

**MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD**

**Event:** Briefing by Stewart Verdery, Assistant Secretary Policy and Planning, BTS, DHS. Responsive to DHS Briefing Request No. 2, in part, re "personnel on staffs of the Undersecretary for Border Security and Transportation and the DHS executives with policy responsibilities for (a) BICE and BCBP matters, and (b) liaison with the Homeland Security Council and the Executive Office of the President"

**Type of event:** meeting

**Date:** July 21, 2003

**Special Access Issues:** none

**Prepared by:** Janice Kephart-Roberts on August 5, 2003

**Team Number:** 5

**Location:** DHS Headquarters, 3842 Nebraska Ave.

**Participants - Non-Commission:**

Stewart Verdery, Ass't Secretary Policy and Planning  
Dan Brown, POC

**Participants - Commission:** Team 5

Betty Swope  
Janice Kephart-Roberts

**TEXT**

Mr. Verdery began with a discussion of a slice of life at BTS.

1. *Policy and planning office.* Primarily to advise Undersecretary Hutchinson on customs, immigration and transportation opolicy. FLETC and Office of Drug Policy also within purview. Also responsible for advising Deputy Secretary and being a public face in Congress, etc., as need be.
2. *Review and coordinate supporting agency activity.* Hoping to start putting in place top-down policies that are consistent with DHS policy and consistent among agencies (ICE, CBP, TSA, FLETC (Connie Patrick), as opposed to the bottom-up policy making to date).
3. *Represent the DHS and BTS.* Private face on interagency discussion and public face in Congress, etc., as need be. Other than Hutchinson, Verdery only other confirmed individual BTS-wide. Hopes we Commission intends to interview Hutchinson.
4. *What Verdery not doing.*
  - a. Micromanaging employees of ICE, CBP and TSA. (Verdery is an equal to the ass't secretaries that run those organizations.)
  - b. Directing operational activities of those organizations.

5. Employees. In end, 30 to 35 employees in office; have 17 now. Majority detailees; five to support Verdery solely. 8 – 10 are detailees from Treasury enforcement.
  - a. 5-7 will do immigration policy, e.g absconders
  - b. 5-7 will do transportation policy
  - c. 5-7 will do cargo and trade policy
  - d. 5-7 will do international policy, e.g. foreign gov't negotiations
6. Originally had a strategic planning group at BTS which were considering putting in Chief of Staff's office since they do budget, but decided to keep at BTS. Hutchinson's chief of staff is Betty Guman.
7. Public and Legislative Affairs at Secretary level and have liaison with BTS.
8. Some assistant secretaries at BTS not confirmed.

**The following questions in bold were asked by JKR. Answers follow.**

*How does BTS directorate define homeland security?*

DHS goals and objectives paper formalizes the mission of BTS. Goal is to protect borders by enforcing immigration laws while maintaining the facilitation of commerce.

*What are BTS priorities at this time, from a policy perspective? Drugs used to run supreme. Is it 100% terrorism (as Bonner has said) now?*

No. Goal for BTS is to follow through on all missions, even if terrorism is a top priority. For example, is to conduct all varieties criminal investigations, so as narcotics crosses over with terrorism, doing both. These are not conflicting goals. And have a responsibility to enforce all immigration laws, even if, again, top priority is terrorism.

*From a management perspective?*

Right now, sifting through operations people of BTS Policy and turning around to policy mandate. Laura Reese from House Judiciary Immigration Committee joining BTS. Working day to day both to review policies want implemented and ensure top-down implementation.

*Work with Homeland Security Council? On policy side, DHS must align itself internally prior to approaching HSC. Work with HSC on staff level all the time. When need to get WH approval, go through HSC.*

*What are BTS' biggest challenges?*

To determine how much policy development out of this office as opposed to the supporting bureaus. All the bureaus are relatively new. Make sure policies are coordinated, e.g. TSA and Customs on cargo. TSA with Coast Guard (although Coast Guard not in BTS). ICE investigative role v. USSS in money laundering.

*In the area of intelligence gathering and sharing? Not Verdery's responsibility; we are customers and not involved in the interagency gathering or sharing between or within the bureaus.*

*Investigations? ICE is in the lead. Mesh customs and immigration cultures. Realize people, money and things fit together.*

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*Inspections?* Integrating customs and INS and implementing new technology efficiencies.

*What are your projected goals over the next six months? Year?*  
Matrix of reforms; looking at a multiyear budget process. See below.

*What programs are run out of this directorate?*

**MRVs and Entry-exit.** *Tell us about US Visit.* US Visit was an office deep within ICE and Hutchinson wanted it reporting directly to him. Brought Jim Williams (formerly IRS) to get it running. Williams reports to Verdery and Hutchinson on policy. Behring Point is contractor. About to go to deployment at all international airports and seaports on biometrics as of December '04 and '05. Put in place MRV readers by October '04. Verdery spends about 80% of his time on this project.

*Heard there was the creation of a Biometrics Office. True? What and where is it?* No. Not aware. There's a congressional mandate to create a data management task force. DHS CIO Office looking at all IT projects.

**Visa Clearance process.** *Tell us about the Visa Policy Office. Tell us about the plan to place DHS employees overseas to help oversee the visa clearance process.* Section 438 of the Homeland Security Act requires DHS and DoS to write an MOU on visa issuance policy. Undersecretary running this effort. MOU delegates some authority to DoS on the operational issuance of visas, but actual policy on visa issuance, clearance and oversight of international functions of other bureaus (TSA screening; CBP with cargo security) will reside within an Office of International Enforcement. MOU almost complete, but for one outstanding issue.

Did not answer questions re specifics of MOU, such as under what conditions waivers will be allowed? How many people will be required to be interviewed prior to granting a visa? How many people must be processed per day?

*Where do you see the FBI's role in the visa clearance process?* Not familiar with the FBI's role.

**Border security.** *The border patrol has employed a number of initiatives over the past few years to stem the illegal alien flow between ports of entry on the southwest border. What are the number of patrol officers on the southwest border? The northwest border? Has a northwest border strategy been completed yet?* To ask CBP.

**Military.** *What does BTS see as the role of the military in ensuring border security in the long term? How has the military partnered with INS/DHS since 9/11?* Not familiar.

**Breeder documents.** *Does BTS have a policy on what the federal can or should do about breeders docs (birth certificates, drivers' licenses)? Working with DHS Office of State and Local and discussing whether DHS should take an official position.*

**Matricula consular cards.** *What is BTS' policy on the consular matricula cards?* Testified in House Immigration subcmte on issue. Created an interagency working group

to develop a government-wide policy, with Treasury in favor and FBI against, DHS "is expressing concern over increase in use".

*How does TSA's work dovetail with BTS' customs work?* Trade Act representative on incoming and outgoing rail, truck and cargo. Already had 24 hour rule on shipping. Transmodal transportation security and will work closely with CBP on transportation that crosses the border. TSA screeners and customs does 24 hour rule. TSA is doing more grant making and standard making. There is an internal security TSA and CBP working group at BTS.