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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives
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Washington, DC 20515-6115

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May 13, 2008

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Mr. Gene Dodaro
Acting Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The United States has begun production and implementation of electronic passports (e-passports), which contain several new security measures not found in previous generations of U.S. passports, designed to prevent the fraudulent use of passports. The new e-passports have an embedded microchip containing information that is identical to information printed in the passport, including the holder's full name, date of birth, passport number, expiration date, and a photo image of the holder. The Government Printing Office (GPO) produces these e-passports through an agreement with the Department of State.

Recently, *The Washington Times* reported national security concerns over the outsourcing of the manufacturing of U.S. e-passports to foreign companies. Specifically, the articles stated that using foreign-produced computer chips makes them more vulnerable to theft or counterfeiting. GPO, however, states that its production process is secure. Further, according to the articles, officials from GPO, the Department of State, and the Department of Homeland Security have reviewed the security issues of these foreign contractors and found that the production process is secure.

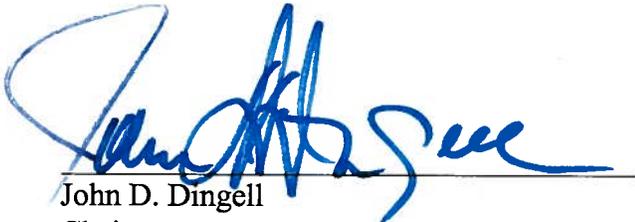
We continue to be concerned that if any part of the e-passport production chain is susceptible to diversion or tampering, a significant national security risk could occur, raising questions about the integrity of the entire e-passport program. Accordingly, we ask the Government Accountability Office to determine if this manufacturing arrangement poses a national security risk and to review specifically the following:

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1. Is it possible that the computer chips used in U.S. e-passports could be altered or forged to fraudulently enter the United States?
2. What risk could malicious code, such as viruses or Trojan horses, on the U.S. e-passport computer chip pose to national security?

The e-passport program is a key weapon in preventing terrorists from entering this country, as well as promoting the free flow of trade and commerce. It is integral to not only a number of important border security programs, but also serves as the key component of our Nation's secure identity initiatives. We appreciate your prompt attention to this important matter. If you have any questions about this request, please contact John F. Sopko, Chief Counsel for Oversight with the Committee staff, at (202) 226-2424.

Sincerely,



John D. Dingell
Chairman



Bart Stupak
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

cc: The Honorable Joe Barton, Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable John Shimkus, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations