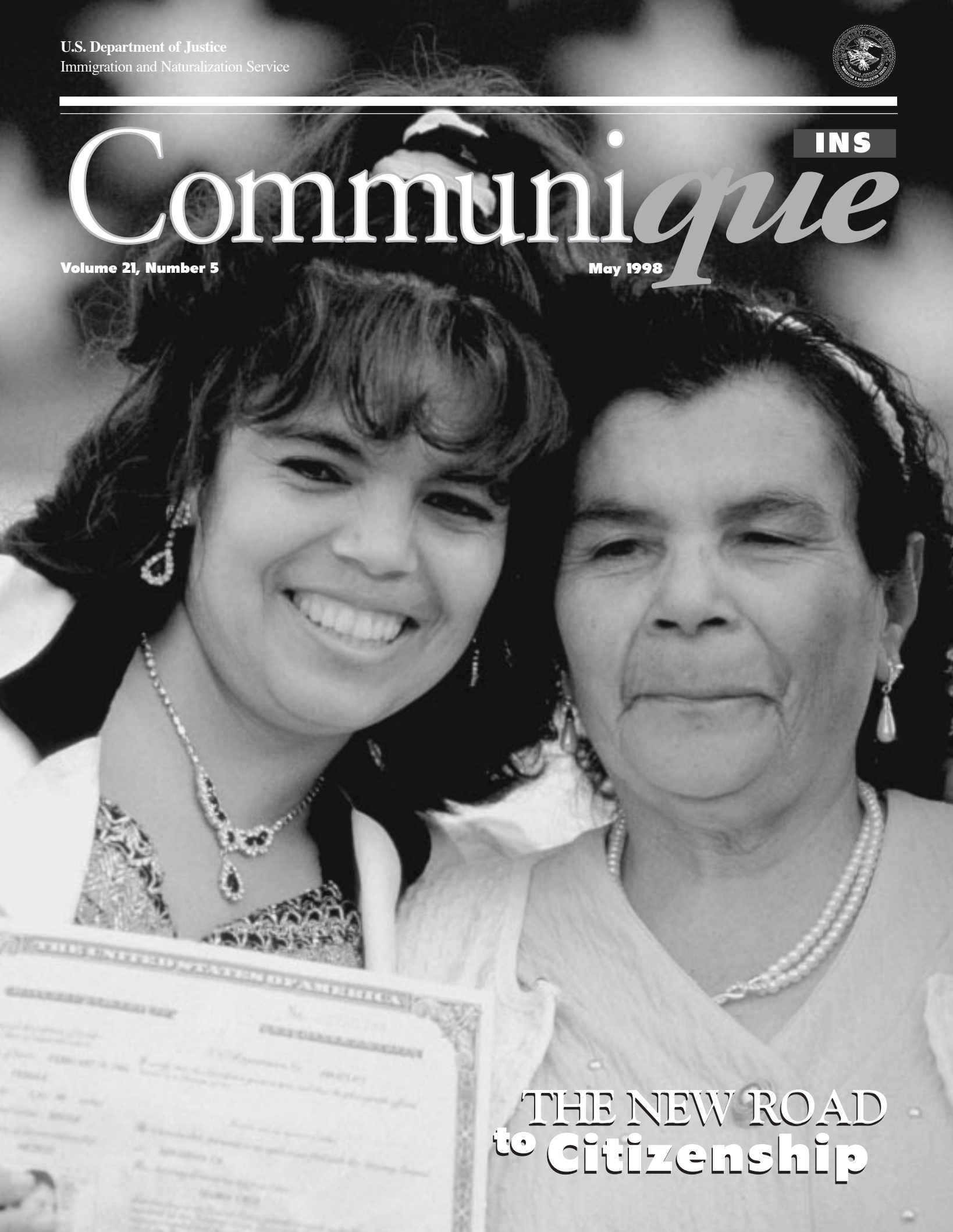
U.S. Department of Justice
Immigration and Naturalization Service

INS Communique

Volume 21, Number 5 May 1998



THE NEW ROAD to Citizenship

Continued Naturalization Improvements

MARK FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF ONO

This month marks the one-year anniversary of the formation of the Headquarters Office of Naturalization Operations (HQONO). The occasion provides an opportunity to review ONO's progress in modernizing our naturalization system. In addition to identifying existing problems within the Service's citizenship program, ONO has been aggressive in designing and implementing fixes, as well as working to develop a long-term blueprint that will ensure the integrity of the overall naturalization system in the future.

The challenge we face remains a daunting one: INS received a record 1.6 million naturalization applications in 1997, nearly three times the 1993 level. This is a challenge we must meet. An array of innovative steps to address the backlog of pending citizenship applications is underway, consistent with maintaining the high standards of integrity of the process that are essential.

In early February, when the new naturalization blueprint designed by Coopers and Lybrand in cooperation with HQONO was announced, I said that this plan represents an entirely new way of doing business for INS. Changes in the existing naturalization process—from the development of an in-house testing program to the use of direct mail for applicants' convenience—are already in place, and further changes are in store for the months to come.

By the end of April, as part of a transition to a larger naturalization overhaul, the Service had staffed over 185 Application Support Centers (ASCs) nationwide, including shared-space facilities and mobile units. In addition, a total of $14 million has been specifically allocated for new resources and additional staff to help reduce the application backlog. Applications are now mailed to one of our four automated Service Centers, rather than to local offices, allowing for a much more efficient use of staff time while better serving our customers, the applicants. We are on the road to replacing the antiquated paper-based process of yesterday with one that is timely and state-of-the-art.

Success won't happen overnight. The successful implementation and use of Naturalization Quality Assurance Procedures (NQPs), as verified by a recent KPMG Peat Marwick audit report, demonstrates that the process is moving forward, and provides an example of how INS' service delivery capabilities overall can be strengthened. The initiatives that HQONO has developed as part of the Coopers blueprint include long-term programs involving major changes in the way INS conducts the business of naturalization. Some of these changes are already in place and are now working to reduce the existing backlog.

With the growing influx of naturalization applications, it is especially important to remain committed to improving the service we provide the millions of customers across the United States who rely upon our work, and to restore timely processing. The blueprint is in place to accomplish this important goal. The necessary resources, both professional and technological, are being implemented.

It is now up to each of us to work together as we move forward in our continuing effort to build the most efficient and secure naturalization system possible. Building on the success that ONO has shown we can all achieve, I'm looking forward to this opportunity to demonstrate the professionalism and dedication I know this agency is committed to providing in carrying out its immigrant-services responsibilities.

Doris Meissner
Commissioner

INS
Communique
Volume 21, Number 5 May 1998

Staff members of the Service's Miami district office stand with Attorney General Janet Reno during her recent visit to a local Application Support Center (ASC). Pictured (l. to r.) are: Nadine Ruggles, Biscayne site supervisory; James E. Smith, Hialeah site supervisor; Michael G. Holmes, fingerprint specialist; Annette Bywaters, Broward site supervisor; Donald Neufeld, assistant district director for Examinations; Jack Bulger, deputy district director; George W. Kimmel, project coordinator; James R. Alger, Sweetwater site supervisor; and John W. Garofano, assistant district director for Inspections. (see story on page 9)

Commissioner Details FY98 Border Patrol Allocations Nationwide

Joined by Texas Senator Hutchison, Says INS will Deploy 1,000 Agents This Year

At a Headquarters media briefing March 10 where she was joined by Texas Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, Commissioner Meissner detailed the agency's planned allocation of much of its $3.8 billion FY98 budget, including the training and deployment of 1,000 Border Patrol agents nationwide.

Commissioner Meissner stands with Kay Bailey Hutchison, Border Patrol Chief Gus De La Viña, and chiefs from sectors along the Southwest border while detailing the Service's FY98 Border Patrol staffing levels and allocations.

Of the total INS budget increase of $644.4 million in FY98 that will be used to hire more than 2,200 new employees, the Commissioner said, $125.3 million will be used to specifically hire, train, and place Border Patrol agents, with many going to continue deployments begun last year with the implementation of Operation Rio Grande. This will include 260 new agents in the McAllen sector, 205 in the Laredo sector, 25 in the rugged Marfa sector, and 45 in the El Paso sector, which includes parts of Texas and New Mexico. In addition, 140 new agents have been allocated for the Tucson sector and 56 for the Yuma sector. Based on these increases, by year end the Patrol will be over 7,000 agents strong, nearly doubling in size since FY93.

"Operation Rio Grande has been an unqualified success," Senator Hutchison said during the briefing. "It shows that manpower can make a difference." She went on to personally thank Commissioner Meissner and the Patrol's chiefs—with McAllen's Joe Garza mentioned specifically—for their work in controlling the border, and concluded by commending the "new agents coming in to Texas who are providing relief to people who once felt helpless" to stop illegal crossing.

While many of the new agents are being allocated to sectors in Texas and New Mexico as part of "Rio Grande," the Commissioner also noted that the Service is committed to continue building on the border-control success of Operation Gatekeeper by increasing the number of agents in California's El Centro sector. Accordingly, that sector will see an increase of 134 new agents this fiscal year, she said, bringing its total staffing level to 277, a 55 percent increase over FY97.

What's Inside

Headquarters News
- *Uniform Fingerprinting Rule* 4
- *Operations Security Campaign* 4
- *SAVE Training Course* 5

Enforcement News
- *El Paso Anti-smuggling* 6
- *Virginia Anti-fraud* 6
- *Golden Venture Conviction* 6
- *Ohio Worksite Operation* 7
- *McAllen Drug Bust* 7
- *Boston Special Agent* 7

News from the Field
- *International Training Unit* 8
- *Executive Potential Program* 9
- *AG Visits Miami ASC* 9
- *PAIC Fire Rescue* 10
- *Aruba Letter of Thanks* 11
- *Houston Recognition* 11

INS Special Events
- *Gvt. Computer News Forum* 12
- *Women's History Month* 13

Records Management Update
- *Searching the CIS* 14

People on the Move
- *Jim Angus* 15
- *Eric Andrus* 15
- *Julie Anbender* 15
- *Adele Fasano* 15
- *William T. Veal* 15
- *Linda Greene* 16
- *Mario Ortiz* 16

Service Implements Uniform

FINGERPRINTING RULE EFFECTIVE MARCH 29

As part of INS' continuing transition to an improved process for considering and granting naturalization and other benefits, the Service announced that as of March 29, applicants for all immigration benefits—including citizenship—will be required to have their fingerprints taken either by INS or a registered State or local law enforcement agency once they have filed their application.

Through the new uniform rule, applicants for all immigration benefits for which fingerprints are required will be mailed a notice scheduling them for an appointment at one of more than 100 locations nationwide. The notification will specify a week to appear for fingerprinting. Those applicants who cannot appear during that week can either reschedule their appointment or bring their notice to the location specified on a walk-in basis on a day designated for such service.

Based on an interim rule published in the *Federal Register*, a $25 fingerprinting fee has also been established, in compliance with congressional and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) mandates that require INS to charge fees based on the actual cost of providing its services to users.

Beginning March 29, the fee must be submitted with the application, in addition to the filing fee for the particular benefit being sought. INS will, however, continue to fingerprint applicants for asylum at no cost, and district and Service Center directors will have the authority to grant fee waivers on a case-by-case basis in response to written appeals. The new fee will also not apply to applicants living outside the United States.

Service's Operations Security Outreach Campaign Begun

The Service's Operations Security (OPSEC) support and awareness campaign was initiated earlier this year, with Headquarters Director of Security Winona Varnon visiting the Marfa, TX, Border Patrol sector from January 12-15. The purpose of the campaign is to increase the awareness of OPSEC and to implement OPSEC practices throughout the Service.

A security "process" designed to decrease the risk to INS operational personnel by identifying and protecting critical information about our operations and planning from our adversaries, the program's policy guidance was issued by the Commissioner on January 8, when she also reiterated her personal support for the initiative.

Since the Marfa site visit, Varnon and members of the OPSEC team have visited the Laredo, TX; El Paso, TX; and San Diego, CA, sectors, and have also made a courtesy visit to the El Paso district. Accompanying Varnon in the outreach effort were various members of the OPSEC team including: Jim McLeod and John Kirby, both of HQSEC; Daryl Adams, Central Region; and Terry Morrison and George Miller of the Western Region.

At each sector team members were hosted by the chief patrol agent, visiting the headquarters facility, as well as various stations and checkpoints. They then provided OPSEC briefings and presented OPSEC awareness reminders at each location. Finally, they accompanied agents during night operations along the Rio Grande, learned about sensor placement in remote areas, and witnessed the work of each sector's Border Patrol agents.

These experiences, it is anticipated, will help the team develop OPSEC practices that support the agents in their duties, rather than simply placing bureaucratic requirements on them. According to Varnon, she and the team members were very impressed with the dedication, morale, and "can-do" attitude of all agency staff they met.

Within the next year, the OPSEC team plans to visit every Border Patrol sector, with trips to Tucson, AZ; Buffalo, NY; and Del Rio and McAllen, TX, scheduled for the near future. District office visits will be the next priority.

Anyone interested in learning more about OPSEC can visit the INS Security bulletin board on cc:Mail, or contact John Kirby at (202) 307-3945. A Security website, which will include an OPSEC page, and a computer-based OPSEC training module are also currently being developed.

Headquarters Director of Security Winona Varnon presents an OPSEC t-shirt to Marfa Border Patrol Chief Simon Garza during her recent visit to the sector.

SAVE Program Holds Year's First Status Verification Training Course

The Service's Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program held its first basic training course of 1998 for newly hired Immigration Status Verifiers (ISVs) and other personnel within the Office of Records on March 3-5 in Atlanta, GA, with employees from offices within Headquarters and the Eastern Region in attendance.

SAVE Program Director John E. Nahan welcomed the participants and made opening remarks regarding the Program's current and future goals. Representatives from the Headquarters offices of Policy and Planning, General Counsel, FOIA/PA, and Records; as well as the San Francisco, CA, and Atlanta, GA, district offices; U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, and Housing and Urban Development, Washington, DC; and Social Security Administration, Atlanta, GA, then provided overviews of their existing programs and how they interact with the SAVE Program.

Course participants included ISVs who had not previously participated in the basic ISV training course. The training focused on topics designed to enlighten the participants on the correlation between various INS and interagency programs' operations to their present positions, as well as to enhance their skills and knowledge as ISVs. The topics included an overview of SAVE Program Processes and Procedures; Forms G-845 and Supplement; Secondary Automated Log; Interim Guidance on Verification; INS Systems/Searches Overview; Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts; Standards of Ethical Conduct; the Verification Information System; Employment Verification Pilots; and the Third Step Verification Process. During the training, suggestions, comments, and recommendations were also solicited from participants on existing and potential future SAVE processes.

The training was the first of three such sessions scheduled for this fiscal year, and plans are currently being finalized to provide basic training for newly hired ISVs within the Central and Western regions before the end of the fiscal year.

The SAVE Program is an intergovernmental information-sharing initiative designed to aid eligibility workers in determining an applicant's/recipient's immigration status and ensuring that only entitled applicants/recipients receive Federally subsidized benefits. The Program established the Alien Status Verification Index for performing automated verification searches and, most recently, began providing guidance on policy and procedures to ISVs.

It also is responsible for providing guidance on policy and procedures to benefits-issuing agencies, institutions, and other entities for the verification of immigration status of alien applicants or recipients relating to SAVE Program processes.

Reflections on Immigration

Commissioner Meissner and Executive Associate Commissioner for Management George H. Bohlinger III stand together in front of a historical photo depicting the arrival of two young women at Ellis Island in the early 1900s. The print is one in a series of photos researched by the INS History Office and displayed outside the Headquarters Office of Management that illustrate the history of immigration throughout the beginning and middle of this century.

Intelligence-Based Enforcement, Interagency Cooperation

LEADS TO ANTI-SMUGGLING AND ANTI-FRAUD SUCCESSES

The Service saw several anti-smuggling and anti-fraud cases come to successful conclusions in March based on significant Intelligence work, effective cross-office communication, and coordination with other Federal, State, and local government agencies. Three of these cases involved related anti-smuggling operations in the El Paso, TX, area, the break up of a fraudulent document ring in Virginia, and the conviction of the principal organizer in the *Golden Venture* Chinese alien smuggling operation.

El Paso Anti-Smuggling. In the first of two El Paso cases, 13 people were charged with alien smuggling March 17 following a joint undercover operation by the Border Patrol and the FBI. Known as "Operation Westbound," the case led to the breakup of a ring allegedly responsible for smuggling more than 1,000 illegal aliens into the United States, including nationals of China, Nepal, and various Central and South American countries.

Authorities estimate that the smugglers were charging up to $30,000 per person for their passage. During the course of the investigation, Border Patrol agents also intercepted nearly 300 of the smuggled aliens.

In a separate El Paso initiative named "Operation Cadillac Arrest," five defendants entered guilty pleas in mid-March in connection with an alien smuggling ring in operation from February to September 1997. The case was investigated by the El Paso Border Patrol sector's Anti-Smuggling Unit, and revealed a sophisticated operation responsible for transporting between 70 and 1,000 aliens per week from El Paso to either Dallas, TX, or Albuquerque, NM. The aliens allegedly paid between $800 and $1,000 each to the smugglers.

Virginia Anti-Fraud Arrests. On March 12, INS, the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) announced the arrest and indictment of two immigration brokers and an ATF special agent in Alexandria, VA. Brian Im, a Virginia lawyer practicing immigration law and Special Agent Jimee Choi were both charged with paying over $82,000 to a senior law enforcement official in the INS Arlington, VA, district office who was posing as a corrupt official. The bribes were allegedly paid for the INS agent's promise to obtain "Green Cards" for Im's clients. Im had allegedly been paid at least $350,000 by 35 alien families to fraudulently obtain the cards. Choi allegedly provided security for the operation, passed along the bribe, and assisted with the processing of the aliens. In addition, David Lim, a Fairfax County, VA, resident was charged with conspiracy for allegedly using two business that he owns as a front for fraudulent alien worker applications.

The joint INS, OIG, and ATF case was investigated by Special Agents James Spero and Elizabeth Goyer, under the director of William Carroll, the Service's district director in Arlington, VA, as well as by one ATF and two OIG special agents.

Golden Venture Conviction. In a third Service-related anti-smuggling success, Lee Peng Fei, the principal organizer responsible for smuggling 282 people from China to the United States on the cargo ship *Golden Venture*, was convicted on March 13. Fei's conviction was the result of an international cooperative effort involving INS' New York district office, the U.S. Attorney's Office, the State Department, and the U.S. Coast Guard. He was arrested in 1997 following a four-year investigation into the *Golden Venture* case. The ship ran aground off the coast of New York in June 1993.

Multi-Agency Ohio Worksite Operation Nets 20 Illegal Aliens

By Patrick A. Elersic,
Assistant Officer-in-Charge
Cincinnati, OH, suboffice

On March 11, Cincinnati Officer-in-Charge William J. Ring Jr. led a worksite enforcement operation that resulted in the arrest of 20 illegal workers from Mexico and Honduras. The arrested workers were detained for deportation hearings. All were being paid $5.25 per hour in the hazardous occupation of asbestos removal. Similar jobs typically pay more than $17 per hour in the Cincinnati area.

An Ohio Department of Health inspector wearing special asbestos-protection equipment assisted in the operation, as did Service officers from Cleveland, OH, and Louisville, KY, Border Patrol agents from the Trenton, MI, station, agents from the Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, and the state's Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division. Officers from the Green Township and Cincinnati police departments also assisted in the operation.

Cincinnati, OH, Assistant Officer-in-Charge Patrick A. Elersic (right) and Jean-Michel Matelot of the French National Police stand in front of an asbestos-contaminated area during a recent worksite enforcement action. Permanently stationed in Paris, Matelot was visiting the Cincinnati suboffice as part of an international cooperative law enforcement effort, and was allowed to observe the worksite operation.

McAllen Sector Seizes Nearly $7 Million in Smuggled Marijuana

Two recent drug interdictions by agents in the Border Patrol's McAllen, TX, sector resulted in the seizure of marijuana valued at nearly $7 million, according to sector public affairs spokeswomen Letty Garza.

In the first seizure, which took place in Cuevitas on March 3, 21 burlap sacks containing marijuana valued at over $1.6 million were captured when a Mexican national attempted to flee while agents were conducting "linewatch" activities. The second seizure, one of the largest noncocaine seizures in the sector this year, occurred on March 9 and resulted in the capture of an undocumented Mexican national who was driving a van carrying 6,421 pounds of marijuana valued at $5.1 million. Following each seizure, the smuggled marijuana was turned over officers of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Special Agent George Fennell

Special Agent Recognized for Work to Return Kidnapped Child

Boston, MA, district Special Agent George Fennell was recognized recently by the Center for Missing and Exploited Children for his work to help return a child who had been separated from his mother for five years.

The child had been kidnapped from his elementary school in Quincy, MA, by his father and taken to a Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon. Working with INS' Los Angeles district office, the assistant district attorney, and the child's mother, Special Agent Fennell devised a plan to ensure the child's return to the United States.

With the mother's help, Fennell first worked to convince the child's father that she was interested in reconciling their marriage. Under this assumption, the father authorized the release of the child to the mother's custody from the refugee camp where he had been held for the past five years. At the same time, the father had returned to Los Angeles, after pleading guilty to charges of stalking his wife, and proceeded to wait at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) for his son to arrive from Lebanon. The plane, however, made a scheduled stop in London, and the boy got off into the waiting arms of his mother who had flown from Massachusetts to meet him.

After Agent Fennell confirmed that the mother and child had been reunited, he contacted the INS district office in Los Angeles which had officers detain the father at LAX. Working with Senior Special Agent Jim Kuiken, Fennell was even able to have photos of the father sent to the district to assist in identifying him at the airport.

Following the successful return of the child to this mother, Fennel said, "I was elated. All of the sleepless nights were well worth it upon learning that Michael had departed Lebanon and was finally in the custody of his mother in London."

In all, Fennel worked closely with each of the following agencies outside of INS while seeking the child's safe return: the State Department's Office of Children's Issues, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the State Department's Consular Affairs Office in Beirut, and the U.S. District Attorney's Offices in Suffolk and Norfolk (Massachusetts) counties. The successfully closed case was just one of approximately 30 he worked in 1996.

Paula M. Grenier of the Boston district's Office of Public Affairs contributed to the development of this story.

Hard Work, Travel Paying off for

SERVICE'S INTERNATIONAL TRAINING UNIT

Members of INS' International Training Unit (ITU) stand with immigration officers from Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and the Dominican Republic who participated in an international immigration training course held in November 1997 in Panama City, Panama. Pictured (from l. to r.) are: Greg Smilski, Immigration Officer Academy (IOA); Severo Quiroga, Border Patrol Academy (BPA); George "Rick" Clarke, IOA; Sidney Beasley, Leadership Development Center (LDC); Robert Wickham, BPA; and Robert Breyer, BPA.

By SBPA Robert Wickham
U.S. Border Patrol Academy, Glynco, GA

INS' International Training Unit (ITU) is again making preparations to travel overseas to deliver Service-designed and -developed training programs. With courses scheduled every month this year, both team members and instructors alike are working hard to fulfill their mission.

Under the leadership of Chief Patrol Agent Charles L. Huffman, more than 300 immigration and border-control officers representing more than 15 nations in Central and Eastern Europe and Central America have been trained through the program.

The concept came about following a request from the Department of State for INS assistance in the global effort to combat international migrant smuggling. With strong support from Headquarters, the unit has made tremendous progress, and has now joined other Federal law enforcement agencies in assisting our allies in their fight against organized crime. The issue remains a high priority with both Congress and the Administration.

'Exportable' Training Programs. Officers from the Border Patrol and Immigration Officer academies, with assistance from the Leadership Development Center, the Training Branch of the Research and Evaluation Section, and the Forensic Document Lab (FDL), have designed and developed two training programs for export overseas.

The first provides both an overview of INS operations and management training, and is called the "International Immigration Training Program." It offers 80 hours of training in Border Patrol and Inspections operations, officer safety/non-lethal force, investigative techniques/interviewing and human dignity/ethics and integrity, migrant trafficking, decisionmaking, leadership development, resource/lifestyle management and media relations.

The second program is a 104-hour "train-the-trainer" course to help participants design, develop, deliver, and evaluate basic immigration law-enforcement training. It is called the "Immigration Training Development Course," and in addition to providing a border-control operational overview, it offers instruction in such subjects as instructional systems design/needs analysis, instructor/test item development, and evaluation/course revision and validation.

Course critiques have consistently rated the training as excellent and relevant to the duties performed by participants. Most importantly, perhaps, respondents have said that it is positively affecting the way in which they perform their jobs.

In addition, the unit has established good relationships with our immigration and border guard colleagues through the training, providing further contacts between local immigration officers and INS/ embassy personnel in Eastern Europe and Central America. This has led to a strengthened law enforcement posture in the area of alien smuggling interdiction.

Expanded Training Locations. In addition to the areas mentioned above, INS has been asked to expand its training to some other locations this fiscal year. The first new site will be in Pretoria, South Africa, a country where there is very little infrastructure in place to handle the inspection and adjudication of the large number of applicants for admission, and where there is a huge area of "green border" where much illegal immigration occurs.

The second location is Nassau, Bahamas. Participants will include immigration officials from the Caribbean Basin, including the Bahamas, Belize, Trinidad & Tobago, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Because of the widespread nature of migrant smuggling and other immigration-related problems, countries around the world are looking to INS for training on border-control issues. It is hoped that in the near future the ITU will receive the resources necessary to meet this critical need.

Service Participants Graduate from Executive Potential Program

More than 20 INS staffers from across the country were among the Federal employees recognized in a special ceremony March 19 for their participation in the USDA Graduate School's Executive Potential Program (EPP).

Designed to prepare high-potential GS-13 and -14 employees for leadership and executive positions within the Federal government, the year-long EPP allows participants to acquire or enhance both their competencies and effectiveness skills. The program includes interaction with a 'cluster group', which is designed to encourage the strengthening of leadership and interpersonal skills, to provide a forum to address current issues facing managers in the Federal workforce, and to stimulate a commitment to personal excellence.

Each EPP participant is also required to complete a detailed individual needs assessment, submit an individual development plan for approval, and undertake a minimum of four months of developmental work assignments. In addition, he or she must conduct interviews with at least three senior executives, complete a three-day shadowing assignment with a high-level agency official, and participate in 23 days of core classroom training, including a program orientation, three residential seminars covering current leadership issues facing Federal managers, and a program close-out.

"We applaud all of you for your professional accomplishments," EPP Director Norman Riggins said during the graduation ceremony. "You each have greatly enhanced your leadership skills and your potential for growth," by participating in the program.

The 194 members of the 1997 EPP graduating class are part of the more than 1,500 Federal employees to have participated in one of the 12 groups to date.

INS participants in the 1997 Executive Potential Program included:

- Cynthia F. Butler, Headquarters, IRM;
- Mark A. Cangemi, Bloomington, MN, district office;
- Steven H. Clover, Western Region office, Laguna Niguel, CA;
- Theodore V. Denning, Havre, ME, Border Patrol sector;
- Robert A. Douglas, Central Region Office, Dallas, TX;
- Jose L. Estrada, Del Rio, TX, Border Patrol sector;
- James E. Franchetti, San Jose, CA, suboffice;
- Christopher T. Hess, Eastern Region office, Burlington, VT;
- Victor W. Johnston, San Salvador, El Salvador;
- Keith A. Jones, Laguna Niguel, CA, office;
- Richard I. Kalb, Frankfurt, Germany;
- Dorita M. Kimble, San Diego, CA, district office;
- Carolyn M. Kroon, Eastern Region office, Burlington, VT;
- Robert V. Looney, El Paso, TX, district office;
- Donald L. Lowry, Headquarters, Operations;
- Olga C. Martinez, Miami, FL, asylum office;
- Danois R. Montoya, El Paso, TX, Border Patrol sector;
- Mario R. Ortiz, Albuquerque, NM, suboffice;
- Larry E. Robbins, Fresno, CA, suboffice;
- Lisa B. Ross, Headquarters, Benefits;
- Roberto S. Saenz, El Paso, TX, district office;
- Andrea P. Sickler, Headquarters, Inspections;
- Sarah T. Taylor, Headquarters, Office of Congressional Relations; and
- Carol G. Thompson, Miami, FL.

Lisa Brown Ross of the Headquarters Office of Examinations was one of six government-wide keynote speakers at this year's Executive Potential Program graduation ceremony.

ATTORNEY GENERAL VISITS MIAMI APPLICATION SUPPORT CENTER

During her recent visit to South Florida in late January, Attorney General Janet Reno visited the Miami district's new naturalization Application Support Center on Seventh Avenue for a first-hand look at the Service's electronic fingerprinting capabilities.

Accompanied by former Director of the Headquarters Office of Naturalization Operations Robert K. Bratt and Miami Deputy District Director Jack Bulger, the AG was briefed on the procedures by which a naturalization applicant is fingerprinted at the facility, and was introduced to both INS and supervised contract staff during a tour of the site. Also during the visit, Reno was electronically fingerprinted, and in doing so, had the opportunity to learn what each applicant will experience during this part of the new naturalization process.

Atlanta District Recognizes Work

OF IMMIGRANT SUPPORT GROUP

In appreciation of its work to support INS and the area's immigrant community at-large, INS' Atlanta, GA, District Director Thomas Fischer presented a plaque of appreciation to the "Bridging the Gap" Project Inc. on March 16 and specifically its New Americans Service Program. Accepting the recognition on behalf of the project were its director, Gail Hoffman, and Project Manager for the New Americans Service Program, Les Oulton.

The New Americans Program is a non-profit organization that is working with INS to improve and provide a wide variety of support services to the immigrant community. The organization is co-located in Atlanta's INS building and for the past year has emerged as a one-stop service location designed to meet the needs of newly arriving immigrants. Staffed by seven employees, it enables immigrants to meet a variety of their basic needs, including obtaining fingerprints and photographs, INS forms, money orders, and postage stamps. Perhaps most noteworthy, is the program's ability to provide translations in nine languages.

"The success of this program [can be] attributed to the leadership of Gail and, at the local level, Les," Fischer said during the ceremony, adding that such programs merit expansion to other locations throughout the Atlanta district.

Bill Castro of the Atlanta district's Office of Public Affairs contributed to the development of this story.

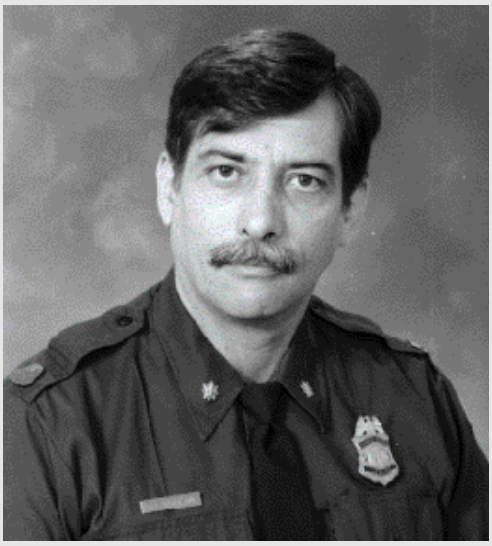
INS News from the ***Field***

New York Patrol Agent-in-Charge Rescues Man from Fire

By Manuel Flores
Headquarters Border Patrol

Richard "Dick" Ashlaw, patrol agent-in-charge of the Service's Border Patrol station in Massena, NY, has been credited with saving the life of a local man trapped when his apartment caught fire in mid-March.

As the first person on the scene, Agent Ashlaw immediately alerted several patrons of the bar located below the man's apartment and told them to evacuate the building. After making sure there was no one else in the bar, he asked whether anyone was upstairs, and was told that one man most likely remained in an apartment within the burning building.



Patrol Agent-in-Charge Richard "Dick" Ashlaw

Disregarding his own safely, Ashlaw forced open the building's door and, flashlight in hand, entered the man's apartment on his hands and knees. He then began crawling on his stomach to avoid being overcome by billowing black smoke, soon heard moaning and, upon locating the trapped man, carried him to safety from the burning building. After being taken to a hospital in Syracuse, NY, the man's condition was upgraded from critical to serious.

A 15-year Border Patrol veteran, Ashlaw spent 14 years of his INS career in South Texas before relocating to New York. In recognition of his life-saving efforts, he was presented with a letter of commendation by Border Patrol Chief Gus de la Viña.

Ashlaw, for his part, told reporters that it was just a case of being in the right place at the right time. In fact, he said after the rescue, "My first thought was that my wife would kill me for ruining another uniform."

Aruba Prescreening Efforts Garner Letter of Thanks

This letter was sent to Commissioner Meissner in late January, commending the work of the Service's officers in Aruba. Other offices throughout the Caribbean conduct similar prescreening operations, greatly facilitating the travel of thousands of individuals returning to the United States each year.

6110 Mountain Springs Lane
Clifton, VA 20124
January 24, 1998

Commissioner Doris Meissner
Immigration and Naturalization Service
425 I Street, NW, Suite 7100
Washington, DC 20536

RECEIVED

Dear Commissioner Meissner:

Just a short note to thank you for establishing the Immigration and Naturalization Service office in Aruba.

We have been fortunate to be able to visit the Caribbean annually for the last few years, and our recent return from Aruba was the smoothest entry back into the U.S. that we have ever had. As American citizens for over 50 years, and taxpayers for over three decades, it is indeed delightful that our own government gives us an expedient entry back into our country. Arriving in San Juan from Barbados last year, it was discouraging (not to mention time-consuming) to wait in the "U.S. citizens only" line while citizens of other countries tried to claim ignorance and get processed through that line. The agent, rather than being impolite and sending them back to another line, tried to help them and process them. While I applaud his efforts to reflect positively on the U.S., the delay caused by not adhering to posted policy was not appreciated.

The pre-screening this year by your agents in Aruba enabled us to completely avoid the long immigration checkpoint lines in San Juan. Since our flight had been delayed and time to make our connection was very short, I can't adequately express how great it was to avoid the crowd processing this year.

Whomever suggested such pre-screening had a magnificent idea, though I recognize it probably entails additional expense. Please expand such pre-screening to other countries. As a career military officer, I know that even though your agents in Aruba live in what may be considered an "exotic" location, overseas living is not without its hardships and privations. Please pass on to your agents that their sacrifices, and their efforts on our behalf, are truly appreciated.

Again, thanks.

Sincerely,

Robert H. McDonald

Houston District Recognized for Commitment to African Americans

In a special proclamation issued to coincide with Black History Day, the Service's Houston district was honored by the city's new mayor Lee Brown, who specifically recognized the office's commitment to African-American hiring, employment, and training.

Presented during a luncheon hosted by the Black Affairs Special Emphasis Program, the proclamation noted that "Black History Month reminds us of the many significant milestones for freedom in our country's history, and serves as a celebration that promotes a spirit of brotherhood and cooperation among all segments of our multi-cultural society."

This year's theme, "African Americans in Business: The Path Towards Empowerment," was celebrated throughout the month of February, with events organized by the district's Black Affairs Program, including a fashion show and several days where African-American entrepreneurs were featured at the district displaying handmade dolls, art, and various other items.

The month ended with a luncheon featuring Dorris Ellis Robinson, publisher of the *Houston Sun* newspaper and prominent community leader. She impressed those in attendance with her powerful presentation on the importance of African-American entrepreneurship. District Director Richard Cravener provided the opening remarks at the luncheon, which was emceed by Black Affairs Program Manager Claudine Greenwood.

OIRM Employees Recognized

AT GOVERNMENT COMPUTER NEWS FORUM

Eleven Service employees from the Office of Information Resources Management (OIRM) were formally recognized during a forum sponsored by *Government Computer News* (GCN) in Washington, DC, in mid-February for achievement in areas ranging from supporting and managing the CLAIMS 4 naturalization processing system to ensuring that all Service employees are connected to electronic mail.

The award recipients, who work on a wide range of Service information technology projects included:

• ***Deborah Alkire***, computer specialist, Administration System Section, Management Systems Branch, for support in the human resources area as INS' senior systems analyst for the Acquisition and Control Tracking System (ACTS), the Electronic System for Personnel (ESP), and the Procurement Management System (PROMAS);

• ***Steven Groth***, computer specialist, Data Repository/Records Systems Section, Corporate Systems Branch, for supporting the mission-critical standard tables and task management for the agency's Central Index System (CIS) and Non-Immigrant Information System, two of the Service's largest automated systems. Overall coordination and management affects the Service across all levels and at the international level, as well;

• ***Valerie Isbell***, computer specialist, Inspections Systems Section, Benefits Systems Branch, who is the project technical lead in the DataShare and Laser Visa initiatives. The projects are being developed as a multi-agency partnership with the Department of State, and Isbell has established working relationships with representatives of the U.S. Customs Service and Department of State's Office of Consular Affairs through the development of these and other projects;

• ***Susan Richland***, computer specialist, Office Systems Section, Management Systems Branch, for her exemplary ability to train users of a new application. She was the primary developer of the General Counsel Electronic Management System (GEMS), and also re-engineered office processes for the Office of General Counsel using the COTS program. Richland was also instrumental in developing standards for the two-dimensional bar code that will be used to collect and capture information on N-400 applications for naturalization.

• ***Pete Rundel***, computer specialist, Examinations Systems Section, Benefits Systems Branch, the project tasks manager for the CLAIMS 4 system developed to support the timely review and adjudication of naturalization applications. Using the system, which will ultimately replace the six existing stand-alone benefits systems, INS adjudicates 65 types of benefits forms.

• ***Mark Walker***, telecommunications specialist, Electronic Systems Section, Enforcement System Branch, the project lead in implementing real-time mapping and Global Positioning System (GPS) capabilities to the Border Patrol. He was the initial tester and evaluator of a GPS-based Geographic Information System (GIS) that provided georeferenced mapping displays of simultaneous multiple vehicle locations. A direct result of his efforts is the approval for the expansion of GIS/GPS application at Border Patrol intelligence offices nationwide;

• ***Leonard Pulley***, for providing technical leadership in support of INS applications running under the UNIX operating system. He was solely responsible for the installation, customization, and implementation of the UNIX operating system on five Pyramid minicomputers and three Sequent minicomputers, allowing critical INS applications to run efficiently and effectively;

• ***Bryan Dorr***, for his innovative work as a network engineer in enabling INS foreign office users to access a full range of information services. He has conducted software compatibility testing of Service applications across the Department of State's test circuits, and has also implemented solutions that allow users in foreign offices to access e-mail and mainframe applications;

• ***Nana Adadey***, for providing critical technical support to INS during the effort to bring the entire Service onto electronic mail. In the past three years, the system has gone from hosting several hundred users to serving nearly 30,000 employees and contractors; and

• ***Dibrell Hunt*** and ***Theodore Fells Jr.***, for providing key leadership during the deployment of the INS Technology Infrastructure Project (TIP), through which computer infrastructure was deliv

Continued on page 13

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH 1998 CELEBRATED AT INS HEADQUARTERS

Theme of 'Strength Through Shared History' Sets Event's Tone

Focusing on the theme "Our History is Our Strength," Women's History Month 1998 was celebrated before a standing-room-only audience at Headquarters on March 25.

Welcomed by Deputy Commissioner Mary Ann Wyrsch, the audience applauded when it was noted that while certain aspects of Women's History Month have been celebrated since 1857, 1998 also marks the 150th anniversary of the larger women's rights movement in the United States.

"This is a time to celebrate the achievements and many valuable contributions of women in our society," Wyrsch began. "This is a special year for focusing on women's issues."

At the end of FY97, Wyrsch said describing Immigration hiring accomplishments, 31 percent of the total INS workforce comprised women, women made up 21 percent of all new hires, were given 28 percent of the total number of promotions, and also received 23 percent of all promotions at the GS-9 level or above. In addition, women in the Service received 49 percent of all performance awards in FY97, as well as 16 awards at the Commissioner's Conference. Wyrsch also noted a number of recent senior appointees within the Service who are women—including herself; Adele Fasano, the district director in San Diego; new Chicago Deputy District Director Christine Davis; and Counselor to the Commissioner Julie Anbender.

"INS' workforce is becoming more reflective of the American workforce at large," she concluded, "and we must continue to increase the presence of women at INS and to retain them."

A Touching Keynote. Following an introduction by INS General Counsel Paul Virtue, the ceremony's keynote speaker *Washington Post* columnist Judy Mann touched the hearts of all those in attendance with her story of perseverance and dedication in her struggle to defeat breast cancer. Stressing that one in eight women will be struck with the disease, she urged those in the audience to not let it sap their emotional solidity if confronted with it, and to rely on their family members, friends, and personal inner strength to help survive them as she has done.

"I want to be part of the history that gives you strength," Mann said in closing her emotional comments. "I want you to know that you can get through it. I did."

This year's celebration also included music by jazz organist Marlin Green and Lady Byron, as well as a special poem read by Acting Federal Women's Program Manager Reneé Deshazor.

Office of Information Resources Management award recipients stand together at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, following the *Government Computer News* monthly forum. Pictured (from l. to r.) are: Leonard Pulley, SID; Mark Walker, Enforcement Systems Branch; Susan Richland, Management Systems Branch; Peter Rundel, Benefits Systems Branch; Nana Adadey, SID; Steven Groth, Corporate Systems Branch; and Theodore Fells Jr., End User Computing Branch. Award recipients not pictured include: Deborah Alkire, Management Systems Branch; Valerie Isbell, Benefits Systems Branch; Bryan Dorr; and Dibrell Hunt.

Forum

Continued from page 12

ered to more than 20,000 Service employees at 475 sites nationwide, on time and within budget.

"It's not often that we get a chance to recognize those individuals who make an agency operate," OIRM Director Ron Collison said during the awards presentation. "These are just a few of the INS employees that are making a difference—helping INS serve our customers better and make the country more secure. They have each played a key role in important projects supporting the INS mission."

Held once a month for the past seven years, the GCN forum is a "chance for those employees on the front lines doing the work to get the recognition they deserve," according to the magazine's editor, with award recipients selected by the top managers of the agency honored at each event.

UPDATE:

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

"Sounds-Like" Searches in the Central Index System

Have you ever used the INS Central Index System (CIS) to search for a common name, only to find it took a long time to get a response? Have you ever searched for com–mon last names (e.g., Smith or Gonzalez) and received pages and pages of records with the last name you provided—but not the first name? Did you ever wish the response time to searches could be faster?

If you answered yes to any of these ques-tions, then this article on "sounds-like" searches in the CIS is for you.

Currently, "sounds-like" searches in the CIS can result in dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of "hits." Users are often frustrated because they must review numerous screens that are often unrelated to the name entered. To improve the system, the Offices of Files and Forms Management, Records, and Information Resources Management (OIRM) are imple-menting two major enhancements to improve the "sounds-like" search function in the CIS. Studies conducted by the CIS support cont–ractor have shown that these enhancements have resulted in tremendous reductions in search response times, without sacrificing results. Although detailed instructions will follow through normal distribution channels, a description of the enhancements follows.

Searches with Exact Character String and Preview. When conducting a "sounds-like" search (CIS 9102 screen), users can enter an exact character string parameter to eliminate potential "hits" that the user does not want to see. For example, if a user enters "HARRIS," for the Last Name field or the "sounds-like search," and "3" as the exact character string parameter, the CIS will only display records that begin with "HAR."

In addition, the user can employ a preview function that will only display one occurrence of a name to avoid being inundated with search results. Results of this search are displayed on the new CIS "Sounds-Like" Name Search With Name Preview screen. The user first selects the desired name. If more than one occurrence of that name exists, the CIS will display the multi-ple hits screen, as in the current process. No more than 28 names are displayed per screen.

Using these new methods will reduce CIS processing time and allow users to quickly receive more accurate search results from the CIS.

It is important to note that:

- The preview screen will not indicate how many occurrences of a name exist; and
- Secondary criteria to further narrow search results (e.g., date of birth [DOB]) are applied after a name is selected from the pre-view screen. For example, the preview screen displays records with various DOBs. Once the user selects a name to review from the preview screen and enters a DOB of 03/03/90 as a sec-ondary criteria, for example, only those records with a DOB of 03/03/90 will be displayed.

Sounds-like/DOB Index. A new sounds-like transaction (CIS 9306 screen) has also been implemented to provide more direct access to the search results when DOB is used as a parameter. The DOB was chosen as the required secondary criteria because it is the most frequently used. Studies conducted by the contractors indicate that with this new feature all search results will be displayed on one screen 99 percent of the time.

Using these new methods will reduce CIS processing time and allow users to quickly receive more accurate search results from CIS.

People on the Move

At Headquarters:

Jim Angus, most recently the deputy director of the Service's Office of Naturalization Operations (ONO) has been named by the Commissioner as the acting director of Naturalization Operations. A career member of the Senior Executive Service, Angus is an 18-year Department of Justice (DOJ) veteran and had held the position of associate commissioner for policies and procedures within ONO since its inception in 1997. In that position his responsibilities included the formulation and development of all policies and procedures affecting ONO, oversight and staffing of independent audits, and re-engineering projects that will affect INS' future naturalization testing, preparation, and service activities.

Prior to coming to INS, Angus held a variety of positions within the Department, including acting special counsel and deputy special counsel within the Civil Rights Division's Office of Special Counsel, chief of the Employment Litigation Section, chief of the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section, and senior trial attorney within the Employment Litigation Section.

He replaces Robert K. Bratt, who the Attorney General had detailed to INS early last year, and who returned to the Justice Management Division of DOJ in early March.

Eric Andrus has been appointed by the Commissioner as director of communications within the newly renamed Headquarters Office of Communications (formerly the Headquarters Office of Public Affairs). Previously the Service's director of Media Services since 1995, Andrus was the communications director of the Glendening for (Maryland) Governor campaign and the Glendening Transition Committee prior to joining INS. He has also worked as the managing director of the New York Foreign Press Center of the U.S. Information Agency from 1993 to 1994 and as an account executive with Geto & De Milly Inc., a New York-based firm specializing in government and public relations from 1991 to 1993.

Eric Andrus

Julie Anbender, most recently the Service's director of public affairs, has been appointed as counselor to the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner, where she will provide assistance on a variety of sensitive immigration-related issues. Anbender has also previously worked as the Department of Justice's acting director of communications and deputy director of the Department's Office of Public Affairs.

Linda Greene, of the Headquarters Office of Management, has been detailed by the Commissioner as the Service's acting assistant chief of staff. Her primary responsibilities during the detail will be establishing and managing a Rapid Response Unit (RRU) responsible for answering the Attorney General's top-priority correspondence. She will also be evaluating the current INS-wide correspondence process, examining the best practices of other agencies and the private sector, and recommending a correspondence process-reinvention strategy to INS' executive staff.

In the Field:

Commissioner Meissner has announced two key personnel appointments in the Southern California area. **Adele Fasano** has been named the San Diego district director, and **William T. Veal** has been selected as the Border Patrol chief of the San Diego sector. Fasano replaces Mark Reed, who was recently named Central Region director in Dallas, TX. Veal replaces Johnny Williams, the Service's new Western Region director, based in Laguna Niguel, CA.

Fasano began her career with INS in 1990 as a special assistant to the Executive Associate Commissioner for Operations at Headquarters. She was later the deputy assistant commissioner for Inspections, as well as the Service's acting assistant commissioner for Records. She most recently was the deputy district director in San Diego.

Linda Greene

Veal, a 25-year INS veteran, was most recently the chief patrol agent in the El Paso, TX, Border Patrol sector, a position he held since 1995. He began his career as a Border Patrol agent in the Mercedes, TX, sector, transferring to the San Diego sector in 1975. In total, he spent 20 years in San Diego, rising to the position of

Continued on page 16

People on the Move

Continued from page 15

deputy chief patrol agent. Over that time, he served in a variety of positions, including as a Border Patrol pilot and as patrol agent-in-charge of the Chula Vista station.

"Adele Fasano and Bill Veal bring with them both the hands-on experience, as well as the vision to continue our success story in the San Diego area...," the Commissioner said in announcing the two new appointments. "The Southern California border is a critical place in our Southwest border strategy. With these appointments, we will continue to expand on the successes of Operation Gatekeeper."

William T. Veal

Mario Ortiz, formerly INS' Central Region director of congressional and public affairs, has been selected as the assistant officer-in-charge of the Service's Albuquerque, NM, suboffice. A 13-year INS veteran, Ortiz has also previously served as the acting deputy district director in both the El Paso and Houston, TX, district offices. Before joining INS, he worked as a special assistant to U.S. Senator Lloyd Bentsen, and as a television news anchor in Austin, TX.

Mario Ortiz

Administrative Convergence

John R. Schroeder (center), who retired in March as the Service's director of administrative centers after a 35-year Federal career stands with center directors from across the nation on his last day with INS. Pictured with Schroeder are (l. to r.): Kenneth Smith, administrative center director, Burlington, VT; Debra Hayes, administrative center director, Laguna Niguel, CA; Barbara Blessing, administrative center director, Dallas, TX; and Stanley Johnson, administrative center director, Twin Cities, MN. (Photo by Ara Asatoorian)

Communique INS

The ***INS Communique*** is published by the Headquarters Office of Public Affairs to inform employees of the Immigration and Naturalization Service about official and unofficial activities. Readers are invited to submit articles, photographs, and letters to the editor. Write to INS Public Affairs, Washington, DC 20536; or ✆ (202) 514-2648. This newsletter and other useful information also are available on the Internet through the INS web site at http://www.ins.usdoj.gov.

Doris Meissner, *Commissioner*
Eric Andrus, *Director of Communications*
Mitch Katz, *Editor*

Cover: The process of becoming a U.S. citizen has become more secure with additional measures such as in-house fingerprinting and a larger naturalization blueprint currently being implemented through the development of Application Support Centers nationwide. (see 'Message from the Commissioner' and story on page 4)