

## **Immigration agency lost track of 111,000 files; The GAO says that as many as 30,000 citizenship applications were wrongly processed without them.**

The Philadelphia Inquirer

November 30, 2006 Thursday

Copyright 2006 Philadelphia Newspapers, LLC All Rights Reserved

**The Philadelphia Inquirer**

Found on Philly.com

**Section:** NATIONAL; Pg. A11

**Length:** 387 words

**Byline:** Spencer S. Hsu, Washington Post

### **Body**

---

U.S. **Citizenship** and **Immigration** Services has **lost track** of **111,000 files** in 14 of the **agency's** busiest district offices and **processed** as **many as 30,000 citizenship applications** last year **without** the necessary **files**, congressional investigators have reported.

The Government Accountability Office, Congress' audit arm, conducted the review at the request of Sens. Charles E. Grassley (R., Iowa) and Susan Collins (R., Maine) after U.S. authorities granted **citizenship** in 2002 to a man **without** checking his primary **file**. The **file**, which was **lost**, indicated ties to the extremist Islamic group Hezbollah.

"It only takes one missing **file** of somebody with links to a terrorist organization to become an American citizen," **said** Grassley, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. "We can't afford to be handing out **citizenship** with blinders on."

Collins, head of the Senate Homeland Security Committee, noted that some of the Sept. 11 hijackers entered the United States legally, disappearing until the terror attacks. She called it "unthinkable" that the U.S. **immigration** system could still grant **citizenship** to a potential terrorist "simply because **they** can't find the person's **file**."

An **agency** official **said** that workers probably checked most of the **files** but failed to make note of it.

The **GAO** report, dated Oct. 27 and released Tuesday by the senators, underscored long-standing problems at the **agency**, which was created out of the **Immigration** and Naturalization Service and is expected to bear the brunt of administering new rules if Congress overhauls **immigration** policy.

The \$1.8 billion **agency** handled 7.5 million **applications** for **immigration** benefits in 2005. It awarded a five-year, \$150 million contract in August to begin digitizing 55 million "alien **files**," or A-**files**, but for now it still relies on paper **files**.

The **GAO** found that the **agency's** workers failed to record A-**file** use in **processing** 30,000 of 715,000 naturalization cases last year, or 4 percent of cases. The **GAO** also found that as of July 27, **Citizenship** and **Immigration** Services' electronic **tracking** system reported that **111,000** A-**files** were **lost** in the 14 offices that manage two-thirds of naturalization cases.

Immigration agency lost track of 111,000 files; The GAO says that as many as 30,000 citizenship applications were wrongly processed without them.

Steven Pecinovsky, an agency liaison to the AGO, said workers were not required to note that they have checked A-files but would be in the future.

## Classification

---

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** CITIZENSHIP (93%); TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS (90%); TERRORISM (90%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (90%); IMMIGRATION (89%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (79%); SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK (77%); INVESTIGATIONS (77%); GOVERNMENT CONTROLLERS & AUDITORS (77%); TERRORIST ATTACKS (75%); HEZBOLLAH (75%); PUBLIC POLICY (72%); MUSLIMS & ISLAM (70%); NATIONAL SECURITY (69%); HIJACKING (69%); RELIGION (55%)

**Organization:** US CITIZENSHIP & IMMIGRATION SERVICES (92%); US GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (58%); HEZBOLLAH (57%); US DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY (56%)

**Industry:** GOVERNMENT CONTROLLERS & AUDITORS (77%)

**Person:** SUSAN COLLINS (72%); CHUCK GRASSLEY (72%)

**Geographic:** UNITED STATES (93%)

**Load-Date:** November 30, 2006