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STILTS

**Why We
Aren't Stopping
Tomorrow's Terrorism**

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7

Al Qaeda's Frequent Traveler Program

In the days before Christmas 2001, the attacks of September 11 were still an open wound. But international flights were slowly returning to normal. Americans were going home from Europe for the holidays; Europeans were taking their holidays in Florida's warmth.

Now was the time for a second strike, al Qaeda's leaders thought. Americans must know that military success in Afghanistan was irrelevant—it could not protect them at home. The first attack inside the United States had succeeded beyond expectations. Another would be devastating.

But the U.S. response had been tougher and more effective than al Qaeda expected. Its agents and sympathizers inside the United States had mostly been rounded up or expelled, often on immigration charges.

To launch a new attack, al Qaeda would have to send terrorists into the United States. But that path was perilous. American border officials were on high alert; customs and immigration controls had been tightened.

Visa applicants from Muslim countries faced tough new scrutiny. U.S. visa processing had returned in many ways to the 1950s. All applicants had to complete a form filled with personal questions. All applicants were interviewed by consular officials at a U.S. embassy or consulate. And in a new measure, all were fingerprinted to confirm their identities. Before allowing visa travelers in, the United States

learned a lot about them—their family status, prior travel to the United States, present employment, the purpose and length of their planned trip to the United States, where they planned to stay, and who was paying for their trip.

The original focus of the questions may have been whether the travelers would overstay their visas and take illegal jobs in the United States, but the process was quickly revised to search for terrorist ties. If any doubts were raised on that score, the applicants simply didn't get a visa. And without a visa, the airlines wouldn't even let citizens of those countries get on a flight bound for the United States.

That was al Qaeda's problem as it looked for a way to launch a second strike on the United States. It had no trained terrorists left inside the country and it couldn't send a new team in, at least not from Saudi Arabia or Yemen or Egypt.

It sounded like a riddle. How do you attack the United States without entering the United States?

But al Qaeda had the answer. It had a plan.

And a man to carry it out.

Boarding Flight 63 from Paris to Miami, Richard Reid did not exactly blend in. He was huge—six-foot-four and over 200 pounds—and the son of an English mother and a Jamaican father. In other circumstances, he might have made the other passengers a bit uneasy. He was, after all, a hardened street criminal who'd spent time in England's notorious Feltham Prison. But in the jittery months after 9/11 what mattered most was that he bore no resemblance to the Arab hijackers.

In fact, though, Reid had converted to a radical brand of Islam in Feltham. Al Qaeda was eager to use a Western convert on a suicide mission. He would get less scrutiny, and a successful suicide mission by a British subject would show the West that it was rotting from within.

But the real beauty of sending Reid on the mission was his passport. All the visa controls imposed by the State Department were irrelevant to Reid. As a British subject, he was part of the Visa Waiver Program. Citizens of developed countries were permitted to travel to

the United States without a visa and to stay for up to ninety days. Launched in the 1980s as a flood of commercial jet travelers overwhelmed U.S. border controls, the VWP was widely praised by business groups and travelers. It allowed easy, spur-of-the-moment trips to the United States, and it allowed Americans to make similar trips to Europe, Australia, Japan, and other popular destinations.

After 9/11, it was also the answer to al Qaeda's prayers. VWP travelers could get on planes without any screening by U.S. authorities. They could fly from Europe into American airspace without any scrutiny until the plane landed. And if the plane never landed—if they blew it up while it was near or over the United States, U.S. authorities would be helpless. All its border controls would be for naught.

That was al Qaeda's plan. It could evade all of America's new visa and border measures and still bring death to American skies.

Reid took a row to himself. He refused food and drink, even though it was a ten-hour flight. But he didn't draw much suspicion until hours into the flight. Then one of the attendants smelled smoke. Walking the aisles, she saw Reid hunched over in his seat.

"I thought, he's smoking," she told *Time* magazine. "It got me mad. I was talking to him, saying, 'Excuse me,' but he just ignored me. I leaned in and said, 'What are you doing?'"¹

Then she saw.

"He's got the shoe off, between his legs. All I see is the wiring and the match. The match was lit," she says.²

I'm going to die, she thought.

She might have been right. According to the FBI, that one shoe held enough plastic explosive to blow a hole in the side of the plane.

She called for help. Another attendant grabbed Reid from behind, and he sunk his teeth into her hand.

"I couldn't get my hand out of his mouth" the second attendant told *Time*. "I thought he was going to rip my hand apart it hurt so bad."³

Passengers rallied to the attendants' aid. They helped pour water over Reid and his match. (It was a flight from Paris, so they used Evian.) Crew members used everything on hand to truss up

the massive terrorist—plastic cuffs, headphone cords, and a seatbelt extension. A doctor on the flight injected Valium.

Reid still tried to break free; he bared his teeth at the crew when they spoke to him.

But passengers and crew had done their job well. When the plane finally landed, he was so thoroughly hogtied that the FBI had to cut Reid out of the improvised restraints. After a trial and conviction for terrorism, he was sentenced to life in prison.

Al Qaeda had been thwarted once by an alert air crew. Five years later, no one boarded a plane without sending one's shoes through the x-ray machine. But the real hole in American defenses hadn't been patched. The VWP was still going strong.

So al Qaeda—which doesn't easily let go once it gets an idea in its collective head—decided to try the same thing again, but on a bigger scale.

Al Qaeda planned several simultaneous suicide attacks on transatlantic flights from Great Britain to the United States. It couldn't use shoes this time, so the terrorists would smuggle common household chemicals onto the planes, then mix them together into an explosive concoction.

Later tests by the Transportation Security Administration found that the liquids were more than enough to blow holes in each of the planes, bringing them all down over the Atlantic Ocean or the United States.

And how were the plotters going to evade U.S. security controls? The same way Richard Reid did. They planned to use British passports to get on the planes, and then destroy the plane and its passengers before American authorities ever laid eyes on them. At least eight British citizens of Pakistani descent were part of the conspiracy. Every one was eligible for visa waiver treatment. Visa waiver had become al Qaeda's favorite travel program.

Once again, overlapping security measures managed to compensate for the lack of controls on visa-waiver travelers. This time it was

good law enforcement and intelligence. The British discovered the plot while it was still in the planning stages. They monitored the plotters before swooping in to arrest them.

We had dodged a bullet again. But we couldn't count on luck to keep us safe forever.

So why didn't we just get rid of the visa waiver program? That was the question that some in Congress kept asking. Senator Dianne Feinstein and Senator Jon Kyl were particularly dubious about the VWP, and they regularly complained about the program's flaws.

But the reasons for adopting the program hadn't gone away. All in all, travel to the United States helps the economy and may even reduce anti-Americanism. Tourism and business travel are crucial in a country like ours that runs trade and payments deficits each year. Each year more than four million travelers come here from the UK and more than three million from Japan. In all, nearly twenty million visitors arrive in the United States under the VWP. Whole business models had been built on the ever-increasing pace of international travel. Were we willing to bankrupt those companies?

And what would we do at the embassies that were suddenly asked to process visas for millions of European and other travelers? Lines would run around the block. State Department officials would have to be drafted for consular duty in these countries, and the pressure to process the applications quickly would make rigorous scrutiny almost impossible.

What's more, international pressure to undo the change would mount quickly. At the time, twenty-seven countries were part of the U.S. visa waiver program, including all the most important American allies in the Cold War—nations like the United Kingdom, France, Japan, Germany, Australia, Italy, and New Zealand. Every one of these governments listened to their businesses and their travelers. They, too, expected the exponential rise in jet travel to go on forever. And they would not tolerate an American policy that interrupted that trend. They would insist that the program be reinstated. If it was not, they would retaliate, withdrawing visa-free treatment from U.S. travelers and forcing Americans to stand in lines around the block for visas to enter their countries.

If all that came to pass, Senator Dianne Feinstein's high-tech constituents would not thank her. Right now, they can catch a flight to Europe or Japan on less than a day's notice, and so can the customers or investors that visit them. Travel barriers that ran both ways would crimp their international ties.

No one wanted less travel. No one wanted a return to the 1950s. The forces of exponential conservatism still wanted jet travel to double and double again every decade. These were the forces that had created the VWP. And they were building again, making the case for expansion of the program.

We couldn't just stand in their path and shout, "Halt."

But the world had changed while the VWP had not. If it was meant to be an exclusive club for American allies, then it was out of date. It was like a museum exhibit of American allies from the Cold War era. When the United States decided to attack Saddam Hussein, the old alliance was ripped apart. Countries like France and Germany more or less switched sides, working with traditional U.S. adversaries such as Russia and China to thwart the U.S. plan. In contrast, the United States received backing from Eastern Europe. Poland, the Baltic states, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, and Bulgaria all sent troops to fight in Iraq alongside the Americans. Asked why his little country had sent a force to Iraq, the Latvian ambassador's reply was poignant: "Because you asked."

We didn't have allies like that in Western Europe. But as far as VWP was concerned, Eastern Europe was still behind the rope line waiting to be let in. Indeed, some of the hardest conversations we regularly had with Jonathan Faull and others at the European Commission were about the VWP. Faull routinely pressed for inclusion of the new EU members from Eastern Europe in the program and, to be frank, his case was convincing.

Actually, it was more convincing for Eastern Europe than for Western Europe. Sure, travelers from these relatively rich countries were a lot less likely to become illegal immigrant laborers than

travelers from poor countries. But after 9/11, the biggest danger posed by foreign visitors wasn't that they'd take dishwashing jobs away from New Yorkers.

If you're worried about Islamic terrorists traveling without visas, the last countries that should belong to the visa waiver program are those with large and disaffected Islamic populations. That's true of most of Western Europe. In contrast, Eastern Europe still hadn't needed to import much labor from abroad. If we were making generalizations about "safe" countries, in short, we'd have let Eastern Europe into the visa waiver program before France, the United Kingdom, Germany, or the Netherlands.

The new alignment hadn't gone unnoticed elsewhere. Ethnic politics reinforced a sense of obligation to our most committed allies as Polish, Lithuanian, and Latvian communities across the country campaigned to bring their homelands (and their relatives) into the program.

Shortly after the Iraq War ended, Senator Rick Santorum, a deep-dyed conservative Republican from Pennsylvania, introduced a bill to give VWP status to Poland. His Democratic cosponsor, Senator Barbara Mikulski of Maryland, pointedly asked why France had VWP status while Poland did not. That was troubling. If even security-minded legislators like Senator Santorum wanted to expand the VWP, our security concerns about the program weren't getting through.

Then, in 2006, Senator Santorum got his bill attached to the massive immigration reform bill being shepherded through the Senate. It was a classic legislative move. The senator knew the Bush administration would have to swallow the change in order to keep its priority legislation on track. DHS might squawk, but it would be ignored.

The test didn't come that year, it turned out. Immigration reform failed, and Senator Santorum was not reelected.

But as far as I was concerned, trouble was surely coming. Senators Kyl and Feinstein might rail against the VWP, but as memories of 9/11 faded it was likely to be expanded, not cut back. If we didn't do something, the security hole would get bigger soon.

Luckily, we'd already begun thinking about alternatives. In 2005, at the urging of the State Department, we'd agreed to lay out a "road map" to VWP status for a new group of countries, mostly in Eastern Europe. But that effort was doomed from the start. We didn't want to expand the program as it stood and the way the law was written, we probably couldn't have done it even if we'd wanted to.

But we had to do something. In November of 2005, a storm broke in Europe over an allegation that the CIA was moving detainees from one secret prison to another in parts of Eastern Europe. European institutions, backed by Western European politicians, excoriated the Easterners for aiding this controversial tactic. It was clear that the split over the war had not been forgiven in Brussels. Countries like Poland would be made to pay and pay again for deviating from the Franco-German line on Iraq.

I stopped by Secretary Chertoff's office. We had several things to talk about. When we were done with our main business, I dropped in another idea. "You know, our best friends in Europe are getting the worst deal under VWP," I said. "I'd like to spend some time thinking of ways to get them in—and improve security at the same time." He was walking around his desk at the time. He stopped in midstride and turned with a glint in his eye. He pointed a thin finger at me and with a smile that was almost mischievous said simply, "Let's do that." That was all the policy guidance I needed.

The deputy secretary at the time was named Michael Jackson. A tall gray-haired workaholic from Texas, Jackson was also a gifted government official. He had worked his way up from the bottom of the bureaucracy to become deputy secretary at two different departments—Transportation and Homeland Security. His easy Texas twang and aging athlete's spare tire hid a canny political mind.

He, too, could see the trap about to spring. He called me and my deputy, Paul Rosenzweig, into his office not long after my conversation with the secretary. "The road map," he said, "is a road to nowhere. I feel like we're just stringing these folks along." He asked the policy office to develop a series of options for completely rethinking the VWP

program. The secretary's three-word guidance was going to become a full-fledged DHS initiative.

But this was not a problem we could fix under the law as it stood. Written to keep illegal dishwashers out of the United States, the law set a host of requirements for VWP status that had nothing to do with security. If consular officials in a country turned down more than 3 percent of the visa applications that they received, the result was fatal for the country's VWP candidacy. The theory was this: consular officials usually turn down applicants because they fear the applicants really intend to immigrate to the United States illegally. So countries with a high visa refusal rate are countries that may send us too many illegal immigrants.

That may be true. You could argue about what the exact cutoff should be, and you could object that countries were being graded on consular officers' perceptions and not actual conduct. But those arguments weren't our concern. The big problem was that the law focused mainly on immigration risk. It failed to do anything about security risk.

Congress had sprinkled a bit of security over the program after 9/11, saying that no country could stay in the VWP unless it adopted secure electronic passports with biometric identifiers. But resistance even to this modest requirement was fierce. The deadline had to be extended by a year, to 2005, and then again to 2006. Even with two extensions, some countries were not able to deploy the new passports on schedule.

It had worked in the end. More than two dozen countries had raised their passport security standards in order to stay in the VWP club. Why not do that on a much larger scale, we asked? If countries would revamp their passports to stay in the club, surely they'd improve security even more to get in the club in the first place. We could re-engineer the VWP to screen for terrorists as well as dishwashers. We could ask VWP candidates to offer reasonable security measures as part of the VWP negotiation. Those measures would set a new security bar for participation in the program. Once the bar was set, the rest of the club members could be held to the same standard.

Outside the department, the world was divided between those who hated the VWP and wanted it closed down immediately and those who wanted it expanded as soon as possible. We had to assemble a coalition of the middle. The expansionists, we figured, couldn't get past the VWP haters without accepting our security measures. And the VWP haters might get no security measures at all if they didn't accept our view that the measures should be tied to expansion. We were a small part of the debate, not strong enough to prevail on our own. But by carefully shifting our weight from one side to the other, we could provide the crucial swing vote that shaped the final outcome. That was my hope, at any rate. But if either the VWP haters or the expansionists gained a decisive advantage in Congress or the administration, the leverage we were using to set new security standards would be gone; we'd fall off one side of the tightrope or the other. We would need luck, determination, and leadership.

Working quickly, my office pulled together the elements of a traveler security program. At the top of the list was information. We could not continue to let travelers hop on planes in Europe without giving DHS enough information to decide whether they ought to be allowed into the country. We had to know who was coming. Our only sources of traveler information right now were provided by the airlines, and the European Commission was still trying to cut off that data flow. Well, they couldn't have it both ways. If they wanted to be part of the VWP, they would need to agree to better data sharing. We finally settled on three measures that would give us the kind of information we could get from a visa program—without the hassles and endless queues created by the visa system.

First, we'd set up a website to collect information directly from the traveler. That would let us control the kind of information we were gathering, rather than depending on what the airline reservation clerk decided to write down. It would also allow us to identify a suspect traveler in time to tell him that he couldn't come to the United States—thus keeping him off the plane and making it harder for al Qaeda to carry out transatlantic plane bombings.

As a bonus, it would even make the traveler's life easier, since the website could be a substitute for the aggravating forms he'd otherwise have to fill out with a borrowed pencil on the arm of his seat while the plane was landing. We even had a name for the system (one we borrowed from our Australian friends, who already had a similar program up and running). It would be the ETA, or Electronic Travel Authorization.

Implementing the ETA wouldn't actually require anything from our VWP partners, other than restraint and understanding. But knowing who was coming was just part of the job. We also needed to know who *shouldn't* come. And for that, we needed information from the traveler's home country. We needed to know which of their citizens they considered a terrorism risk. And we needed a way to find out whether someone coming to the United States had committed crimes at home.

These items seemed almost embarrassingly obvious. But the State Department had been trying for years to get other countries to share lists of terrorists with us, and their successes could be counted on the fingers of a single hand. When drivers are stopped by highway patrolmen in this country, their criminal records can be quickly obtained from other states—and from Canada. But when a traveler was stopped at the border, not a single VWP country had agreed to tell the United States whether he had a criminal record.

Imagine: Even if a border agent is suspicious of a man who says the young boy traveling with him is his nephew, he would never know the man was a convicted sexual predator at home. DHS had no idea whether the traveler it was inspecting had been convicted at home of smuggling drugs or of committing terrorist attacks. That had to be fixed.

Finally, as always, screening for risky travelers would fail if terrorists could switch identities at will. So we would need a second generation of protections against passport fraud—both better security for the passports and better reporting of lost and stolen passports. To deal with the threat to transatlantic flights, we added provisions to strengthen airport security, air marshal cooperation, and other safeguards we cared a little less about. We knew enough about negotiation not to ask only for the things we had to have.

In exchange for these security measures, we proposed to relax the strict 3 percent refusal criterion in the law—essentially taking a bit of risk on the immigration front to get a lot of new protection on the terrorism front. Without that relaxation, none of the Eastern Europeans would qualify for VWP. In 2005, Poland had a visa refusal rate above 25 percent, while Latvia's was nearly 22 percent. The rates were coming down fast in many countries, but getting below 10 percent would be an accomplishment; 3 percent was, for most of our allies, but a distant dream.

We knew what we wanted. But we didn't know whether we could get it. Like any tightrope act, this proposal would be at risk right to the end. If it hadn't been fully executed by the end of the administration, it could be delayed or the security measures could be watered down.

That shouldn't be so hard, we thought. After all, the president had been sworn in for a second term just that year. The administration had more than three years to run.

But in those years we had a lot to do. First, we needed to make sure the Eastern Europeans were as eager as we thought—and as willing to take security seriously as we hoped. Then we had to get our security measures through the same National Security Council and interagency process that was fighting us on PNR. Then we had to get Congress to adopt the same balanced proposal we were advancing in the interagency. And once Congress acted, if it did, we'd have to negotiate something like two dozen international agreements at the same time we were launching an unprecedented Web-based travel authorization application capable of handling millions of transactions a year.

Suddenly, three years didn't look like much time at all.

Petr Kolar, the Czech Republic's ambassador to the United States, is a bookish man with the mild and friendly air of a college professor. Kolar had barely finished school when the Communists fell. His timing was good. Untainted by service in the old regime, he moved easily from academia to stints in the Czech foreign ministry. He became a

confidant of the Czech prime minister, who sent him to Washington. That turned out to be a wise move.

The Czechs are a proud people who spent most of the twentieth century under one autocratic boot or another. Austro-Hungarian emperors, Nazi *gauleiters*, and Soviet apparatchiks all took turns ruling the Czechs.

None found the job particularly comfortable.

Even today, the Czechs are prone to insisting at inconvenient times that their allies actually live up to their high-minded diplomatic pronouncements. That's understandable; twice in the twentieth century the West gave strenuous verbal support to Czech democrats and then stood idly by while first the Nazis and then the Soviets crushed them.

For Kolar, the Czech Republic's absence from the visa waiver program was a last vestige of the Iron Curtain. It had to go. He pulled together the rest of Eastern Europe in the hope that they could achieve the goal more quickly as a group.

Kolar developed a close relationship with Paul Rosenzweig, my deputy. Kolar kept prodding for action, but he seemed to understand that the world had changed on 9/11, and that security concerns about the program could not be dismissed. Rosenzweig trusted him. So, once we had our wish list of security measures, Rosenzweig urged that we ask Kolar for a confidential assessment: Would the Eastern Europeans be able to accept these measures as the price for VWP?

They met one afternoon at the Starbucks on New Mexico Avenue, near the department's headquarters. With him, Rosenzweig brought our wish list of security requirements.

Kolar took the draft list away with him. A few days later he called Rosenzweig to tell him that by and large the security requests were feasible; no promises, but they could form the basis for substantive discussion. We knew that we were in shouting distance of a successful negotiation.

But we knew that our hardest international talks didn't take place overseas. Once again, the toughest negotiations would be inside the government.

We knew there would be no difficulty persuading the National Security Council or the other cabinet departments that the visa waiver program should be expanded. President Bush felt a deep connection to the newly independent Eastern European states that had backed his campaign against Saddam Hussein when older allies turned against him. The National Security Council would be on board.

The State Department, too, wanted to stop requiring visas in these states, both because they saw how it hurt our reputation and for a more practical reason. All those visa-processing consular officers took up valuable embassy office space and distracted ambassadorial attention from more interesting diplomatic issues. The Department of Defense would also be glad to do something for their brothers in arms.

Justice, too, would favor easing VWP standards. The department was used to supervising the immigration agencies, which had been part of its domain until 2003, and it was usually willing to sacrifice immigration interests to improve prosecutorial and law enforcement relations. Indeed, there were press reports that Justice and State had already slipped up to Capitol Hill to offer clandestine support to the Santorum bill—cutting DHS out of the process because they knew we'd never support a VWP expansion that did not improve security.

Everyone, in short, would be pleased to expand the VWP. That was the problem. At the level of bureaucratic interest, all the other players would be willing just to surrender to the exponential logic of international travel. But our job was to guarantee that the border failures of 9/11 wouldn't be repeated. We were alone in wanting to tie expansion to the new security measures.

That would be the battleground.

We had two advantages in the battle. The first was a short chain of command and superb top cover. Chertoff and Jackson were the smartest leadership duo in the cabinet. We briefed them, and they at once saw the logic of the principal security measures. We knew they'd back us up all the way.

The second was the rest of the team. Rosenzweig was committed to winning the fight against terrorism. Stout, balding, and ebullient,

he wore the bow ties favored by men who are proud of their quirks and independence. He was loyal, smart, and one of our fastest writers, a crucial skill in interagency fights where words are weapons.

He was too high-ranking to kick off the interagency scrum. For that I chose a young and talented lawyer who had already served at the Justice Department as well as in private practice. Nathan Sales was a thin, intense lawyer whose cowboy boots were a clue to his spirit. He was a fighter with a sharp mind. If he couldn't fight terrorists, I figured, he would gladly settle for fighting the National Security Council staff.

Sales drafted our proposal. Chertoff and Jackson blessed it. We took it to the interagency.

Unlike our PNR proposal, this initiative met with cautious interest rather than determined resistance. DHS had for so long simply said "no" to VWP expansion that the other players were delighted to hear us say, "Yes, but ..." And, like good negotiators, they first wanted to pocket our "yes;" there'd be time enough later to water down our "but."

And that's how it went. As we negotiated over the precise nature of the legislation, time and again the National Security Council staff or the Justice Department would suggest that maybe we didn't need to include all the security measures. That could be left to Congress, they suggested. Or perhaps the security measures could just be "factors" for the administration to keep in mind while expanding the program. Anything but a clear, straightforward statement that the security measures were as crucial as the expansion. We had to fight for the security half of the package at every turn.

This was the highest of high-wire acts. Like a man on a tightrope, we had to keep the proposal balanced as we moved forward. Over and over again, from Sales to Chertoff, the DHS representatives insisted that we could not support expansion of the VWP without closing its security holes. I'd like to think that we were persuasive, but we also owed a lot to Senators Feinstein and Kyl. In the current climate, we said, this bipartisan pair would kill any proposal for expanding VWP unless we could show a net gain for security. Many senators, particularly the Homeland Security committee leaders, Senator Susan M.

Collins and Senator Joseph Lieberman, were skeptical about expansion but open to persuasion. Only if DHS could make a heartfelt security case for expansion would we be able to persuade the Homeland Security committee's leadership. And we wouldn't be persuasive if the interagency compromised away the security features of the plan.

Dan Fried, a wily lifer in the Foreign Service who had risen to become assistant secretary of state for Europe, was the first to realize that the game had changed. State had tried pushing a reluctant DHS into adopting individual "road maps" to VWP status for candidate countries; when that failed it had tried getting the same result from Congress without telling DHS. Nothing had worked.

Fried had served on the NSC and spent years in Poland, eventually rising to become U.S. ambassador there. He knew the region, he knew the issue, and he knew the Hill was deeply split between hardliners and expansionists. DHS's proposal to link expansion and security measures offered the first new idea after years of deadlock. Still, it was a hard idea to swallow—not least because of where it came from.

From the moment of its creation, DHS had been State's adversary. At the outset, State barely prevented Congress from transferring its consular service to the new department lock, stock, and barrel. And we were constantly complicating State's diplomacy, either demanding more of foreign nations on the security front or sending their most prominent citizens to hard-nosed secondary inspections at the border. Worse, DHS was still building its international capability, from nothing. The department's reputation for international follow-through was not good. Even if we were sincere, Fried wondered, could we deliver?

In the end, Fried decided to take a chance on the DHS proposal. Perhaps he figured that State could always step in if we stumbled. In any event, he agreed to the essence of the idea—legislation that would both set new security standards and relax the 3 percent refusal standard that stood in Eastern Europe's way.

Once State was on board, the way was clear, though both Justice and NSC kept trying to water down the security measures.

The president seized on a November 2006 trip to Estonia to announce that he was sending Congress a new approach to VWP expansion.

We were now launched on a very public high-wire act. The other end of the wire was far away. We needed legislation, followed by dozens of agreements, not to mention a new computer system. And we'd burned a year of the president's second term—a third of the time we had—just getting the interagency on board.

Actually, it was worse than that. During that year, the American people had gone to the polls. After four years when Republicans controlled both houses of Congress as well as the presidency, they'd had enough, electing Democratic majorities to both the Senate and the House. Now, campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination also shifted into high gear. The outgoing President Bush had a whiff of lame duck about him. Anything on his legislative agenda was likely to get a cold shoulder and a slow walk.

This was going to be a squeaker.

VWP reform would require legislation. We knew that. But members of the executive branch are always wary of Congress. Football coach Woody Hayes, it is said, used to defend his conservative ground game with the aphorism, "There are three things that can happen when you throw a pass, and two of them are bad."

That's how we felt about going to Congress. If we asked for legislation, a lot of things could happen, and most of them were bad. We could lose, of course, but almost worse would be to get a win that upset the balance between security and expansion.

We had no choice, however, and no time. Early in January 2007, Rosenzweig and Sales went to the Hill to brief the Senate staff. We had legislative language and a rough consensus from the interagency on what should be in the bill. The early reaction was as good as we could hope. Senators Feinstein and Kyl were opposed, as expected, but the crucial Homeland Security leaders—Senators Lieberman and Collins—were open to the idea.

Then we got lucky. The new leadership of Congress announced that it was going to adopt legislation implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission.

This was an odd thing to be doing in 2007. The commission had delivered its report in the middle of 2004. It had pressed for rapid and bipartisan implementation of its recommendations, and that's what it got. By December of that year, Congress had passed and the President had signed a law to implement the commission's recommendations. But the new House leadership wanted to dramatize its view that the first law was inadequate. A second bill implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations was duly introduced with the coveted title of "House Resolution No. 1," signaling that it was a top priority in the new Congress.

Even better, the bill would go through the Homeland Security committees that we had already briefed on VWP reform. Maybe, we thought, we could hitch a ride on this powerful locomotive.

Our proposal was attracting bipartisan support. In the House, Rahm Emanuel had long favored expansion of the program. His district had a huge Polish-American population. As part of the new leadership he could provide crucial help. In the Senate, the cause was championed by Senator George Voinovich, a member of the Homeland Security committee.

There was just one problem with adding VWP reform to a bill implementing the 9/11 Commission's recommendations. The commission hadn't actually made any recommendations about the VWP. It hadn't even asked for the information sharing and other security measures we were adding to the program. But, we reasoned, it did express strong views about terrorist travel. So it wasn't too much of a stretch to suggest that maybe VWP reform ought to be part of the new legislation. Representative Emanuel, Senator Voinovich, and the Homeland Security committee's leaders agreed. Perhaps they thought it would give substance to a bill that was otherwise largely symbolic. Or perhaps they wanted to make sure that President Bush had a reason to sign the bill rather than vetoing it. Whatever the reason, all of a

sudden we found ourselves holding a ticket on the first legislative train out of the station.

Until then, we had been wary of the groups that were campaigning on the Hill for VWP expansion. We feared that they would cheerfully push for expansion without security. But once the administration's position took legislative form, it was their best hope. If anything showed the wisdom of our fight to include security measures as part of the President's package, this did. To be our allies, the expansionists had to offer at least some support for the security provisions. And they did. Energized and convinced at last that the United States was serious, Kolar and the other Eastern Europeans began mustering support from sympathetic ethnic constituencies. They made common cause with other VWP applicants (most notably the South Koreans) to expand their base, a tactical move that helped us win the support of Hawaii's tourist-conscious delegation.

It wasn't quite enough. Not everyone thought our security measures were sufficient. Senator Lieberman liked the ETA, but he didn't want VWP expanded until ETA applied to every VWP traveler. Senator Feinstein wasn't giving up either. She could see that the reforms would improve VWP security, but she wasn't satisfied that it did enough to prevent illegal immigration. That was a hot button issue in 2007. If she took to the floor to attack reform as a new avenue for illegal immigration, she might knock out the provision.

It was time to make a deal. To ease Senator Feinstein's concerns, we agreed to new conditions on expansion. No new countries would come in, we agreed, until the secretary certified that all the security measures were in operation—including the ETA. That would further reduce the time we had to get everything done, but it was good for security. If we left the hardest part of implementation to the new administration, they'd be lobbied endlessly to stall or drop the ETA. Unfortunately, when Congress drafted the provision, it inadvertently used language requiring that all our security measures had to be in place by October of 2008. Congress had cut three months from our already tight schedule.

We had a tougher time with Senator Feinstein and the immigration provisions. We didn't think that illegal immigration from Eastern Europe was that big a risk. Most Eastern Europeans could already work legally in places like the United Kingdom; how many would turn down legal work in Britain to live an underground life in the United States? But the committee was wary of the immigration issue, and of giving the executive too much discretion. Rather than dropping the 3 percent visa refusal requirement in exchange for security improvements, the committee decided that the 3 percent requirement could be waived—but only up to a maximum of 10 percent.

This was a tough blow. It meant that one of our strongest allies would be left out of the first round of expansion. Poland had gotten the reform movement rolling, and it was one of our best allies. But the refusal rate for Poles was still too high; they could not get under 10 percent before the end of President Bush's term.

The legislative train was moving; we had to take the deal if we wanted to stay on board. The tight timetable had claimed its first casualty.

And Senator Feinstein wasn't done. She had long believed that the United States should fingerprint everyone who leaves the country. If we tracked everyone who came in and everyone who left using their prints, she thought, then by process of subtraction, we'd also have the prints of people who came in but didn't leave when they were supposed to. Armed with that information, she thought, we could track them down and deport them. She insisted that we implement fingerprint exit monitoring, at least in airports, before we were allowed to expand VWP.

This was a deal killer. We weren't opposed to exit measures on principle, but identifying people on their way *out* of the country didn't have much to do with security. It was a bookkeeping measure. And it was based on a misunderstanding. First, we already had a paper-based system for recording departures. It could be better, of course, but it identified better than 90 percent of all departures. What's more, even if DHS had a dazzlingly accurate list of everyone who overstayed their visas, it didn't have anything like the resources to track down and

deport all of them. We had to set priorities. Terrorist risks and criminals were our top priorities, and we were already tracking them down using the paper system. On top of everything, the Feinstein system would be staggeringly slow and expensive to implement. We could never do it in the time remaining.

We said no. The senator insisted.

We were stuck.

Then, at the last moment, I got a call from the Homeland Security committee. Could we live with alternative language? The new language, drafted by a creative travel industry lobbyist, said that we would have to implement an exit system in airports by the middle of 2009; if we didn't, we couldn't expand the program. As I parsed it, that meant we could expand VWP until mid-2009, but the curtain would come down on additional expansion if we didn't implement air exit. That wasn't good, especially for countries like Poland that missed the first cut; and it would create a real headache for the next president, whose Homeland Security secretary would have to work overtime to get the air exit program in place by mid-2009. But in the near term, it would allow us to bring in most of Eastern Europe and set a new security standard.

Well, hell, I thought. We only had eighteen months left to get this job done. This was no time to be worrying about the next president's problems.

I took the offer.

So did the senator.

There would be no floor fight.

Despite Woody Hayes's dictum, we had put the ball in the air, and it had come down all right, battered but still recognizable. VWP reform became law in August 2007. It had gone from proposal to enactment in just eight months—a miraculously rapid legislative voyage. But we had no time to celebrate. We had only seventeen months left, and in that time we had to draft multiple standard security agreements, shunt the text through the interagency process, then bring home eight separate but simultaneous negotiations over the texts. It was a tall order.

But that wasn't all.

We also had to get the electronic approval system up and running before any country could be admitted. Designing, developing, field testing, deploying and operating a new computer program in seventeen months is well-nigh impossible. Especially for the government, which has to follow strict procurement procedures and must issue proposed and final regulations before it can actually put a program like this into effect.

Governments have a history of failure where big new computer systems are concerned. We all knew that. The managers may stay on schedule for months, then one day announce the discovery of flaws that will take months and millions to cure. Customs and Border Protection was the responsible agency, and it was better than most of the other DHS agencies at implementing programs, but that was no guarantee. I once compared the agency to a trophy wife—the implementation might be as good as you hoped, but the cost was likely to be far more than you could ever have imagined.

This time, we couldn't have any surprises. I put Kathy Kraninger in charge of overseeing the program. Kraninger is a blond wisp of a woman. She looks like the first strong breeze might waft her away. But she had brought order to the DHS credentialing programs with a combination of expertise, steely charm, and persistence that agency executives could not resist. She made an odd contrast to the burly men who dominated CBP, but she worked well with Paul Morris, the experienced program manager who oversaw the team of programmers and technicians who would build the ETA.

Morris and Kraninger had begun planning the system in the late spring of 2007, as our legislative hopes began to rise. Now with the passage of the 9/11 bill, they kicked the team into gear.

Soon, the programmers had a schedule showing that the system would be up and running by October 2008, but few of us were comforted. There were dozens of contingencies built into that schedule. If any problems arose, any at all, we were going to disappoint a lot of people very publicly: our allies and friends overseas, Secretary Chertoff, our colleagues at State and the NSC, and, most of all, the president.

Managing big government IT projects is hard, in part because the usual rules for fast government action don't apply. Usually, being able to get quick decisions from the top is an advantage, and top-level monitoring of progress is a good way to smooth the project's path. Not so with computer projects, where most of the problems come from contingencies that don't yield to the kind of help high officials can offer. Once launched, the program can't usually be speeded up by throwing more resources at it—putting nine women on the job, as they say, won't produce a baby in a month. All the top officials can do is count the contingencies and wake up in the middle of the night worrying about whether the technical managers can overcome them.

Actually, it's worse than that, because one of the keys to making progress on government computer programs is: Don't change the instructions you gave the programmers at the start. Unfortunately, the top decision makers in government are used to, well, making decisions. The more they learn about the project the more they want to decide its details. They don't like to hear that their good idea was overruled by design decisions reached four months earlier when a batch of low-ranking techs set the specs.

So when the National Security deputy adviser told me he wanted regular briefings on the progress the ETA was making, my job was a little tricky. I needed to reassure him without inviting the kind of help that turned into change orders.

I kept the briefings short.

I'd show up in his office, show him the timeline, and say, "We're still on track."

And we were. I just hoped he wouldn't ask how many contingencies were still open.

Then he wouldn't sleep any better than Kraninger or me.

While the programmers toiled in pressure-cooker anonymity, we were trying to deliver the international agreements on which we'd based our entire strategy. With somewhere between eight and ten candidate

countries and several agreements to be reached with each, just keeping track of the paper and the schedules would be a challenge.

My most experienced assistant secretary, Rich Barth, took point on the task. When I first met Barth in the early 1990s, both of us had other jobs. I was at the National Security Agency and he was a staffer at the NSC. I'd stayed in touch with him when he went off to be a senior executive at Motorola. Instead of the usual legal or liberal arts background, Barth brought a chemist's discipline to his work: problems were there to be solved, not admired. We'd lured him to DHS to manage the policy development process. For the delicate task of delivering all the deals in cooperation with the international office, Barth recruited Marc Frey, a young staffer who bore an uncanny resemblance to Clark Kent, minus the glasses.

Their task was complicated by the interagency process. As usual, negotiations with State and Justice were more difficult than with our foreign counterparts. To avoid squabbles over text, we first put forward a high-level memorandum of understanding on all of the security measures we wanted; it would be followed by a detailed set of agreements that would take longer to clear the interagency process.

To minimize conflicts and speed negotiations, we wanted all of the agreements to be as similar as possible. So Barth's team set out to nail down a standard-setting partner. Once again the Czechs were willing to lead the way. But the calendar was slipping away. Not until February 2008 did we get both the interagency and the Czechs to agree on a memorandum of understanding that could be a model agreement for the other countries.

We had eight months left.

And a lot still to do. After we signed the memorandum of understanding with the Czechs, we'd have to agree on the same principles with eight or nine more countries, and then negotiate the detailed agreements with all of them before October. With enough determination on both sides, though, we still reckoned that we could get it done.

We reckoned without Brussels.

As DHS's plan for a secure VWP unfolded, the European Commission had spent the winter quietly simmering. This was not the way it wanted events to unfold. The commission had told the Eastern European states to stand back and let it take the lead. It would use the combined might of European solidarity to force the United States to expand VWP—without any new security measures. That was its *raison d'être*, after all, and its business model. The first play in the Brussels playbook was, "Confront the United States with a United Europe; extract concessions that no one European country can obtain on its own."

Despite years of trying, that approach had gone nowhere. DHS had quietly turned aside the commission's demand for talks, saying that U.S. law required a separate evaluation of each country.

Worse, from the Brussels point of view, the Eastern Europeans seemed to be doing better on their own than the commission had been able to do on their behalf. Instead of invoking privacy to slow the U.S. initiative, they had readily agreed that sharing information about travelers would improve security on both sides of the Atlantic.

Now, with the signing of the Czech memorandum, visa-free travel was at last on the horizon. And it was met with something close to full-blown rage in Brussels.

For daring to take the initiative on VWP, the Czechs were pilloried. The commission's leaks to the press portrayed them as bad Europeans who were splitting the EU and delivering their citizens' personal data to the Americans. The commission publicly threatened to take the Czechs to court to punish them for their deviation, and the European Union summoned them to a meeting with the entire council for a tongue-lashing and a possible European repudiation of the memorandum of understanding.

The Czechs gave as good as they got. Asked to justify the decision to follow its national interests rather than the commission's wishes, Czech Interior Minister Ivan Langer could not have been more blunt.

"I am a free man, and not a slave of the commission," Langer told the press after one bruising confrontation in Brussels.⁴At DHS,

someone suggested having Langer's words printed up on T-shirts for the next U.S.-EU negotiating session on passenger name records.

Despite the leaks criticizing the Czechs for compromising European privacy, it was clear that the dispute ran deeper than that. Brussels and the new members had already lost patience with each other when DHS showed up with its proposal. A European Commission official once complained to me over wine that, "The Eastern Europeans are different. They're not like the other new member states. They just don't seem grateful that we let them in."

That wasn't inaccurate. After years under the Soviet boot, the Eastern Europeans treasured their sovereignty. In Western Europe, nationalism had been tainted by World War II. The surrender of sovereignty to Brussels could be cast as the key to avoiding a repeat of that conflict. In the East, nationalism was a secret flame that flickered behind the iron curtain until it could at last revive when the walls fell. Surrendering sovereignty to another distant capital had no great appeal for these newly freed nations.

From our perspective the European Commission's gambit was a disaster. We could not negotiate productively with the European Commission on these topics. European countries had widely varying practices where passports and airport security and information sharing were concerned. We couldn't ignore those differences, or U.S. law.

But there was more. The EU's unremitting campaign of privacy objections to U.S. policy on travel data had left a scar. DHS had no confidence that the commission would agree to cooperative arrangements or exchanges of information, even when U.S. lives were at stake. Quite the contrary. The leaks coming out of Brussels seemed to promise yet another effort to keep the United States from knowing more about the travelers who showed up at its borders.

DHS had learned its lesson from the PNR talks. We had productive, collegial relationships with the European interior ministers, who had the same interest in fighting terrorism as DHS. The commission did not. It had sown its combative approach to PNR, now it would reap ours to VWP.

Still, we were running out of time, and the whirlwind in Brussels was threatening to pull apart the entire strategy. The commission was trying to blow up the whole deal, or take over the talks, claiming that the Czechs had no authority to enter into the agreements we were seeking. It was getting backing from the countries at the core of the Union—France, Germany, Italy, and Benelux. The Czechs in turn were getting support from the East, even from countries that wouldn't be eligible this time around.

It was ugly. When the Czechs were summoned to Brussels the stakes were high. The commission wanted to take over the talks; and even if that gambit ultimately failed, the rancor could stall negotiations long enough to kill all hope of a deal.

Then Brussels overplayed its hand.

Determined to use the privacy weapon to punish the Czechs, it began suggesting that they had no authority to sign an agreement on sharing criminal information with the United States. Only Brussels could allow an agreement on that topic, commission staff argued.

This was a strike at the heart of our security strategy. To focus our enforcement on the riskiest travelers, we needed better access to foreign criminal records. Turning that agreement over to the commission would kill progress on a critical security issue. But the agreement was not something we made up for the Czechs. It was a carbon copy of the agreement that Secretary Chertoff had worked out with Wolfgang Schaeuble, Germany's interior minister. The deal had cemented their friendship with substance, and it was dear to both men's hearts. When we told our German counterparts that Brussels was playing the privacy card and questioning their landmark deal, they were visibly displeased.

That was the turning point. Not long after, the EU met in Brussels to decide whether to discipline the Czechs or let them go their own way. According to second hand reports, at the showdown meeting the German representative broke ranks with the commission. Without German support, the European Union could not muster a consensus to bring Eastern Europe to heel.

We offered an olive branch as well, agreeing to talk to the European Union on two topics—a small issue where it clearly had jurisdiction and, in a triumph of hope over experience, the sharing of EU enforcement data. The European Union did have some data on visa and refugee applications; finding ways to share information to reduce fraud would be good for both of us, we thought.

By the middle of March, when it was clear that the EU's power play had failed, it accepted our offer and then more or less dropped from sight. Despite several efforts on DHS's part, no progress was made on the issues ceded to the EU. Since none of them were central to our security concerns, the lack of progress was disappointing but would not stall reform. The only concrete result of the consultations was that we agreed to change the name of the system from ETA (which evoked the initials of a Basque terror group) to Electronic System of Travel Authorization, or ESTA.

We were back on track.

Except that now we only had seven months left.

And while we had been focused on the memorandum of understanding and the drama in Brussels, the interagency process was grinding toward gridlock over the detailed agreements.

With Brussels back on the sidelines, the candidate countries had quickly signed on to the memoranda of understanding. Now we needed to complete the detailed agreements that would define more particularly what information would be shared, in what manner and by whom. DHS wanted those protocols complete before the expansion took place. Only by negotiating detailed protocols could we avoid lingering disagreements and get enforceable commitments.

But now the Justice Department was balking. DHS had come up with the proposal for criminal data sharing because we needed the data for evaluating travelers. Justice was glad to share data with other countries. But it wanted to keep DHS from doing the same.

Its argument was a convoluted take on the principle of reciprocity—the notion that we shouldn't ask other countries to do things for us

that we wouldn't do for them. Justice claimed that under U.S. law, border inspections aren't always treated as law enforcement operations for purposes of disclosing criminal convictions. So Justice wouldn't always be able to give criminal conviction data to foreign border inspectors. For the sake of reciprocity, Justice argued, DHS border inspectors should be forbidden from getting criminal information from the authorities in other countries. This was laughable. Our allies weren't insisting on importing U.S. law into every aspect of the deal. All they wanted was a rough reciprocity that would give them information they actually needed.

I wondered again if some of Justice's fault finding and obstruction had a deeper cause. Until DHS came along, foreign interior ministers had only one counterpart in the United States—the Justice Department. But in some ways, DHS's role was closer to that of an interior minister than Justice's. As DHS expanded its contacts abroad, even when it used its contacts to help Justice, the Justice Department's international staff couldn't help but feel crowded. Perhaps its insistence that DHS was doing everything wrong was a natural reaction to the fear of losing turf. Certainly, cutting DHS out of criminal data exchanges would put Justice back at the center of the international law enforcement; we suspected that was a more potent motivator than some abstract notion of reciprocity.

Whatever the reason, Justice continued to insist that the criminal data-sharing agreement couldn't be executed as we'd written it. We tried arguing that Justice was wrong about U.S. law. It made no sense to read the law as denying criminal records to border officials, even for early screening decisions. But Justice insisted that its position was driven not just by law but also by concern for privacy and civil liberties. Prosecutors could use the data freely, of course; the FBI could use the data, too; hell, highway cops in every corner of the country could see the data every time they stopped someone with a broken taillight. But letting DHS use the data to screen travelers as they crossed the border—well, that raised serious privacy concerns. This was evidently a wall the prosecutors could live with.

The summer was nearly over. Rich Barth pressed me to yield. Justice must have thought that the ticking clock would bring us around—or that the buzzer would sound and we'd lose the deal entirely. The countries we were negotiating with had to see text right away. We were weeks from the deadline. Negotiations couldn't begin until we told our partners what we wanted. And we couldn't do that without an interagency agreement.

I was willing to take this one to the mat, though. Trying to isolate Justice, I called Dan Fried at the State Department. "Isn't this the deal you proposed three years ago?" he said to me. "You've done what you promised. There's no reason to change the rules now." We were still deadlocked, but Justice was the lone holdout.

Finally, the NSC took fright. It had always been more interested in VWP expansion than in the security improvements. Time was up. If the deadlock continued, NSC feared, expansion would be at risk.

The NSC staff set a deadline for DHS; if we didn't reach agreement with Justice right away, they would come down on Justice's side. In fact, they threatened to push VWP expansion through without the criminal information sharing protocols.

Close as we were to the finish, the tightrope walk was not over. We still might get visa expansion without adequate security.

But DHS still had one last advantage—short lines of communication. I walked down to Chertoff's office and briefed him on the NSC's threat. He understood the stakes. He refused to buckle. Under the new VWP law, he said, new nations could not be admitted to the program unless he personally certified that visa expansion would not jeopardize American security interests.

"There are a couple of people who can instruct me to make that certification," he told me, "but none of them are staffers at the National Security Council. And none of them are likely to think that the criminal data agreement should be dropped."

Told of the secretary's position, NSC blinked. They instead pushed Justice into a compromise. It was August by then, almost too late. But we had a free hand at last.

It was up to Barth and his team to deliver.

August slipped into September. The heat was on. We needed everything signed and sealed by mid-October. We broke our staff into teams so we could negotiate with several countries at the same time. One by one, our counterparts began signaling that we were close to a deal. But there were problems everywhere. Every country has different criminal procedures; different privacy rules; different requirements for approving international agreements. Some of the obstacles were substantive, some were procedural, but any of them could prevent us from signing the countries up by October.

In the end, two countries missed the deadline. Tiny Malta had trouble keeping up the pace—and had not been a negotiating priority. And Greece had booted its chances months earlier. It had failed to take the security provisions seriously, perhaps hoping that European solidarity would make a security agreement unnecessary.

The rest made it. Barely. On October 17, 2008, in a Rose Garden ceremony, President Bush announced the expansion of the Visa Waiver Program. He announced that effective November 17, citizens of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, and South Korea would be allowed to travel to the United States without a visa. Malta was added a few weeks later. The Greek ambassador attended, glowering amid the smiles. It was the one sour note on a sweet day.

All we needed was a computer system.

One month later, on November 17, we turned on ESTA in test mode. Czech Deputy Prime Minister Alexandr Vondra and Interior Minister Ivan “Not-a-Slave-of-the-Commission” Langer flew on the first flight from Prague to New York. Barth and Kolar were proudly there to greet them as they got off the plane. A few days later, at a celebration marking Latvian Independence Day, the Latvian ambassador proudly announced that the violinist who was performing had arrived, visa-free under the new program, from Riga.

It looked as though we had made it to the end of the tightrope. Except for ESTA. In test mode, it could process a few dozen new

VWP travelers from Eastern Europe each day. Come January 2009, when the system went live it would have to apply to everyone traveling under the VWP program—twenty million of them a year.

And so, from November to January we waited with bated breath. Every day Kraninger would bring in the statistics on ESTA's performance. Every day we saw improvement. And glitches—problems in translation, problems in operation, and problems in decision making.

Day by day, CBP fixed the glitches and expanded the system. We started taking advanced ESTA applications from the other VWP countries that would be covered by the system in January. Meanwhile we ran stress tests on the system to assess its stability. All seemed to be ready.

Finally on January 12, we turned the switch and ESTA went live for everyone coming to the United States without a visa—more than 400,000 arrivals each week.

It worked. For the first time since the 1980s, American border officials knew who was coming to the United States in time to say “no” or to flag some travelers for closer scrutiny.

We were done.

Four working days later, President Bush was out of office, and so was I.

We could not have cut it finer.

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