A Yes, that feeds CIS.
Q Do you know anything about who gets into that database or makes changes to that RNACS database?
A It would be normally -- from my experience when I was in the district, it would be the adjudications clerical folks, based on granting or denial of benefits when they have -- they have to update the system for decisions. That's normally who would do that work.
Q So in the field offices?
A Yes, ma'am.
Q We've talked about NFTS. Have you ever heard of RAFACS?
A Yes.
Q Receipt and Alien File Accountability and Control System?
A Yes, ma'am.
Q Does that feed into the CIS?
A It did. It was -- that's what NFTS replaced. RAFACS was a system where you could only see your own files. It was -- it wasn't -- like NFTS is web-based, so I can see that you have a file in Tegucigalpa, Honduras and what shelf -- or what person has it. RAFACS would not allow that. That just would let me see what was here and only here. So now it's more of a cross-reference. You can see basically anybody's file holdings anywhere, if you inquire, or you're trying to figure out where the file is, you put in the alien number, and it will say this is sitting at the western service center or northern service center or wherever it resides so you can go in and readily request it.
Q So to the best of your understanding, RAFACS has been replaced?
A Yes. Now. And the only caveat -- and it's not that it hasn't been replaced. I'll give you an example. Effective yesterday morning, the Nebraska service center was converted to NFTS. The last remaining office in the country is Vermont, and in June, we'll finish their conversion. We've already done the training. It's just now getting the data -- you know, doing the mechanics of moving all the data from the old RAFACS system and converting it into NFTS.
Q Does that mean if an A-file is in Vermont right now, you couldn't see it? Or can you see it?
A No, I can't, because they're on the old RAFACS system.
Q So once they make the transition, you'll be able to see what's there?
A Right.
Q And they will be able to see what's everywhere else?
A Right. The only way I can tell if a file is in Vermont currently, I would go in the Central Index System, and it would show me the current file control service.
Q So NFTS links up with CIS?
A Yes, yes.
Q Can you see more in NFTS about the location of an A-file than you would be able to see in CIS?
A Yes, more specifics. See, CIS will only give you the office where it says the file is. In NFTS, it will tell me the office, and it will tell me the shelf. It's a section and a shelf number.
Q So as you subdivide your shelving unit, it could be shelf A, row 1, shelf A, row 2, and it's subdivided. So it gets a little more specific.

And our belief anyway, is that it helps provide for more rapid retrieval of the file, because each responsible party code we design -- or we suggested that it be no more than one foot of shelf -- of files, instead of the old terminal digit order filing with an entire row, you know, which would make it difficult to retrieve.

Q Have you ever heard of the RAPS, refugees, asylum, parole system?
A I've heard of it.
Q Do you know how it works with CIS?
A No, I don't work with it at all.
Q How about TRKS, Transaction Record Keeping System?
A That's a sub -- that's a subsystem within central index.
Q And then the last on my list is VIS, Verification Information System.
A Yeah, I -- I haven't worked with that at all. I mean, I know what they do, as far as when people request, you know, what the current status is, but I don't know much more about it.

Q Okay. Do you know whether CIS links up with any external systems, like the Social Security Administration?
A No, CIS, no, we don't.
Q Not the Central Index System?
A No.
Q Okay. Is it your understanding that information would go into one of these non-CIS databases, like RNACS, and then from RNACS, it would get into the Central Index System?
A Normally, in my experience, when somebody first applies for a benefit, we create the record in CIS. But then again, I know there's some systems where, based on the filing for a petition, claims uploads records based on somebody filing, we just do the piece that comes to us with -- when we do a search and there's no record, we add it to our system. I mean, I know there's some that will feed CIS, like the data share from State Department, when they issue the visa number, basically just save that number for that individual. That feeds us.

But I don't know all the other ones that do. You know, I'm used to from our side, you know, we get a file, we create it electronically, and that's how it gets in our system.
Q Let's say somebody's file is already in the system, they're a legal permanent resident.
A Okay.
Q And then they apply for naturalization and it's granted. Do you know -- would it be fair to say, then, that the information that the person has, naturalized, is going to be entered by the field office or --
A Right.
Q Would it be entered by anybody else?
A Normally, whoever does the ceremony or the adjudication. When they close the ceremony in CLAIMS 4, the information gets fed into CIS, and updates it to show now that they're no longer an LPR but they're a USC, their certificate number, normally the court number and the date of naturalization.
Q Now --
A And, of course, the office where it occurred, I'm sorry.
Q Thanks. You had mentioned that the information would be put into CLAIMS 4.
A For naturalization, yes, ma'am.
Q Why not RNACS?
A RNACS was replaced by CLAIMS 4 in the late '90s.
Q Thank you.
A And the changeover started somewhere around 1997, I believe. So nobody actively uses RNACS for naturalization cases anymore.
Q So to the best of your understanding, a change in somebody's electronic record to reflect their naturalization would be made in CLAIMS 4?
A Yes, ma'am.
Q And then that would uplink to the central Index System?
A Right. Now, I don't know if it still feeds through RNACS to get to CIS. I know it comes to CIS and it's updated. I don't know the mechanics of how.
Q You mentioned that you used to be in a field office; is that right?
A Yes.
Q Tell me when that was.
A Oh, gosh. I started in 1996 in the Seattle district office as a records technician, and I came here in 2000, I believe. I went back, and then I came back in 2004. So from '96 to about 2000, I was in the district, and then from 2002 to 2004, I was back in the district.
Q And you were doing records-related work both times?
A Yes, yes.
Q In your first position in the Seattle district office, were you physically doing data entry?
A I did data entry. I did -- I chased down more files than most people would ever want to do. Most of it was just tracking files, replacing bad bar codes at the time. We did some data entry because it was -- for us, it was a small district. So, I mean, everybody kind of worked together to do what had to be done to get the work out.
Q Did you ever do data entry when somebody naturalized?
A In RNACS, the old RNACS system, I did, back then.
Q What kind of document would your district office receive that would trigger somebody to do the data entry for a naturalization?
A At the time, obviously, the N400, which was the application for naturalization, and whatever other supporting documents they required. I don't know anymore.
Q That would --
A But the N400, I'm sorry, was the document that we used once it was adjudicated and stuff, because they already had a preexisting A-number. So the adjudicator got it, they would conduct the interview and either grant or deny or continue the case.
Once it was granted, they would come to us to close out RNACS, update it with, you know, the adjudicating officer and the status.
Q Would that status be changed in the database before the person took the oath of citizenship?
A For us, at the time, no.
Q You would wait until they took the oath of citizenship?
A Yeah, we had to.
Q How would you get the news that that had been accomplished?
A In our case -- and again, I can only speak for what we did in Seattle -- we had daily ceremonies. Well, when I say "daily," it was like four times a week, because you needed one day to try to slow down a minute.
But we did them, and then like that evening, depending on how many there were, or the following morning, we would start to update all of the records.
We also ran -- we had a unique situation. We ran a night shift, where none of the other offices really did. So when they did the ceremony in the afternoon, part of what the night crew had to do was update everything so it could be closed out before the records could go for -- to be archived.
Q That's very efficient.
A Yeah, we were.
Q Let me catch up with my outline for a minute.
Q Do you know -- I know that we've just been talking about how the Seattle field office worked with updating people's records for naturalization in the '96 to 2000 period.
Are you able to testify on behalf of CIS about how records are updated to reflect naturalization today?
A I mean, the only thing I know is when the ceremonies are closed out in C4, the data gets pushed up to CIS. That's a pretty much standard practice.
Q When you say NC 4, is that the same as CLAIMS 4?
A No, I meant to say CLAIMS 4. I'm sorry.
Q When CLAIMS 4 is closed out, then the data comes and gets loaded into CIS. It's --
A I'm curious about, for example, if somebody were to take the oath of citizenship in Seattle or Tucson -- I mean not Seattle, Phoenix or Tucson or Yuma in Arizona, whether you're familiar with how that information moves from the ceremony at the federal courthouse into a database like CIS.
Q No. I mean, I don't know the specifics of how they do it.
A The certificates, obviously, they get printed prior to the ceremony so they can have them on hand. So they have -- there's a manifest or a list of those who are going to -- scheduled to attend the ceremony on a given day. And then after the ceremony is done, it's just, I guess, a bookkeeping thing of if there were no-shows for the ceremony, you have to void out those certificates as no-shows.
Q If somebody didn't turn in their green card, they would have to have -- do a -- it's a document for lost alien registration card, because we also have to account for -- you know, if we retrieve or don't retrieve the card, you know, because you want to preclude any potential for fraud, you know. Somebody may find it and use it for their own reason.
Q You know, and then once -- again, once they get that portion straight, as far as, you know, everything back, who no-showed or if anybody was missing documents, then they close the ceremony in C 4, to my understanding, and again that will feed CIS.
Q Do you know if there's a CIS person at the naturalization ceremony for every ceremony in Arizona?
A No, I don't know.
Q When you were in Seattle, would there be a CIS person at the naturalization ceremony?
A We had a -- I mean, there were adjudication officers there. We had a clerical folks there, because, I mean, it would not be -- if it wasn't feasible for us to -- I mean, for one person to handle everybody's certificate and get it to them. So as people would come in -- and I guess for us a bigger one -- like the Fourth of July ceremony is always a big one in Seattle. We had basically broken down the alphabet so people would check in by -- you know, as it was broken down. So one person had a manageable workload. And then once they checked in, you know, we would pull those certificates for the adjudication officers, and at the end of the ceremony, they would, you know, be issued or the judge would hand them to them as they came up, as they were called.
And then again, when we went back, whatever certificates were left, we knew they were no-shows, they had not checked in. We would wait around long enough after, in the event somehow they got passed and they were actually in the ceremony. So we would try to correct those -- you know, the little logistical nightmares on the spot.

But then when we went back to the office, it was the same thing. You take your no-shows, you have to void the certificates. You have a couple of things to do because they are secure forms. You don't just want them floating around.

And then you close the ceremony in CLAIMS 4, and it updates CIS. That's all I know.

Q Are you familiar with any process by which the clerk of the court would communicate information about naturalization and who naturalized to CIS?
A No. We would get -- the only time we would get anything from the clerk of the court, again from when I was out there years ago, was like when they -- if they had applied for a legal name change because they were all approved by the court.

So we would get those forms back to make sure the right name appeared on the certificate. But no, other than that, you know. We did our own -- I mean, like I said, I don't know.

Q Do you know if you had any naturalization ceremonies in the area covered by your field office where a CIS person was not sent?
A No, when we went, we had somebody there all the time.

Q And the naturalization ceremonies only happened right there where you were?
A No. We had -- no. The administrative oath that -- granted -- the court allowed us to do in Seattle, we did in our district office.

So we had -- I don't want to say an oath room. It was just a big enough room to accommodate the folks, and somebody would come in and talk to them about, you know, being a citizen and, you know, we used to give them little flags and stuff, and kind of showed them a little video on just, you know, now that they're a citizen, you know, their right to vote, et cetera, et cetera.

It was a CIS message, just saying congratulations, basically.

We would give them their certificates. Some folks would take pictures, and then, again, we went -- the adjudications clerical folks went back and took care of the closeout of the ceremony.

And then the only time we would get it again would be if you know, when the files were ready to go. When they closed it out and the files were ready to be boxed up, and go to the archives.

Q And when you say "close it out," tell me what that means.
A Part of closeout -- what they did and again what we did in Seattle, they would take and update everything, that they appeared for the ceremony, they attended, they took the oath. And then they update -- that's what they took to update page 16.
the system.
You know, they double-checked it, who
showed up, and made sure they were all there. And
then the process, whatever the process in CLAIMS 4,
they hit a couple of buttons and it pushes the data
through to update their status and show their
assigned certificate number and that.
Q And when you say "close out," do you mean
close out because that person had now become a
citizen?
A Yes. It was like the final action had
been taken, or it was done, so that's what -- they
say close out the ceremony. There's no further
action for the individual. They have achieved their
citizenship so their file now goes to NARA, or did
go to NARA.
Q What was that?
A The National Archives. Because once
they're naturalized, there's no other benefit for
them, unless somewhere down the line, you know, they
come back and ask a question or do, I guess, a
freedom of information release or request for
information or somebody in their family does. But
that's about it.
Q Once they have naturalized, they go away
to be housed and then they're housed for 75 years
after that.
Q Then what happens?
A After that 75 years, they get destroyed.
The life cycle, based on the national archives
retention schedule, is 75 years. So from the date
of the last action, it's a 75-year -- it will sit on
the shelf until that time comes.
Q So if somebody who naturalized -- somebody
who is naturalized 10 years ago, their A-file is
going to be at NARA; is that right?
A Should be, yeah. Should be retired, yes.
And if that person had a house fire and
their certificate of naturalization got burnt up and
the person applied for a replacement certificate --
A Then we retrieve the file.
Q You would retrieve the A-file?
A Yes.
Q And is there a photocopy of the
naturalization certificate in the A-file?
A We always maintained a copy, yes.
Q So you would then --
A That's part -- I'm sorry. That's part of
the closeout. You make sure there's a copy of the
cert and everything that's attached to the approved
N400 and affixed to the file.
Q Do you know how long it takes for somebody
to get a replacement naturalization certificate if,
as I mentioned, that file has been closed out, and
gone to NARA?
A My -- from what I understand, I mean, some
places were taking six months, some shorter, some
longer. You know, but I would say around six
months, in some cases, I know.
And that's not all based on the retrieval
from NARA, although that could be a portion of the
problem, with the retrieval from the archives.

But --

Q Is the archives a one -- single location?
A No, ma'am.

Q NARA is in various places?
A Yes. The bulk of our files currently were
migrated to Lee's Summit, Missouri. But we have
files here in Suitland, Maryland. There's files at
Sand Point, Washington, San Bruno, California,
because of -- I mean, just that's where they have
been, you know.

Q Does the system ensure, for example, that
if you're a naturalized citizen living in California
and you naturalized in California, that your A-file
is in NARA in a California location?
A No, no, ma'am.

Q Or you could be anywhere?
A No. I don't want to say once upon a time,
because that's -- at one point, we had all the
files, say, from the Seattle district -- and I refer
to that only because that's what I know best.

We would take our files to Sand Point,
Washington, which was up by the university about 30
minutes from our office. There were a lot more
federal records centers. What we did, we have
basically one -- a large file repository for our
files currently, which is in Missouri, the national
records center.

Now, these are files that are not yet
ready to be retired, but right next door to them is
the main federal records center. They did a mass
file migration, so they now house the bulk of the
current CIS files and the former INS files for
naturalization and adjustment cases, et cetera.

So the bulk of them are housed right next
doors to our national records center in Lee's Summit,
Missouri. It was something that NARA, I guess -- I
don't know if they did it for fiscal reasons or, you
know, financial or whatever. I don't know. But
that's basically their central collection point now.

Q So if I was a naturalized citizen living
in Phoenix, my closed-out A-file could be anywhere?
A No, it would be in the -- in Lee's Summit,
Missouri, at the federal records center.

Q Definitely?
A All of our -- all of the local files were
moved to Lee's Summit. The only ones we maintain
here are classified files. So if you were
naturalized -- and I don't want to get into
individual situations, but if you were naturalized
but your file was a classified file, those are
housed here in Suitland, Maryland.

Q So if I was just a regular naturalized
person --
A Lee's Summit, Missouri, is where all
the --

Q Does it happen from time to time that
A-records cannot be retrieved, that you just can't
find them where they're supposed to be?
Q Have you ever seen an N 4 monthly report on naturalization papers form?
A No. I mean, I see -- we get an update of naturalization ceremonies electronically now. I don't know -- I'm not familiar with it personally.
Q Okay. Now, you had mentioned before that in Seattle, you were doing naturalization ceremonies up to four times a week.
A Yes.
Q And were those administrative oaths?
A Yes, ma'am.
Q Okay. So your federal court wasn't doing these ceremonies that much?
A No. They did the big Fourth of July one and maybe one other one a year, when there was -- I mean, somebody wanted to -- when they wanted it. But no, most of ours were administrative oaths.
Q What is the purpose of an individual's A-number after he or she has naturalized?
A It's just a number that they're assigned from when they begin to apply for benefits, so it follows them throughout, if they want to, you know, seek -- I don't want to say -- progressive benefits, but if they go from conditional residents to removing the conditions, they are becoming a legal permanent resident or what we call a permanent resident and then they subsequently file for naturalization, we can see the progression that one, they were eligible and granted one and they gained the other one in some sequence of events.
Q And that, I mean, it's just a number that was assigned to them when they started the process. I mean, once it goes away, I mean, once they naturalize, they really don't need it, not for their purpose, I wouldn't think.
A But, you know, because now they would -- and this is me assuming that they get a U.S. passport and then, you know, that's pretty much it.
Q Can you think of a -- well, no.
A If somebody naturalized last year in 2007, would it be fair to say that the information that they had naturalized would be in the Central Index System?
Q That would be a fair assumption, yes.
A What other information about that person would be retrievable in the Central Index System?
Q How much of the person's information would be in the CIS, as opposed to that hard copy A-file, which has been closed out and sent off to Missouri?
A I would have their name. I would have their date of birth. If it was -- if it was provided or the system updated, the mother and father's name, port of entry, class of admission, which if they naturalize should be USC, Social Security number if they provided it, fingerprint number if, again, it was uploaded. Port of entry, country of citizenship, country of birth, file control office, which shows who had whatever taken, whatever action with the file, or whoever --
whichever office had retired the file, because it’s still under their umbrella of responsibility, even if it goes off to NARA.

I can go and see a history of what benefits they were granted and in what order, or if there was an enforcement action and they were removed, it would show the deportation date.

Q Would you see the number of the certificate of naturalization?
A Yes, yes.
Q As well as the A-number?
A Right, yes, ma’am.
Q And if the person had departed and entered the country before naturalizing, would you see any of those departures or arrivals in the Central Index System?
A No, I don’t -- no. People come and go all the time, so no, we don’t -- see, I don’t know if it makes -- the A-number we use now wasn’t always used, so --
Q Tell me about that.
A There’s a -- okay. Before, central index -- before the inception of central index, which was around 1975, they were -- we had certificate numbers issued. There were some low A-numbers, but as far back as what we call old law files, there was a certificate number and a certificate file.

So older historic files didn’t have alien numbers.
Q When you say "certificate number," are you meaning certificate of naturalization?
A Yes, ma’am.
Q So these are for people who were aliens and who became naturalized?
A They were naturalized prior to April of 1956, we used the certificate number. The problem with certificate numbers -- not the problem. That was just a different series. So there weren’t always A-numbers back in the ’40s, ’50s, ’30s. There were certificate file numbers, not alien file numbers. Instead of an A, it was a C.
Q So if the number is leading with a C, we know that this is one of these old certificate numbers?
A It was an older -- right, an older case.
Q What did you use to track people who remained aliens until their death, who never naturalized?
A LPRs?
Q Yes.
A We have visa files, we have -- there were some -- the I-94 old admission records. There were -- a lot of the records were on microfilm and microfiche from the earlier days. We have records that go as far back as -- the earliest one I’ve seen is with a date of birth of, like, 1831. Now, they probably entered around 1850 or ’60, but, you know, we have some information on them, just old what we call just they’re index cards but they’re on microfilm and microfiche.
Q When you say that people began to get A-numbers in the 1950s; is that right?
A No, no, the folks who were naturalized prior to '56, April of '56 and before, were given certificate files. The A-numbers were -- gosh, I got to think when they started being issued. We'll find some low A-numbers around that time, but I don't know the exact year that they moved over to A-numbers.
Q So if I entered the country as a bride of a U.S. citizen in 1960, would I have received an A-number?
A Yes, ma'am.
Q All right. But maybe not in 1950?
A Possibly not.
Q Are you aware that some certificates of naturalization do not have an A-number printed on them?
A The old historic ones that didn't have an A-number, yes.
Q If somebody has one of these C-numbers, or certificate numbers, would you be able to find that person in the Central Index System?
A Probable not. Those are the files that are maintained on microfiche and microfilm.
Q What if somebody wrote to you and said they needed a replacement copy of their naturalization certificate?
A Then we would pull it from the film.
Q And how would you be able to find their certificate number? Let's say the person does not remember their certificate number.
A What -- most of our searches we'll do by name, date of birth, country of birth, any pertinent information you can give us to track them down.
Q How would you do that on film?
A Believe it or not, I have folks that have worked here for up to 45, 46 years, and there's what they call soundexing that's done with all the old film. I'll try -- and this is a brief version.
Consonants are given a numeric value of, like, 1 to 6, certain letters are given certain numeric values. If there's a double letter in a name, say the last names is Williams, the first L gets a numeric value, the second does not.
So they will soundex these based on the value assigned. They go to the microfiche. Then they have a reel which is indexed by those soundex cards, and they pull it.
Q Wow.
A I've -- fortunately, I have folks that have been doing this for 46 years, because -- now, there are occasions where I talk to the CIS historian, and we have to go back to the ship manifest when they first arrived because -- and I give you a prime example.
In my grandmother's case, her name was changed by one letter. So if I go -- you say my name is spelled this way and I'm looking for it that way, I won't find it if there was any variation to