

Baja Bush Pilots
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May 8, 2009



To all BBP Members/flying public

On July 17, 2009, I sent a letter to the Director of eAPIS regarding the many concerns that we have either have experienced or anticipate being a problem.

Yesterday, I got a phone call from Eric Rodriguez, the person responsible for implementing eAPIS who wished to address my letter and what the Department of Homeland Security planned to do.

The one and one-half hour conversation was very positive and I feel that DHS has a good feeling regarding our concerns. In addition to indicating what action was being taken, I was asked for my opinion on several matters, primarily regarding the ability to have staff available to answer a call 24/7 when requesting landing rights for entering the country.

There were several other issues that we discussed in addition to what was in the letter. The following is my report as to what we should expect in the way of changes over the next period of time.

With these changes, I feel very strong that the eAPIS program will be much simpler and user friendly. I wish to thank Erik as well as his management for listening, understanding, and responding in a positive manor.

Sincerely
Baja Bush Pilots

Jack McCormick
President

(Note, items in normal text are from my original letter, items that are marked bold is the results of the discussions via telephone yesterday)

Item 1:

I am herby requesting a six-month extension before making eAPIS mandatory so that there is time to research and make changes to the product as well as to better prepare the flying public for eAPIS

This will not happen. The time line for mandatory compliance has already passed and there cannot be any more extensions.

Item 2:

“That the 24 Hour Emergency Contact Information” data be saved.

In almost every case, the pilot will have the same emergency contact. DHS’s response when requesting this in the past is that this has to be filled out every time so that DHS is assured that the information is correct.

This data will be saved however, you will have to confirm that the information is correct by clicking a “check box” that confirms the information is correct. Under review and development

Item 3:

“Address While in the United States” data should be saved

This is another data field that should be saved. In almost every case, the crew is US based and the address is their home, and it remains the same.

This data will be saved however, you will have to confirm that the information is correct by clicking a “check box” that confirms the information is correct. Under review and development

Item 4:

That passenger records be retained (just like the crew data)

I have about five persons who travel with me and very little others. This is the case with most pilots. I am hearing that people are doing a work around by making the four or five persons crew, which is saved. It would be good to set up the Passenger records to save just as the Crew records are saved.

These records will be saved just as crew is now saved. Under review and development

Item 5:

Change a hyperlink.

On the Arrival Permission email, you are told to go to www.cbp.gov to get the specific port information. It would be much better to provide the hyperlink that indicates to go to <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/contacts/ports/>, which dumps right into the Port telephone list.

This is a software challenge for DHS however, it is felt that it can and will be done. And they indicate that their first choice for the solution would be to list the phone number(s) on the permission reply so that you will not have to have a list of all CBP Port of Entries. If that becomes a challenge, they will link to the address listed above which gives you a listing of every Port of Entry. Under review and development

Item 6

That there is assurance that calls to the port of entry will be answered

There is still a major problem that even if we have the correct telephone number and the port is staffed, the call might not be answered. This is primarily caused because there might be only one officer at the port and he/she could be on the ramp checking in an aircraft or, having lunch, etc. And when there is more than one officer at a port, many times both officers will come out to do the inspection which again leaves the phone unanswered.

And if the port is not staffed, the phone will ring with no response.

We have made several suggestions including that all calls be made to a district office which is staffed 24/7 as well as one national number for requesting permission. We have been told that this was not possible.

Another solution would be to indicate on your website under Port Information that if the phone is not answered at the airport, call the General Phone number however, you must remember that these calls are made from third world countries and making one call can be hard, the second is sometimes much harder.

I have provided a “snapshot” of what the information you provide.

Please note that there is a telephone number listed for the “Facilities and Crossing”, Nogales International Airport however there is no direction as to who to call if the airport telephone is not answered.

I did call Nogales Airport at 4:00 A.M. this morning and the telephone was not answered. I then called the General Information Service Port number and the call was answered. I questioned the person who answered as to if I could request landing rights from that number and she indicated that yes, when no one is at the airport, I should call the main port office.

I asked her if this was the standard operating procedure with all the Districts and she indicated that she did not know however, that is how her District operated. (it was a very pleasant conversation, her name was Officer Ortiz)

The best solution would be that all (airport) Port telephones were set up so that after a certain number of rings, the call would transfer to the district office where there are people there 24/7. This is simple and would take care of a major concern.

This was a point of major discussion. It was agreed that this needed attention and change. DHS is looking at several solutions. One would be that DHS sets up a national number for requesting landing rights if your Port of Entry is closed.

Another would be to provide the number that you can call within the District that the port is located that is staffed 24/7. And the last solution which I am pushing for is that if you call your chosen Port of Entry and the phone is not answered, after a predetermined number of rings, it the call transfers to a telephone within the District that the port is located that is staffed 24/7. Under review and development

Item 7

That USBP form 178 not be required once eAPIS is in effect

I have been told by Eric that this form, by law, will not be required however CBP Officers at several Ports indicate that they need more information than eAPIS provides and that we will always be required to provide form 178 upon arrival.

After May 18, USBP form 178 will not be required.

Item 8:

That the time-out period be increased

I have been in the process of filling out an eAPIS and have been interrupted or, had to get more information to continue. When returning, I have been “timed out” and have had to go back out, re-enter my password, and pick back up.

This is part of Government security and is not under the control of DHS. This will not change

Item 9

That when you close eAPIS, eAPIS closes

We find that when you close eAPIS, it really does not close for about 15 minutes. You can go back in with the computer that you closed it with but, if you try to access your account on a different computer, you cannot access your account.

This is a non-issue. I have not been able to replicate this situation.

And in additional conversation:

Item 10

After a period of time, your password is voided and you must get another one.

eAPIS, along with many other programs that the public can access in government software, is designed that your password must be changed every six months. This is part of Government security and is not under the control of DHS. This will not change

Item 11:

That to receive email from some foreign locations can be difficult:

That DHS is looking at the ability to have your permission automatically written to the bottom of your eAPIS request form once you press “Submit”. With this done, we will no longer have to wait for an email as you will have permission at the same time you apply. Under review and development

Item 12:

That the CBP agent at a port of entry have the ability to edit your eAPIS.

Although not addressed in my letter, this was one of my first requests for change. With this in place, you will be able to change dates of departure and/or arrival with a call to a Port of Entry thusly eliminating the need to make a second eAPIS landing request if the arrival date changes. Under review and development

Item 13:

That eAPIS stamp much of the information from the departure request to the return request.

At this point, there is no transfer of specific data from the departure request to the return request. DHS is looking at the ability to “fill in” some of the blanks on your return request again to make the form much easier to use. Under review and development

Again, we, along with the AOPA and other flying organizations have worked hard with DHS to insure that the final eAPIS rules were something that we could all work with. The current DHS people have taken a rule and, with input from those that fly across International Borders, has or are in the process of fine tuning the final rule so that with much less effort, can continue to enjoy the pleasures that crossing borders provides us.