



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Department of Homeland Security

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Potentially Ineligible Individuals Have Been Granted U.S. Citizenship Because of Incomplete Fingerprint Records

The Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General (OIG) today released a report that found that U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) granted U.S. citizenship to at least 858 individuals from special interest countries who had been ordered deported or removed under another name. This happened because neither the digital fingerprint repository at DHS nor the repository at the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) contains all old fingerprint records of individuals previously deported.

In the new report, *“Potentially Ineligible Individuals Have Been Granted U.S. Citizenship Because of Incomplete Fingerprint Records,”* OIG found that the records are missing from the DHS digital repository because paper-based fingerprint cards used prior to 2008 were not consistently digitized and uploaded into the repository. The FBI repository is also missing records because, in the past, fingerprints collected during immigration enforcement encounters were not always forwarded to the FBI. Currently, about 148,000 fingerprint records of aliens from special interest countries who had final deportation orders or who are criminals or fugitives have yet to be digitized.

Incomplete digital fingerprint records hinder adjudicators’ full review of naturalization applications and may lead to USCIS granting the rights and privileges of U.S. citizenship to those who may be ineligible or may be trying to obtain citizenship fraudulently. For example, OIG learned that at least three individuals who became naturalized citizens after having been deported under a different identity had obtained credentials to conduct security-sensitive work at commercial airports or maritime facilities and vessels. Since being identified, all have had their credentials revoked.

Additionally, the Department has investigated very few of these individuals to determine whether they should be denaturalized or criminally prosecuted.

“This situation created opportunities for individuals to gain the rights and privileges of U.S. citizenship through fraud,” said Inspector General John Roth. “To prevent fraud and ensure thorough review of naturalization applications, USCIS needs access to these fingerprint records. DHS agreed with our recommendations. ICE has plans to digitize and upload all available fingerprint

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records, and the Department has told us it plans to review the eligibility of each naturalized citizen whose fingerprint records reveal a deportation order under a different identity. We will continue to monitor DHS' progress.”