U.S.C. §§ 401–424, and according to the *Quality Standards for Inspections and Evaluations*, issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

DHS OIG’s Access to DHS Information

During this evaluation, DHS provided timely responses to our requests for information and did not delay or deny access to information we requested.

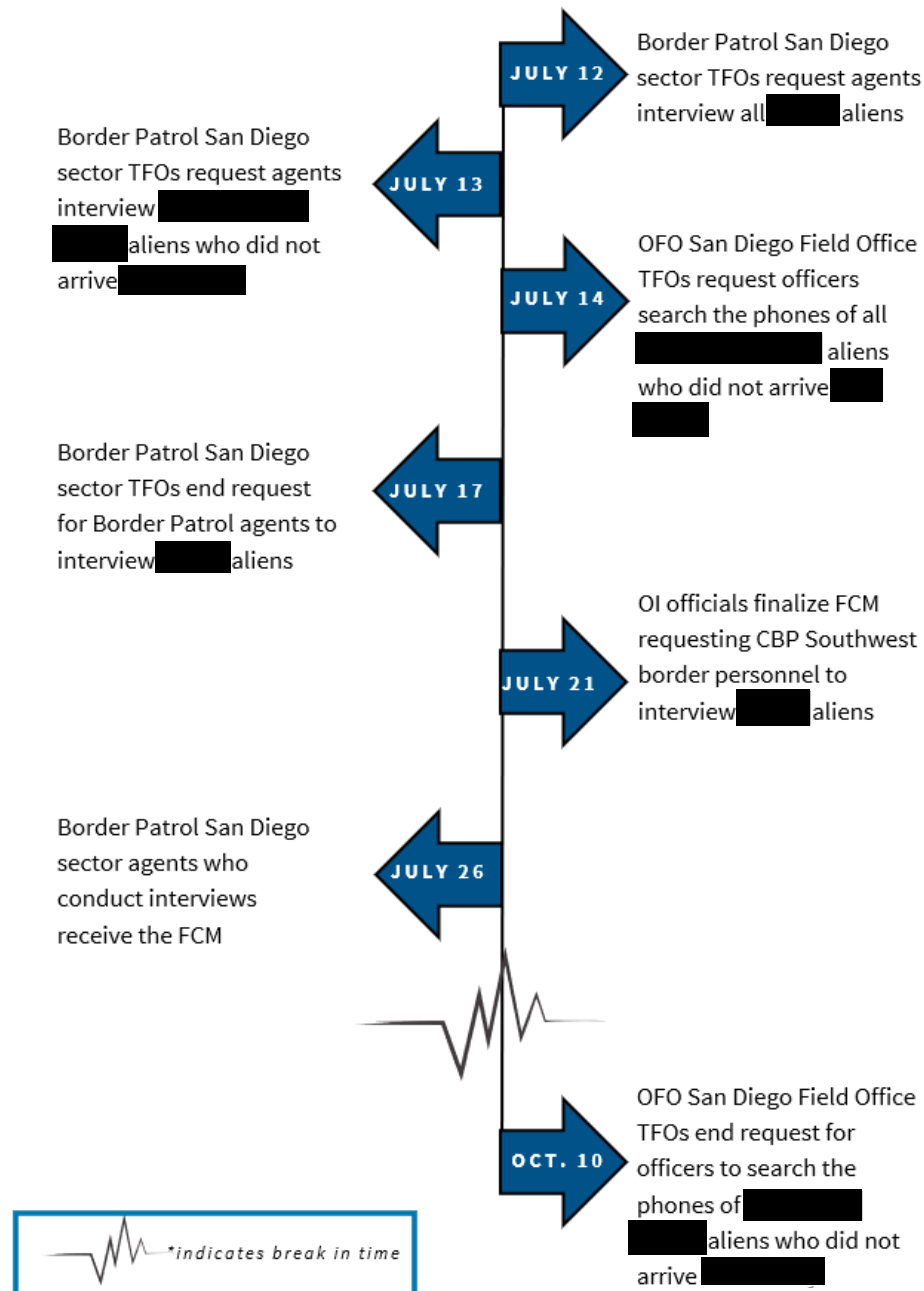


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Appendix B:

Timeline for CBP's Additional Screening Efforts of [REDACTED] Aliens



Source: DHS OIG analysis of CBP screening efforts



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**Appendix C:
CBP Comments on the Draft Report**

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1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20229



**U.S. Customs and
Border Protection**

BY ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

June 4, 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR: Joesph V. Cuffari, Ph.D.
Inspector General

FROM: Henry A. Moak, Jr.
Senior Component Accountable Official
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

6/4/2025

X

Signed by: HENRY A MOAK JR

SUBJECT: (FOUO/LES) Management Response to Draft Report, "CBP
Has Inconsistent Processes for Identifying Special Interest
Migrants and Did Not Complete Requests for Interviewing
██████████ Migrants in July 2023" (Project No. 23-062-ISP-CBP)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) appreciates the work of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

CBP's leadership is pleased to note OIG's recognition that CBP Office of Field Operations (OFO) and U.S. Border Patrol (USBP) agents collect biographical and biometric information and conduct record checks to identify potential national security threats. CBP remains committed to further strengthening its comprehensive approach to border management and control, which combines customs, immigration, border security, and agricultural protection into one coordinated and supportive activity. ██████████
██████████

The draft report contained three recommendations, one with which CBP concurs (Recommendation 1) and two with which it non-concurs (Recommendations 2 and 3). Attached find our detailed response to each recommendation. CBP previously submitted

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technical comments addressing several accuracy, contextual and other issues under a separate cover for OIG's consideration, as appropriate.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Attachment

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**Attachment: Management Response to Recommendations
Contained in OIG 23-062-ISP-CBP**

OIG recommended CBP Office of Intelligence (OI):

Recommendation 1: Develop and issue policy for identifying and screening SIAs [special interest aliens].

(U//FOUO) Response: Concur. [REDACTED]

Efforts to address this recommendation were completed in June 2024, and CBP sent the OIG documentation corroborating these activities on December 19, 2024. We request that the OIG consider this recommendation resolved and closed, as implemented.

OIG recommended CBP USBP Intelligence Division:

Recommendation 2: Develop and issue guidance on the prioritization and tracking completion of TFO [task force officer] interview requests.

Response: (U//FOUO) Non-concur. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] JTTF TFOs work collaboratively with other agencies participating in the JTTF and facilitate information sharing in support of routine or time-sensitive matters in their area of responsibility. Whether formally assigned to a JTTF or supporting under another arrangement, agents continue to function under the direction of their chain of command. Personnel retain their primary focus of enforcing immigration, customs, and other federal laws at the border, including the prevention of terrorists and their instruments from entering the United States. Due to their unique position, TFOs do not direct operational decisions at or between CBP Ports of Entry. Establishing more prescriptive guidance on prioritizing interview requests would set a requirement and process for which TFOs are not intended or empowered to perform and therefore could not be implemented as recommended.

CBP sent the OIG documentation corroborating this activity on April 16, 2025. We request that the OIG consider this recommendation resolved and closed.

OIG recommended CBP USBP:

Recommendation 3: Develop and implement a process for timely disseminating FCMs [focused collection messages] to agents conducting interviews.

(U/FOUO) Response: Non-concur. [REDACTED]

CBP sent the OIG documentation corroborating this activity on April 16, 2025. We request that the OIG consider this recommendation resolved and closed.

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Appendix D:

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