

**CIS Town Hall**  
**Prepared Remarks**  
September 8, 2003

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**Director Aguirre**

Thank you for joining me this afternoon. It has been six months and seven days since our bureau was created, and I commend each of you for your dedication and hard work during this period of transition. Together, we have built a new organization and a new identity while taking important steps to improve customer service. Thank you for a job well done.

Today, we have several important issues to cover including the A-76 competition for the IIO function. We will address this issue in-depth in a few moments. First, however, I wanted to talk to you about a few other important CIS issues.

The new fiscal year is rapidly approaching, and we must keep our eye on the ball. We have three goals, or if you will- promises.

They are to:

1. Reduce the backlog;

2. Improve customer service; and
3. Enhance national security.

I am committed to delivering on these promises.

To address the first goal, I want, and the President expects, backlog reduction with integrity. Our backlog reduction efforts were frustrated by the terrorist attacks of two years ago. Although it was critically important for CIS to implement measures that were necessary for national security, these extra measures have been extremely time consuming and costly. While these measures have had a profound negative affect on CIS operations, it goes without saying that the security of the adjudication process must not and cannot be compromised.

We are in the process of developing a new backlog reduction plan to help us achieve our 6-month processing time goal. We will submit this plan to Congress by November 25<sup>th</sup> of this year. The plan will establish specific milestones toward achieving our goal. Headquarters will provide the field with additional tools to achieve these milestones. Meanwhile, our answer is to work smarter; not cut corners, nor dilute in any way the integrity of the process. You are each key players in this effort. We will succeed based on your dedication, enthusiasm, and immigration expertise.

I have traveled the country to speak with more than half of our 15,000 CIS employees. At each stop, you have demonstrated your commitment to public service. I know that you are not getting rich doing this job. Rather, you do this work because it matters in your community and for your country. Secretary Ridge and I know this and remain your greatest advocates. We will provide you with the tools you will need to feel greater satisfaction at the end of each day.

Working with the field, Headquarters created a list of Director's Priorities. These priorities will help us, as a bureau, to improve our efficiency and meet our goals. I sent the full list to you in this week's CIS updates, but these priorities include common sense activities like reducing the lines at our offices and ridding ourselves of self-imposed requirements that only serve to delay our progress. In the course of doing your job, if you identify ways to improve our business, I encourage you to forward your suggestions to us through your chains of command.

You each know the significance of the job we have before us. We are entrusted with matters of national security, within the context of the Department of Homeland Security, while strengthening our commitment to providing world-class customer service. We are building the right team to get that job done. And, as a team, we developed core values to guide us along the way.

They are:

- Integrity;
- Respect and
- Ingenuity

As at Headquarters, core values will soon be posted in each of the field offices to serve as a daily reminder of who we are and what we strive for.

In that vein, we continue to move forward as a bureau with new ideas and programs. On September 17th, CIS will celebrate Citizenship Day across the country. This day, first celebrated in the 1950s, acknowledges the importance of U.S. citizenship and recognizes those who have become citizens over the past year. We have special citizenship ceremonies planned across the country, and this will be our first opportunity to unveil a new oath of allegiance. We anticipate that the new, more modern and meaningful wording will help our newest citizens understand better the promises that they are making to the United States.

Over the past year, there has been much discussion about what the permanent CIS organizational structure will look like. For now, we will maintain the current 3-region and 33-district structure. We believe that this approach will cause the least amount of disruption to you and to our daily business. However, we are still in a period of transition. I ask that you remain flexible in case our business needs or requirements of the Department of Homeland Security change. Today, I am releasing a new draft of our organizational chart, which primarily reflects changes that have been made at the Headquarters level over the past six months. This chart will be disseminated through your chains of command, and we will also post it to the transition site on the intranet.

The status of interim appointments is an important issue at headquarters and in the field. In the spirit of looking forward, it is time to finalize the leadership for our bureau. We will soon make dozens of field and headquarters appointments permanent.

I also want to make mention of the term-to-perm issue. We have received approval from the Office of Personnel Management to extend those District Office term employees who were facing mandatory time limits. The current FY 04 budget language provides us with greater flexibility in position management, and this should permit us to convert many term positions to permanent positions. Although we do not yet have final budget approval—it must first be passed by Congress and then signed by the President—we remain very optimistic. It is important to note that we are referring to positions. We cannot convert term employees into permanent positions without asking those employees to compete for the positions.

With regard to the A-76 process, our panel will discuss this matter in more detail, but I first want to say a few words. I want to assure you that CIS used every opportunity to present our case to DHS. The decision was made to move forward with the A-76 process, and now we must get behind this decision.

We will continue to fully support our IIOs. Your work is critical to the function of this bureau. You are at the front lines every day serving millions of customers a year. You are the face of CIS. I know that you are concerned about your jobs, your families, and your future. However,

this is a time for positive thinking. We will put our best people and resources behind winning the competition for the IIO jobs. In the meantime, I ask that you meet this challenge and continue to do an excellent job.

Today, I am pleased to announce that I have named Mike Aytes, our director of Information & Customer Service, as the Competitive Sourcing Official. In this position, he is responsible for implementing the overall A-76 process. In addition, I have asked Paul Novak, our Vermont Service Center Director, to be the Agency Tender Official. Paul will be responsible for developing, certifying, and representing the agency tender. This means that he will be leading our employees' bid for this work. Mike and Paul will discuss A-76 issues in more depth in a moment.

Before I close, I do not need to remind you that Thursday is the second anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks. On such anniversaries, it is normal to feel renewed anxiety and stress. CIS employees in New York and Washington, DC, were witnesses to traumatic acts of terrorism. They, and every CIS employee across the country, had to quickly return to work to serve our customers despite the crisis in the country. During this week of remembrance, I hope you feel pride in your service to this great nation. The Employee Assistance Program will be available this week and in the future to support our employees.

Thank you for your contributions to building U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. And, may God continue to Bless America.

### **Michael Petrucelli**

Today, I will update you on two issues: the zero tolerance memo and the branding of our new identity.

As you know, Legacy INS Commissioner Ziglar issued a zero tolerance memo to the field. This memo had its place and time. We are, however, in a different place and time. Our needs, going forward, will not be what they once were.

Director Aguirre wants ideas and action. Accountability for decisions at every level will continue to be imperative, but our guiding principles of Integrity, Respect, and Ingenuity are better suited for the tasks we have before us.

What does that mean for the day-to-day business of the bureau-- it means that we will treat our customers with respect. We will not tolerate prejudice, discrimination, fraud, or abuse. We are rescinding the zero tolerance memo, effective immediately.

By the same token, one of our guiding principles is Ingenuity. If you follow our policy and our guidance, the Director and I will stand by your decisions. We expect you to understand our guidance, and if you do not, you should ask the necessary follow-up questions through your chain of command.

It is also our sincere hope you alert us should you find policies that you believe are antiquated, or that simply do not make sense. As the Director has pointed out, it is our job to give you the tools to succeed. Our commitment to you is one such tool.

We have also received many questions from employees about what we call “branding” issues. Essentially, this refers to use of logos, flags, credentials, letterheads and other tangible pieces of our new identity.

Last month, the Department of Homeland Security determined that our abbreviation, BCIS, would officially change to U.S. CIS. In shorthand, we will refer to the bureau as CIS. By way of example, this includes press releases and advisories, internal updates, meetings and remarks.

CIS will not develop its own flag or seal. We are a component of the Department of Homeland Security, and we will use the DHS flag and seal for all official occasions, as displayed in the studio today.

In the next few weeks, you will be receiving templates for business cards, letterhead, envelopes and other official documents. We will place those materials, as well as the CIS Style Branding Guide, on the intranet. We will also disseminate electronic copies of that guide to every headquarters and field office.

Only after these critical pieces of “branding” are in place, will we begin to focus on re-branding our customer products and collateral, including items like certificates, cards, and forms. This effort will take time, and I thank you in advance for your patience and cooperation. Meanwhile, I stress that all Legacy INS and BCIS labeled collateral and products should be preserved.

I am equally pleased to announce the arrival of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman, Prakash Khatri. The Director and I have met on several occasions with the Ombudsman. We are impressed with his expertise and dedication to the mandate set forth by Congress. The Ombudsman has stressed his cooperation and enthusiasm for working with us—not against us. According to the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the Ombudsman is separate from U.S. CIS, also reporting to the Secretary through the Deputy Secretary. Prakash is in the process of establishing his office, but you can anticipate hearing his name and learning how to advise our customers on the procedures through which they may contact him.

Finally, I wish to make mention of the Director’s recent swearing-in-ceremony in the historic Indian Treaty Room of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building on August 15<sup>th</sup>. It was a special day for the Nation, the Department, our bureau, the Director and his family.

As Secretary Ridge pointed out, “What better leader for the organization that shepherds immigrants through the American citizenship process – than a man who, at age fifteen, arrived at Miami’s shore in search of a better life? Who better to incorporate the values and character only fostered by the immigrant experience into the day-to-day business of the Bureau?”

And, I add-- A man whose patriotism, dedication and enthusiasm resonate. He is the right leader, in the right job, at the right time.

Director, on behalf of your 15,000 employees, I congratulate you on your swearing-in and reiterate our commitment to you in fulfilling the mandates before us.

### **Bill Yates**

In a video message a couple of weeks ago, I talked about to you about A-76. As the Director said, our collective job now is to get behind this decision and move forward.

Today I want to tell you four things. First, that I expect you to win this competition. No one knows your job like you do, and I know you have good ideas for how we can do better. You should know that in recent years, as more complex jobs within the government have been opened to competition, government bid teams are winning 60% of the competitions. I expect you to be part of that 60%.

Second, I want to echo the Director's comments to further emphasize to you that we're committed to supporting you as you continue to do important work. Customer service is critical, and something we must improve. Thus we will continue to fill IIO vacancies. We will also continue to provide training. For example, we've already set a basic IIO training class schedule through the end of FY 2004. We set this in place this early as one way of showing that we're committed to you and to the work you do.

Third, I want to tell you that we will do everything we can to make sure you have every opportunity to win this competition. Some of you will be asked to be part of the team that develops the Government bid. We are going to put money behind your effort, and are arranging for the team to be supported by a company with extensive experience helping government teams win these kinds of competitions.

Fourth, I want to give you a little information about the roles Mike and Paul will play. A-76 is a complicated process. A lot of that process is designed to ensure that government employees have a fair chance to compete. Mike will be the 'Competitive Sourcing Official'.

The CSO is in charge of an agency's competitive sourcing work and this study. Mike will have a team of folks who will develop the statement of work and conduct the competition. He will have another team - your team - to put together the Government's bid.

Paul will be the Agency Tender Official - leading that Government bid team - your team. Paul has extensive experience as a manager, and has the qualities needed to lead your efforts.

## **Michael Aytes**

Folks, if this was an old western movie, you'd probably be picturing me as the bad guy wearing a big black hat.

But life isn't as simple as those old movies. I'm a career public servant, as is Paul. When I started in Chicago I worked side-by-side with the IIOs there.

My job here isn't to turn your jobs over to the private sector. It's to conduct a competition - to ensure that the team that runs the procurement does a good job - and to ensure Paul has what he needs to help you prepare your best possible bid.

We're faced with an aggressive schedule. We plan to make a tentative award decision on June 30<sup>th</sup> - less than 10 months away, and we have much to do between now and then.

Over the next few days we'll be putting the teams together. Some of you will be asked to be on one or the other.

Two last points. First, I also want you to know that as we go into this, we're going to take a look at how we want to do business. The last thing we want to do is go through this just to decide who will do the work the way we do it today. That's not the purpose of A-76, and that's not what we want. We have problems to solve. Your knowledge - and your effort - will serve you well as you come up with ways you can innovate and best meet our requirements.

Second, we know that you're concerned about your jobs, your families and your future. We know you need information - information about how this process will happen, about schedules, and, yes, even about what might happen if the Government bid doesn't win and there's a RIF.

There's a lot of material available on A-76, and on the mechanics of a RIF. I encourage you to become informed. Starting tomorrow there will be a new A-76 section on the intranet. Over the next few days we'll post FAQ's, the project timeline and RIF mechanics.

## **Paul Novak**

When I was asked to lead your team, I thought about saying no -- that the work I was doing was too important. But I said yes because you and the people we serve are more important.

As government employees, we're not used to the idea of competing for work. But each of us competes every day in many ways. Bill told you the odds, and they're not bad. We know the work - both the challenges and the problems. We work hard, every day, to do our best. I am confident in you, and confident that we can win - if we put our minds to it. In the coming days and weeks I'll be reaching out to some of you and asking that you take up this important work with me. I hope you'll join me. In the meantime, the best we can do is to continue to do our best.