

INS unlikely to meet student-tracking deadline

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Body

Washington --- The government may miss a Jan. 30 **deadline** to establish a system for tracking foreign college students, federal officials warned Wednesday.

Janis Sposato, deputy commissioner of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, told a House subcommittee that her agency had made "considerable progress" on the Internet-based system to monitor more than 500,000 foreigners who study at the U.S. colleges and trade schools each year.

She conceded, however, that the **INS** was still struggling to write regulations for the program. She also said it is uncertain whether inspectors could visit all of the participating schools to verify that they are legitimate educational institutions.

Cox Washington Bureau

Congress ordered the agency to set up the \$37 million monitoring system by next Jan. 30 after it was discovered that three of the Sept. 11 hijackers had student visas. Two had visas for pilot training and a third for English language classes.

The tracking system requires schools to enter information about each foreign student and to notify the government if one fails to appear for classes.

Glenn Fine, the inspector general for the Justice Department, raised doubts about how complete the new system will be. "We continue to believe that full implementation is **unlikely** by Jan. 30, 2003," he told the congressional committee.

The **INS** database on the thousands of participating schools is filled with inaccuracies, Fine said. He said his office checked out 200 of the schools and found that 86 appeared to have closed and, among the rest, 56 were listed with incorrect addresses or names.

Sposato said that if the **INS** fails to inspect all of the participating schools, then the agency will concentrate on the "high risk" ones, such as flight schools and language schools. She also said some schools might have to continue using paper-based visa forms if they can't enter student information into the computer system.

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