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CARDIN CHAIRS TERRORISM AND HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING THAT EXPOSES OPPORTUNITIES FOR PASSPORT FRAUD

GAO report finds vulnerabilities in the current system

Washington - U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Terrorism and Homeland Security Subcommittee, today expressed his concern over the significant vulnerabilities found in the issuance of U.S. passports. Senator Cardin made his remarks during a subcommittee hearing he chaired entitled, *"The Passport Issuance Process: Closing the Door to Fraud."* Witnesses from the General Accountability Office (GAO), which investigated the ease of using fraudulent documents to obtain a genuine U.S. passport, and the Department of State, which issues U.S. passports, participated in today's hearing.

"Identity theft, fraudulent materials, and basic counterfeiting skills are among the many threats to the effectiveness of how our government issues one of the most sought after and valuable documents in the world: an American passport. The top priority of our government is to keep our citizens safe from harm, but the passport issuance process is flawed. We must constantly examine ways to improve our government and its security measures," **said Senator Cardin.**

"It is encouraging that the Department of State has taken some preliminary steps in response to the most recent GAO report, which mirrored results found in 2005 and 2007. But I still am concerned that we still face significant gaps in our passport issuance process that could allow a criminal or terrorist to obtain a genuine U.S. passport from the State Department through fraudulent means.

"I am appreciative of the groundwork laid by Senator Diane Feinstein (D-CA), the former Chairman of this Subcommittee, and Ranking Member Jon Kyl (R-AZ) by requesting that GAO undertake this study and report in the last Congress."

In March 2009, the GAO issued a report entitled: *"Department of State: Undercover Tests Reveal Significant Vulnerabilities in State's Passport Issuance Process."* The report was designed to "proactively test the effectiveness of the current passport issuance process to determine whether malicious individuals could use counterfeit or fraudulently obtained documents to obtain a genuine U.S. passport."

Witness testimony can be found at <http://judiciary.senate.gov/hearings/>.

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