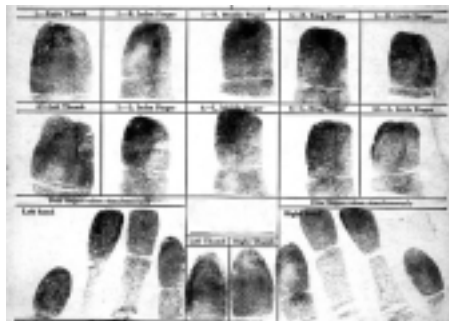


It takes 10 fingers to enter U.S. now



10 fingers and not just the two index fingers of arriving visitors. Like the two-digit fingerprinting, the new 10-digit system is electronic. There is no messy ink; arrivals just press their two thumbs against a glass, then their other fingers, a three-second process. The prints are read, coded and compared within seconds to millions of prints on file to see if the arrival is either banned from entry or a wanted person. The 10-finger system was launched November 29 at Dulles International Airport outside Washington, D.C. The process will be progressively extended to all 288 points at which people can enter the United States.

The plan is to make the 10-digit system apply everywhere by the end of 2008. The fingerprints and a photograph are taken from all noncitizens entering the United States between the ages of

14 and 79 with some exceptions. Iranians are subject to the same entry requirements as others, although Iranian officials still often talk about Iranians being singled out for fingerprinting because of an American bias against Iranians. Fingerprinting, with ink, began more than a decade ago and applied then only to Iranians and a handful of other nationalities. After 9/11, the electronic system was created and extended to most nationalities. The EU and Japan have also adopted fingerprinting requirements for new arrivals. The main drive behind the fingerprinting is the political interest in intercepting terrorists. But the main impact has been to catch criminals and stop previous immigration law violators. Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff said last week that since fingerprinting began "almost 2,000 criminal and immigration violators" have been stopped at the border based solely on the fingerprint program. He didn't mention any terrorists at all. One example he cited was of a man who arrived at Dulles airport with all his travel documents in order. The fingerprint scan showed the man at the arrival gate was not the man to whom the visa was issued. Instead, the arriving visitor was a man who had previously been arrested on drug charges and deported. He is now in jail awaiting trial, Chertoff said.

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'Kite Runner' film...

store owner or terrorist." Toub says, "I do see a change in the way the writers are writing the roles, the sensitivity they have, that people are just people." Ershadi is cast as Baba, a Kabul businessman who flees to America with his young son—played by Zekiria Ebrahimi—when the political climate in Afghanistan becomes dangerous. When director Marc Forster invited him to Kabul to read for the part, Ershadi said he didn't think he was the right person to play Baba—a towering man physically—and instead recommended another Iranian actor to the film's director. "I thought the book was fantastic, but I'm shorter than the character in the book. I'm not that big a guy. I took some pictures of my friend, and I sat down and I told Marc, 'I think I've got the right person for you. I have a picture of another Iranian actor who can do the part,'" Ershadi said. The director asked Ershadi to read a segment of the screenplay in which Baba is hospitalized. Forster said the power and simplicity that Ershadi brought during that initial reading, convinced him that he was right for the part. "The thing that is so amazing about him is that he [Ershadi] is a natural. A lot of actors rely on their technique, and he only relies on his heart," Forster said. After filming "The Kite Runner," Ershadi said he realized how different filming was in his home country versus elsewhere. "We don't have a manager, we don't have an agent, and so we don't have auditions. If a director calls you, that means they've already chosen you for the film. You go to the office just for negotiations, for the contract, that

kind of thing. But [in Hollywood] it's totally different. You have the audition. You have lots of competition. "And then the technology, the technology is totally different. Now Iran is getting better. They're starting to bring in the new technology. And the maximum crew on the set is maybe 20 or 30 persons. But here we were 200 to 300 everyday on-set. For 'A Taste of Cherry,' my first film, we were only 10 people altogether. This [filming 'The Kite Runner'] was a very big experience for me, working with this huge crew." Ershadi has not given up architecture, explaining that he developed high-rises and town houses in Vancouver for years. Ershadi moved to Canada after fleeing the Iranian revolution in the late 1970s. His children and grandchildren still live in Vancouver, but in 1991, Ershadi decided to return to Iran where he owns an art gallery in Tehran with his sister and brother. Ershadi sees some similarities between acting and architecture. "You know, both of them are art. Architecture talks about the volume, lights, those kinds of things, which you are using in film too. You know, sometimes when you are not professional, it makes it easier because you don't have to act. You don't think about acting. You're natural. Whatever you say, whatever your position—your face, your hands it comes natural." When the National Post asked him if he ever had hopes of becoming an actor before he was stopped at the red light that fateful day, Ershadi said, "Never. I was in architecture all my life. I never thought about becoming an actor, because I also thought you had to go to acting class, or something like that. At my age—I was almost 49—I was not young—49-years old, you know, it's too late to be an actor."

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Pakistan says...

government, army and intelligence agencies," said the spokesman from Waziristan, a lawless tribal region where Al-Qaeda leaders, including possibly Osama bin Laden, are alleged to be hiding. One day after Bhutto was laid to rest at her family's mausoleum in southern Sindh province, Pakistan was virtually paralyzed with most people unable to buy food or petrol, with all shops, fuel stations, banks and offices closed down. The streets of the country's main cities, Karachi, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Peshawar, were largely empty, and in many places there was evidence of violence and looting. President Pervez Musharraf ordered security chiefs to take firm action against rioters, and the interior ministry estimated that damage ran into tens of millions of dollars. "Elements who wish to exploit the situation by looting and plundering must be dealt with firmly," the Associated Press of Pakistan news agency quoted Musharraf as saying. "Some elements of criminal mentality have taken undue advantage of the situation," interior ministry spokesman Brigadier Javed Cheema told a news conference.

However, Cheema said the situation was "satisfactory" partly due to the army's presence in several hot spots. "The situation is getting back to normal rapidly and we hope that in a day or so life will return to normal in the country," he added. Analysts warned that nuclear-armed Pakistan was facing its biggest crisis since Bangladesh split from the country more than 3 years ago. "We are heading towards a very uncertain phase of politics which has the potential to plunge the country into a state of anarchy," Hasan Askari, former head of political science at Lahore's Punjab University, told AFP. The White House declined to comment on any delay of Pakistan's elections and urged Islamabad to thoroughly investigate Bhutto's killing. "The elections should be free and fair," said White House spokesman Tony Fratto. "But as for the timing, this will be something that the Pakistani authorities will have to determine." "Pakistan's interior ministry has rejected the need for external help to probe Bhutto's death. Educated at Harvard and Oxford, Bhutto first took the helm of Pakistan in 1988. She was ousted in 1990 amid corruption allegations but was premier again from 1993 to 1996. She was buried next to her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a former premier hanged by the military government in 1979.

Levinson family finds nothing



IranTimes: The wife of ex-FBI agent Robert Levinson said she received no new information about his fate during her trip to the Islamic Republic last month. Christine Levinson held three days of talks with Iranian Foreign Ministry and immigration officials in the hope of finding clues to the disappearance of her husband last March. "We came to Iran to try and find Bob and bring him home. Our trip is almost over and the miracle we were hoping for has not happened," she told reporters at a news conference held in the Swiss embassy, which represents the United States diplomatically in Iran. "I have not received any new answers about my husband," Mrs. Levinson said, flanked by her son Daniel, 22, and sister Suzi. "I still have no idea what happened to my husband," who was 59 when he disappeared. Mrs. Levinson said the husband, who retired from the FBI in 1998, had traveled to Kish island to investigate cigarette smuggling and was last seen March 8. "We still do not know where Bob is and the nightmare I and my family are experiencing will continue. I cannot express the pain we are feeling and the depths of our disappointment," she said. Just before her news conference, the Iranian government repeated that it has no information Levinson had disappeared on its territory. "We have no information to confirm this American national has gone missing in Iran," government spokesman Gholam-Hossain Elham told reporters. Iran has said it has no record of Levinson even entering the country and vehemently denies speculation it detained him. But Mrs. Levinson said, "I believe he is still here [in Iran]. His passport has not been seen anywhere else in the world." The last person known to have met her husband on Kish was Davud Salahuddin, an American-born convert to Islam previously known as David Belfield. He has lived in Iran for almost three decades since shooting Ali-Akbar Tabatabai, a former diplomat with the monarchy, in Bethesda,



Maryland, in 1980. Belfield also set fire to the Iran Times offices in Washington, D.C., several days before killing Tabatabai. Mrs. Levinson said she was still hoping to meet Salahuddin before she left Iran Sunday. She said that "logistical" reasons had prevented them from meeting so far. In the end, they did not meet. Sallahuddin has said he was talking with Levinson in his Kish hotel room last March when police burst in and arrested Sallahuddin, but not Levinson. Sallahuddin said the police were alerted by the hotel clerks who were suspicious when a black man with a foreign accent and American birthplace checked in using an Iranian ID card. Sallahuddin said the police questioned him, established who he was and released him. He said he went back to the hotel to find that Levinson was gone. Sallahuddin said Levinson had contacted him weeks earlier to ask for the meeting and was seeking Sallahuddin's help in contacting Iranian officials who might aid him with his cigarette smuggling investigation. Mrs. Levinson praised Iranian officials for their help and said, "They told me they will give complete answers when they finish their investigation." She traveled to Kish and talked with hotel and airport staff who had contact with her husband. She said she had seen her husband's signature at the Mariam Hotel and a record of him checking-out. But she said her husband's name appears on no manifests for flights leaving Kish. Levinson called his wife from Dubai on March 8 before boarding a plane to Kish. He told her he had left most of his luggage at his Dubai hotel because he would be returning in 24 hours. It was unclear if her husband's private investigation work was linked to his disappearance, she said, adding that she did not know who his client was. "It was a confidential contract," she said. Kish is a resort island with attractive beaches and diving. In contrast to mainland Iran, foreign nationals do not require a visa for short stays on Kish.

U.S. frees 10th Iranian held in Iraq

The U.S. military last month freed another of the Iranians it has been holding captive, the 10th man freed in the past two months. Iran said the man freed last month was Seyed Heydar Alavi, who had been held by the Americans since being taken captive in Sulaymaniyah in June 2004. Hassan Kazemi-Qomi, Iran's ambassador to Iraq, said Alavi's "business in Iraq was legitimate, official and carried out in cooperation with the Iraqi government." But he declined to give any specifics on Alavi's work. In the 3 1/2 years of Alavi's captivity, the government of Iran had never publicly com-

plained about his captivity. The U.S. military said Alavi was freed after it "assessed him to be no longer a threat to the security of Iraq." That was the same explanation Iran gave November 9 when it freed the first nine Iranians. The Americans said then that they were keeping 11 Iranians. So, with Alavi's release, the total should be 10. In November, however, after the nine men were freed, Ambassador Qomi said the U.S. still held 25 Iranians, including six diplomats. Last month, he said the Americans still held about 20 Iranians, including five diplomats and officials.

Prez caves in to FIFA's demands

President Ahmadi-nejad has moved to resolve the crisis with FIFA, the governing body of international soccer, by ordering his vice president to drop plans to run for president of the Iranian Football Federation in violation of FIFA rules. In a television interview, Ahmadi-nejad said, "In the interest of soccer, I have told [Vice President Mohammad] Aliabadi to step aside and let the elections take place and allow the elec-



tion of an appropriate person." FIFA has been threatening to suspend Iran from all international matches if it went ahead and made Aliabadi the federation president. The elections for a new board and new president will still have to be completed and those elected approved by FIFA before the threat is fully removed. Early this month, the Iranian Football Federation, the Iranian government's Physical Education Organization (PEO—which runs organized sports and is headed by Aliabadi), the Asian Football Confederation and FIFA (Fédération Internationale



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