



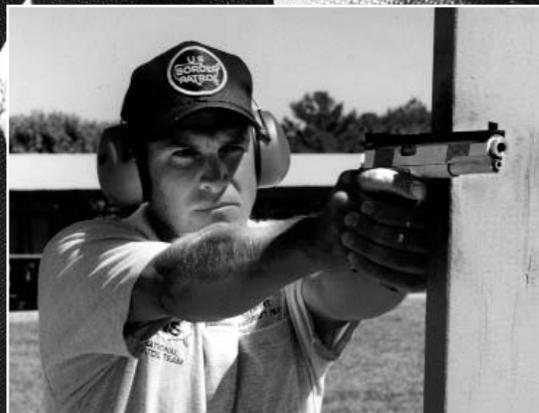
CommuniQUÉ

S E P T E M B E R / O C T O B E R 2 0 0 2

A BORDER PATROL STORM

Agents stay focused despite 8 inches of rain, sweep national police shooting competition

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Solemn Headquarters ceremony honors Sept. 11 victims of terrorism

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Central Region reducing costs while increasing morale, deportations

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President, Canadian Prime Minister praise recent border improvements

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HEADQUARTERS *News*

HEADQUARTERS HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH EVENT HONORS 'STRENGTH IN UNITY, FAITH, AND DIVERSITY'

IN 1988, National Hispanic Heritage Week was expanded to a month to more fully honor the diverse peoples of Spanish-speaking backgrounds who have come to the United States.

At the Sept. 18 Hispanic Heritage Month celebration at Headquarters, Acting Deputy Commissioner Mike Becraft said that one month is not enough. He spoke about Hispanic contributions to the INS and all facets of the United States during the celebration's opening remarks. Dr. Jacob "Jake" Lozada, assistant secretary for human resources and administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs, was the guest speaker at the event, which featured the theme, "Hispanic Americans: Strength in Unity, Faith, and Diversity."

U.S.' largest minority group

Lydia St. John-Mellado, director, Fraud Unit, Office of Field Operations, Investigations, introduced Lozada and noted that Hispanics are now the largest minority group in the United States.

Both Becraft and Lozada spoke about how the 2000 U.S. Census showed Hispanics are now the U.S.' largest minority and that their U.S. population increased by more than 60 percent between 1990 and 2000.

"Ever since Columbus sailed with his Spanish crew under Queen Isabella's flag, men and women of Spanish ancestry have been coming to American shores in pursuit of their dreams," Lozada said.

“What makes their loyal service even more remarkable is that many Hispanics put their lives on the line for America long before they and their families were fully accepted as U.S. citizens with all the rights and privileges that come with it.”

—Acting Deputy
Commissioner Becraft



Dr. Jacob "Jake" Lozada highlights Hispanics' historical contribution to the U.S. military—and the United States and New World since 1492—and their recent U.S. population growth.

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The musical group "Los Compadres" of Washington, D.C., performs.

Said Becraft, "Hispanics have been making a vital contribution to our nation since its founding."

Besides contributing to U.S. politics, public service, business, science, and arts and entertainment, Hispanics have particularly had a distinguished record of service in the U.S. military since the War of Independence. In the Vietnam War, he noted, they made up one quarter of the casualties despite, at the time, making up less than 5 percent of the U.S. population.

"What makes their loyal service even more remarkable is that many Hispanics put their lives on the line for America long before they and their families were fully accepted as U.S. citizens with all the rights and privileges that come with it," he said.

Contribution to INS and Border Patrol commended

Becraft also spoke about the INS' accomplishment of having one of the highest proportions of Hispanics on its payroll of all federal agencies. He commended the contributions of Hispanics to the INS and Border Patrol.

Lozada concluded with a quote from President George W. Bush: "By working together, we can achieve a fully democratic hemisphere, bound together by good will, cultural understanding, and free trade. The many contributions of Hispanic Americans to our nation will help us reach this important goal by helping connect our country with the Hispanic nations to our south. This month, we celebrate the talents, culture, and spirit of Hispanic Americans, which deeply enrich our country and bless our people."

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HEADQUARTERS *News*

CUSTOMERS CAN CHECK APPLICATION STATUS WITH A FEW CLICKS ON CASE STATUS ONLINE

WITH the successful implementation of Case Status Online, many INS customers are now just a few computer keystrokes away from learning if action has been taken on their pending applications and petitions.

The Case Status Online system, which opened to public access on Sept. 27, allows customers to check on most pending applications filed, via the INS website: www.ins.gov. Reflecting the INS' commitment to improving customer service, the system will spare many customers a trip to an INS office or time on the telephone to check the status of their cases.

"We shared the frustration of customers and employees who complained that there was no easy way to check the status of a pending case," said INS Commissioner James W. Ziglar. "We expect that the availability of Case Status Online will reduce the number of customers who need to call or visit INS in person for this information."

He said the new system also enables local field offices to focus on providing services that are only available by appointment or in-person visit.

"We intend to use the INS Web site to even greater advantage in the future to provide several basic immigration-related services online," Ziglar wrote in an introductory letter on the Web site. Future services include offering INS customers the ability to report their address change online, which is now done by filing a paper form.

Other electronic government (e-Gov) services are being developed and will be provided online upon completion. Improvements that have been recommended in restructuring plans for the INS "will enhance our ability to guard the American homeland and help deliver the American dream," Ziglar wrote.

The Case Status Online system provides a read-only access to callers and safeguards the integrity of case file information. Case-study information is updated regularly throughout every business day, providing in many instances notification within minutes of when action is taken on an application. Users will need to wait official notification, by letter, of what that decision is.

Customers can gain access to Case Status Online and notifications posted for their files by using the unique receipt number that the INS issues for each petition or application it receives. Those who have recently filed applications must await the arrival of their receipt in the mail before they can gain access to the Case Status Online system.

The National Customer Service Center of the Immigration Services Division, which operates the Case Status Online system, emphasized that it is a new option available to customers and does not replace any existing methods for obtaining case status. Applicants can still receive such information by calling the National Customer Service Center at 1-800-375-5283 (or, for the hearing impaired, 1-800-767-1833, which provides a TTY connection) or by visiting their local INS field office.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT CASE STATUS ONLINE

Q How often is the case status information on this site updated?

A The case status information on this site is updated regularly throughout the business day. If any action is taken regarding a case, the change will be reflected on this site within a few minutes of the action taking place.

Q Does this site provide support for any languages other than English?

A Yes, this site also provides support for Spanish.

Q Is a receipt number required to perform case status searches via this site?

A Yes, an application receipt number is required to perform case status searches via this site. There is no other way to locate case status information. This site does not maintain any personal information that may have been provided with applications, thus customers will not be able to search via any other means. If

they have submitted an application, but have not received a receipt number, they will have to wait for their receipt number to arrive in the mail.

Q Is the case status information only available online?

A No, customers can receive the same information provided through this site by calling the automated telephone system, INS Direct, at the Service Center where their application was filed.

Q Is the case status information provided on this site the same as that provided by INS Direct on the telephone?

A Yes, the case status information on this site is identical to the information provided by the automated telephone system, INS Direct, at the Service Center where an application was filed.

VICTIMS OF TERRORISM REMEMBERED AT SEPT. 11 HEADQUARTERS CEREMONY

*Day is done,
Gone the sun,
From the lakes,
from the hills,
from the sky,
All is well,
Safely rest,
God is nigh.
—“Taps” lyrics*

At 9:37 a.m. on Sept. 11, the exact time that American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon a year earlier, INS Headquarters employees stood for a moment of silence to recognize the one-year anniversary of the moment tragedy began unfolding about four miles away from Headquarters.

A few of the INS employees at the 15-minute ceremony in the street in front of Headquarters were among the INS personnel who assisted with search, rescue, and comfort at both the Pentagon and World Trade Center ground zero sites during the days and weeks following the terrorist attacks. A few personally knew some of the victims and/or their families. Most had experienced a direct post-Sept. 11 impact on their jobs. Almost all had witnessed the plume of smoke rising in the otherwise clear Washington, D.C., skies as the nearby Pentagon began burning for days a year earlier.

The mood was somber at the ceremony, organized by the Border Patrol, that brought together uniformed officers from the



Senior Patrol Agents Marc Brito (left) of the El Paso Station, Texas, and Gabriel Acosta (middle) of the Laredo South Station, Texas, stand ready to perform as Supervisory Border Patrol Agent Jose Gonzalez (right), Honor Guard supervisor, of the Laredo South Station, Texas, walks by.

Border Patrol and Inspections along with INS staff to remember and reflect on Sept. 11; the lives lost; and the impact on the INS, the nation, and the world.

Making no public remarks, the Commissioner, the Chief, and other senior INS officials watched, along with other INS employees, as the Border Patrol Honor Guard began the ceremony by marching in front of the building entrance and posting the colors.

Following the moment of silence, bugles slowly played the 24 mournful and comforting notes of “Taps.”

Then a bagpipe filled the air with the solemn sound of “Amazing Grace.” The ceremony ended as solemnly and respectfully as it began with the retiring of the colors.

Employees then returned inside to their jobs. Private remembrances continued throughout the day, as they have every day since Sept. 11, and as they will for years—and anniversaries—to come.



Uniformed officers from the Border Patrol and Inspections salute in memory of the Sept. 11 victims of terrorism.



The Border Patrol Honor Guard posts the colors.



A giant American flag hangs above Headquarters.



Photo courtesy of Brian Smith

The President thanks border inspectors for their hard work.

PRESIDENT, CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER PRAISE RECENT BORDER IMPROVEMENTS

CROSSING the U.S.-Canadian border in Michigan will become a lot easier for commuters and business travelers next year under two new initiatives praised Sept. 9 by President George W. Bush and Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

“With these two initiatives, we’ll ensure faster movement of legal, low-risk goods and faster travel for

people across our borders,” President Bush said. “And we’ll be able to better enhance security. Our inspectors will spend less time inspecting law-abiding citizens and more time inspecting those who may harm us.”

With the busiest crossing point between the United States and Canada—the flag-adorned Ambassador Bridge near Detroit—rising above them, the two leaders expressed their commitment

to the NEXUS and Free and Secure Trade (FAST) lane programs. Both programs are designed to help speed frequent low-risk border commuters through U.S. and Canadian inspections while tightening security against terrorists and criminals.

NEXUS card-holders are able to cross the border without the usual questioning. Applicants undergo a series of background checks by U.S. and Canadian authorities and, if approved, receive photo-identification and proximity cards. When they cross the border, they drive through dedicated NEXUS lanes and flash their card to a border-crossing agent.

Continued on page 19



Photo courtesy of Marie Sabrechts

The first NEXUS lane opened as a pilot at the border crossing linking Port Huron and Sarnia.

INS NEWS
Note

BORDER PATROL SWEEPS NATIONAL SHOOTING COMPETITION DESPITE STORM

THE Border Patrol took the 2002 National Rifle Association (NRA) National Police Shooting Championships by storm—figuratively and literally.

As tropical storm Isidore deluged competitors with upwards of eight inches of rain during the three days of shooting Sept. 23-27 in Jackson, Miss., the Border Patrol competitors showed they could excel rain or shine. Agents earned top honors as National Individual Champion, National Individual Women’s Champion, and National Four-Man Team Champions.

No individual team has ever taken all of those top honors during one tournament.

‘We still had mental focus’

“Even when the weather is bad, we still have to do our job,” said Agent Gina Hernandez, a firearms instructor at the U.S. Border Patrol Academy in Glynco, Ga., who took the Individual Women’s Championship with a score of 2946-144X out of a possible 3000-300x. The “X” signifies the center-of-target hits used to break ties during the shooting competition.

“We weren’t shook up by the weather,” the 17-year Border Patrol veteran said. “We still had mental focus, and that’s what it takes to win under nasty conditions.”



Photo courtesy of Patricia Zollman

Agent Clay Tippit, a pilot based in Marfa, Texas, emerged for the third time as the top gun in the NRA’s National Police Shooting Championships.



Agent Gina Hernandez hopes her National Individual Women's Championship will help inspire trainees.

Hernandez's win was the first time a woman from the Border Patrol took the title since the women's competition began in 1985. The national individual championship titles are based on two full days of shooting, first with revolvers, then with semi-automatic pistols.

Agent Clay Tippit, a pilot based in Marfa, Texas, emerged as the competition's top gun—for the third time—claiming the overall National

Individual Champion title. Also a 17-year Border Patrol veteran, Tippit previously won the championship in 1997, broke the national record last year, and this year won the championship with a 2978-204X. Tippit also won, for the fifth time, the "Freedom's Defender, the Bill Jordan Commemorative, National Border Patrol Trophy."

"The rain and wind were a big factor. It's real tough to see your sights; there's water on everything," he said. "You just have to hold steady and make your sight picture look as good as possible. It's about stress and how you deal with it."

Tippit's third championship marked the tenth time a Border Patrol agent earned the competition's top gun honor since it began in 1962.

"The Border Patrol has been fantastic with their support for the national pistol team," he said. "Without the support of the Border Patrol, I doubt we'd be in the position we're in."

The National Four-Man Team Championship went to the Border Patrol Blue Team, consisting of Tippit and Border Patrol Agents John Poole II of the Laredo Sector, Robert Vadasz of the San Diego Sector, and Allen Parsons of the Swanton Sector. Vadasz also took third place in the individual competition with a score of 2970-181X, and Parsons took top honors in the Federal Category with a score of 2948-172X.

All Border Patrol Academy graduates

Both Tippit and Hernandez emphasized that they and the other three champions are Border Patrol Academy graduates without any previous military training.

"It certainly shows what you can accomplish with a basic start in the Border Patrol academy," Hernandez said, noting that as an instructor she wants to be inspirational to trainees and show them that with "hard work, dedication, and motivation they can accomplish great things in the U.S. Border Patrol."

She noted the competition for the event was stiff and consisted of some 500 law enforcement officers from across the United States, Germany, England, the former Czechoslovakia, and Canada, including members of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms; Customs Service; Drug Enforcement Administration; Federal Bureau of Investigations; Secret Service; Los Angeles Police Department; and New York City Police

Department. The matches were conducted by the City of Jackson Police Department and held on its 100-position pistol range.

According to the NRA, the competition serves as an opportunity for officers who have trained year-round to demonstrate and strengthen their combat proficiency in order to better serve and protect their communities. The matches include individual and team challenges using revolvers, semi-automatic pistols, and shotguns.

"NRA takes great pride in its longstanding alliance with law enforcement agencies," said NRA's Executive Director of General Operations Craig D. Sandler. "The National Police Shooting Championships are an especially important function, as they give policemen and women a chance for international recognition of their specialized shooting skills."

Tippit NRA's 2001 Officer of the Year

The NRA's Director of Law Enforcement Activities Division Ron Kirkland noted the organization was pleased to honor Tippit.

"Agent Tippit is an asset to his country and exemplifies all of the finest qualities of professional law enforcement," he said.

Last year the NRA named Tippit its Law Enforcement Officer of the Year for 2001 based on his individual proficiency with firearms combined with his actions taken to rescue people in need, his contributions to his community, and his coaching of fellow Border Patrol national pistol team members.

Hernandez acknowledged Tippit's support—along with the support and coaching of the rest of the team—as being an important contributing factor to her win.

"Clay thought I had some potential and thought I could do it this year," she said. "At the beginning of the season he and the rest of the team started encouraging me more and more."

Tippit, however, takes all the accolades in stride and stresses he is not letting his three championships and officer of the year title go to his head. He said it is just part of his commitment to the Border Patrol and fellow agents.

"I have no plans of transferring to another agency. I love my career," he said. "It's not just a job for me. I enjoy getting up and going to work every day."

Tippit said all he wants is to be an example to new agents showing that "there is a lot of upward mobility in this outfit as long as you work hard and stay focused." (He was trained to fly helicopters in the Border Patrol as well.) He also said he wants to encourage more Border Patrol agents to compete and fine-tune their shooting skills in a supportive team environment.

"There's a lot of hidden talent. Agent Vadasz took third place. He has been competing for three years, but it was his first year on the national pistol team," Tippit said. "What I'm saying is they need to try. These folks just need to come forward."



The Border Patrol did not lose focus despite tropical storm Isidore deluging the competition with rain.

INS NEWS FROM *the Field*

SEATTLE DISTRICT, LOCAL POLICE WORK TOGETHER TO END LARGEST FAKE ID SCAM IN STATE HISTORY

THE largest fraudulent immigration document operation ever encountered in the state of Washington was shut down Sept. 11 as the result of an INS undercover operation conducted in cooperation with local police.

“The important thing about the (fake card) operation was that it was so sophisticated,” said Seattle District Public Affairs Officer Garrison Courtney. “Normally, we can look at the cards and know instantaneously that they are fraudulent. These cards we had to look twice at, and with our close proximity to the Canadian border that is of a major concern to us.”

Joint INS-local police raids

During joint INS and local police raids on two homes in Seattle suburbs, police arrested Jesus Salvador Rivera-Villalon, a Mexican national accused of being the operation’s ringleader, and a second Mexican national, Jose Luis Ruelas-Vasquez, an alleged associate in the scam.

Officials also seized a vehicle; at least \$144,000 in cash; and sophisticated document-making equipment and paper used to manufacture fraudulent green cards, Social Security cards, Washington state driver’s licenses, and Mexican birth certificates.

The raids culminated a 10-month joint investigation by the INS and Lynnwood Police Department. Lynnwood is a suburb of Seattle.

Courtney said Special Agent Ben Carnevale played a key role in the investigation, which uncovered clear evidence that Rivera sold at least 800 fake Social Security and green cards in the past year with a street value of about \$240,000. Sophisticated fake documents like the ones that were manufactured and sold through the operation typically sell for \$200 to \$350 a piece.

The operation typically drummed up business by word of mouth, Courtney said, and customers

tended to be Mexican nationals living in Western Washington. Buyers use the faked paperwork to line up jobs or apply for identification in other states.

“They offered a whole package anyone would need to create a whole new identity,” he said.

Numerous “buys” by confidential informant

According to the Seattle U.S. Attorney’s Office, a confidential informant made numerous “buys” of fraudulent INS documents and other counterfeit identification documents during an undercover investigation last summer.

During the first raid of that residence, Ruelas was found in possession of counterfeit green cards and other fraudulent identification documents.

Ruelas immediately offered to cooperate in the criminal investigation by leading the officers to his supplier’s apartment where he purchased counterfeit documents from the occupant. Based on Ruelas’ purchase, the officers obtained a search warrant for what later proved to be Rivera’s apartment.

Rivera was charged under Title 18, U.S. Code, Section 1546, for unlawfully possessing and manufacturing green cards. If convicted, Rivera faces a maximum 10 years in prison and deportation. The charges against Ruelas are unknown at this time.

Warrants both state and federal

Courtney emphasized that the case was a little unusual in that the warrants used to arrest the two suspects were both state and federal, with INS serving as the federal conduit to the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

“It was hand-in-hand with the Lynnwood Police Department. As a district, we’re working closely with local police,” he said. “We realize strength is in numbers.”

EL CENTRO SECTOR MULTICULTURAL DAY EXPLORES REGION'S DIFFERENT CULTURES

A day of fun exploring all the different cultures represented in the Imperial Valley, the community of the Border Patrol El Centro Sector, marked the sector's first annual Multicultural Day Celebration Sept. 14.

"What we were trying to do with our celebration was promote community, and our efforts were successful," said Chief Patrol Agent Kenneth Stitt. "We had over 300 people from the community come together to celebrate unity through diversity in a day filled with music, entertainment, food, and fun."

Special emphasis program managers and the recruitment office worked together to come up with ideas on how to make the event special, deciding upon Bucklin Park as the location with its greenery, duck pond, and large pavilion. They sought donations of different ethnic foods and supplies from local businesses and enlisted entertainment from schools, local entertainers, and Border Patrol members and their families.

"Since the issues of community and unity are important, we set a day aside to mix with the community, examine the special contributions of different cultures, and promote unity in the valley," Stitt said. "We very much appreciated our community coming through for us and their generosity in giving us all the help we needed to organize the event."

The day started at 6 a.m. with Field Training Officers, their new recruits, and the Explorer advisors with their team of Explorers helping set up. Air Ops flew in its helicopter with the field training team securing the perimeter for safety.

Booths were set up at 8 a.m., and the Bike Patrol, K-9 service, Border Patrol Search Trauma and Rescue (BORSTAR), and Horse Patrol all had booths with equipment and displays. Other booths included an Explorers child identification fingerprint

station and artifact and historical information displays on the Border Patrol's multiculturalism.

"We showed that we are a federal law enforcement agency with a long and proud history of multiculturalism," Stitt said.

Supervisory Border Patrol Agent Jesus De La Vega set up the sound system and Assistant Chief Patrol Agent



The Hispanic Affairs Program booth highlighting the Border Patrol's historic multiculturalism.

Secretary Nubia Avalos donated an inflatable playroom. Stitt opened the ceremonies, the El Centro Sector Honor Guard presented the colors, and Training Secretary Kelly Rodriguez sang the "Star Spangled Banner."

Volunteers from the out stations, training office, and sector headquarters as well as spouses of agents prepared, cooked, and served the food donated by the ethnic communities. They also gave away free prizes to everyone.

"One of the most successful and enjoyable ways to explore different cultures is enjoying one another's foods," Stitt said. "The willingness of local businesses to donate food and supplies for the event was critical to the day's success."

Some of the entertainment from the community included Calexico Martial Arts; Native American dancers from the Cycuan, Pacua Yaqui, and Quechan Tribes; Mexican Folklorico; and tap/jazz dancers from a local dance studio. The daughter of one of the Calexico agents sang and danced to music by Selena, and the daughter of one of the Program Managers performed a Hawaiian dance. Central High School jazz band, which included the son of El Centro Sector Training Officer Woody Lee, performed for the last half hour as the day came to a close.

After a long day, displays were disassembled and again the field teams and Explorers jumped in to help get everything cleared and stored.

"Everyone's hard work resulted in three very important outcomes," Stitt said. "We created new partnerships with ethnic communities; we enhanced cross-cultural understanding; and, most importantly, we promoted a greater awareness of the Border Patrol's every day commitment to public service."



Mexican Folklorico dancers perform.

CENTRAL REGION INITIATIVE IN CHICAGO PROCESSES CRIMINAL ALIENS 8 TIMES FASTER THAN AVERAGE

24-hour, 7-day-a-week video-teleconferencing operation reduces costs, travel time while increasing morale, safety, and deportations

SUPERVISORY Special Agent Sam Ashurst frequently interviews criminal aliens incarcerated in San Antonio, Texas, as if they were right in front of him.

Although more than 1,000 miles away at the Central States Command Center (CSCC) in Chicago, Ill., he can look in the aliens' eyes, read their body language, see their expressions—and, most importantly—compare their faces and other biometric data with cross-referenced, on-screen photos and data from the INS' biometric identification system (IDENT) and the National Automated Immigration Lookout System (NAIS).



A dozen jails throughout the Central Region are equipped with video-teleconferencing equipment through Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants, and another 40 are waiting to come online.

“It’s almost like you’re there”

“It’s almost like you’re there,” he said. “You see the person. The person sees you.”

The center Ashurst directs provides state and local law enforcement agencies, local pre-trial services and parole offices, and INS field agents with operational support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, when foreign-born suspects are criminally arrested in 18 states throughout the Midwest. The command center also handles the region’s apprehensions from intercepted smuggling loads.

Using video-teleconferencing technology, the dozen agent detailees staffing the command center interview criminal aliens and fill out charging documents remotely—eight times faster than agents can by conducting live, face-to-face interviews in the field. All of them are bilingual in Spanish, and many of them speak a third language, such as Polish or Russian.

And that opens up a whole new world of possibilities.

“I guarantee you that 99 agents out of 100 prefer working a proactive, complex investigation as opposed to conducting a reactive jail interview, which involves an agent spending the day in the car driving to the jail, sitting in that jail waiting to complete a number of interviews, then returning to the office to process paperwork,” said Chicago Assistant District Director for Investigations (ADDI) John Torres. “The CSCC is much more efficient, more of a morale builder, and the INS continues to arrest criminal aliens, which is a top priority.”

Long drives eliminated

He said the command center’s remote interviewing capabilities eliminates situations where agents are required to drive long

distances—in the Central Region’s harsh winters, sometimes 100 miles or more in the snow—to interview a criminal alien in a jail. After clearing security and interviewing the subject, these agents have to drive back to their office to complete record checks.

“After an agent lodges a detainer requesting the jail to ‘hold’ the subject for INS, resources must be committed to return to the jail to transport the aliens to an INS detention facility,” Torres said. “The CSCC eliminates one trip to the jail and frees up agents to focus on sex offenders, gang members, or national security cases.”

Ashurst noted that eliminating travel to and from jails also cuts down on fuel costs and vehicle repairs and is much safer, especially in the winter. “I’m not putting my officers at risk,” he said.

Started in response to Gallegly Law

The command center is an initiative created in August 1998 in response to the Gallegly Law (requiring an INS presence in all jail facilities), the National Criminal Alien Removal Program, and Congressional concerns over a growing criminal alien problem. In agreement with the regional director and the district director of Chicago, the command center was placed within the Chicago District.

The center started with a single phone line and grew into a state-of-the-art facility with advanced technological systems and equipment. Today, it is the INS presence for about 70 jails and serves nine of the 11 districts within the Central Region. A dozen of those jails are equipped with the video-teleconferencing equipment through Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) grants, and another 40 are waiting to come online



An agent from the Central States Command Center in Chicago, Ill., appears on a monitor during an interview with a suspected criminal alien (left) in a jail in San Antonio, Texas.

after having just been approved for COPS grants. Interviewing and processing at the rest of the jails is done by telephone.

Torres attributes at least half of the Chicago District’s recent 700-percent increase in apprehensions of criminal aliens over 1996 levels to the command center’s coordination with the Chicago Alien Criminal Apprehension Program (ACAP) program. Besides processing criminal alien cases for the districts, the command center also tracks “pending” criminal convictions



Deportation Officer Dorothy Herrera-Niles interviews an incarcerated alien in Polk County Jail in Iowa without leaving the Central States Command Center in Chicago, Ill.



Detailees to the Central States Command Center pose for the camera. Top row (left to right) Supervisory Special Agent Sam Ashurst; Deportation Officer Miguel Robles, Pecos, Texas; Special Agent Jesse Hill, Chicago District; and Special Agent Stephen Hernandez, Chicago District. Bottom row (left to right) Special Agent Patrick Schumacher, El Paso District; Deportation Officer Dorothy Herrera-Niles, San Antonio District; Special Agent Mike Einspahr, North Platte, Neb.; and Special Agent Ulrich Denig, St. Paul District.

that would make current “in status” aliens subject to deportation at a later date.

“What it really does is maximize the limited resources of the investigations program,” he said. “My philosophy is that if the CSCC processes criminal aliens eight times faster than standard ACAP work, I’d like to see the CSCC process the majority of criminal aliens in the Chicago area.”

Dallas District ADDI Tom Homan, formerly ADDI for the San Antonio District, echoed Torres’ sentiments. He said by signing

up eight jails in the San Antonio District with the command center, he was able to reassign eight agents from processing criminal aliens to more complex, comprehensive investigations—leaving only two agents to perform effectively what was once the job of 10.

“In fact, the total criminal alien statistic increased after signing up with the command center and because of the eight reassigned people, the total prosecutions increased by over 300 percent within that unit,” he said.

Complements LESC activities

Across the region in Fiscal Year 2002, the center interviewed and processed and detained 9,023 criminal aliens as well as 110 smuggling loads of five to 19 people each. That represents more than a quarter of the Central Region’s Government Performance and Results Act goal for investigations-related criminal alien removals.

All day and all night, two to three agents per shift answer telephone inquiries and monitor the responses of the INS Law Enforcement Support Center (LESC) in Burlington, Vt. Also a 24/7 operation, the LESC assists local law enforcement agencies determine if a person they have contact with, or have in custody, is in fact an illegal, criminal, or fugitive alien. LESC inquiries come in through the National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (NLETS), the identity-check system local law enforcement agencies use when someone is arrested or pulled over. LESC copies the command center on all its NLETS responses in the region.

“We complement them,” Ashurst said.

Between 85 and 90 percent of the cases the command center identifies, he said, come from the LESC during the swing and graveyard shifts, times when most INS offices are closed. For many district offices, the center serves as an after hours “duty agent,” eliminating the need for a physical presence at an investigative scene.

INS detainer placed immediately

“When LESC establishes alienage, we contact the jail and interview the subject. If it is determined the subject in custody is in fact a criminal or illegal alien, we detain the subject and process the required paperwork and place an INS detainer immediately,” Ashurst said.

Homan said that before the San Antonio District started working with the command center, local authorities sometimes inadvertently released deportable criminal aliens the LESC record check identified in the evening or at night rather than notify the INS and hold them until agents arrived.

“A lot of county jails love the idea because no criminal aliens are going to be released accidentally,” he said.

Continued on page 13

INS NEWS *of Note*

ELLIS ISLAND FLAG PRESENTED AS BEACON OF PROMISE AT DEDICATION CEREMONY

By Marie Sebrechts

A flag once displayed in the Great Hall of Ellis Island now hangs at the new Customer Service Center in Chula Vista, Calif.

“Ellis Island has stood as a beacon of promise for millions of immigrants arriving to America,” said Western Region Director Carolyn Muzyka as she, in a surprise gesture, presented the flag at the center’s grand opening and dedication ceremony on Sept. 4. “Similarly, this office will be a welcoming presence for immigrants here in San Diego County.”

The flag was spirited across the country with the help of National Park Service Ranger Vincent DiPietro and properly folded and encased by the San Diego Border Patrol Sector to hang in its new home near the Pacific Ocean.

Deputy Executive Associate Commissioner for Immigration Services Bill Yates said the state-of-the-art, 20,000-square-foot facility reflects the agency’s efforts to make the process of welcoming eligible new immigrants easier.

“Across the country—and around the globe—we are seeking to make our services friendlier and more accessible, while at the same time enhancing the security and integrity of our nation’s immigration system,” he said.

The Chula Vista office is located in an area easily accessible by trolley and bus and with plenty of free parking spaces. Not only was it custom designed to serve San Diego’s immigrant population of about 600,000 with an accessible, customer-oriented setting, it also was designed to provide a safe and comfortable workplace that attracts and retains employees.

San Diego District Director Adele Fasano noted that state-of-the-art computer systems will help reduce backlogs and streamline the application process.

“Today’s ceremony marks another major step forward

in our continued efforts to reduce application processing and customer wait times,” she said. “In less than two years, applications for permanent residency have already been reduced from 32 to 12 months. With this new facility, we are confident we will further reduce processing times to six months by the end of next year for all benefit applications.”



Executive Secretary Ann R. Hanson (middle) holds an American flag once flown in the Great Hall of Ellis Island. As Western Region Director Carolyn Muzyka (left) announces the flag is being presented to the Customer Service Center to serve as a “beacon of promise,” San Diego District Director Adele Fasano (right) smiles in response to the surprise gesture.

In its first month, the staff has interviewed some 5,000 applicants for all types of immigration benefits except naturalization—and has provided information to almost 2,500 customers.

The dedication ceremony drew a cross section of federal and local government agencies and community leaders. Speakers included Chula Vista Mayor Shirley Horton; Consul General Rodulfo Figueroa of Mexico; Sandra Wagner, president of the San Diego Chapter of American Immigration Lawyers Association; and Bob Montgomery, International Rescue Committee director.

In addition to the presentation of the Ellis Island flag, the unveiling of the dedication plaque, and diverse speeches from a cross-section of partners, the ceremony included acknowledgment of outstanding employees: Assistant Regional Director for Adjudications Jim Booe, Regional Space Management Specialist Pat Rice, Regional Space Management Specialist Robin Coachman, San Diego District Facilities Specialist Robert J. Barron, Adjudications Facilities Coordinator Dolores Uribe, and IT Infrastructure Support Specialist Keith Jones.

Muzyka said they “worked tirelessly over the past two years to bring us closer to ensuring that service is more than just a word in INS’ name—that it’s a way of doing business.”



A children’s area offers colorful toys, children’s videos, and art supplies.

Photo courtesy of Marie Sebrechts

Photo courtesy of Marie Sebrechts

3 INS EMPLOYEES AMONG HONORED 'UNSUNG HEROES' AT CUSTOMS EVENT

THREE INS employees were among some 170 "unsung heroes" honored at the Customs Service Commissioner's Annual Awards Ceremony 2002 on Oct. 25 in Washington, D.C.

"I understand the degree of personal sacrifice you all make, often unsung at the eleventh hour, that you make for our country," Secretary of the Treasury Paul O'Neill said during the ceremony's opening remarks.

He said that it is important to recognize the people who have worked so hard the last few years and months, emphasizing that this recognition needs to include the unsung heroes' friends and families.

"You have to remember that the family and friends get no recognition and they pay a huge part of the price," O'Neill said. "And, at the same time, I want to say to them on my own behalf 'thank you very much. It's greatly appreciated what you do.'"

The INS employees receiving awards were Stan Knight of Inspections and Border Patrol Agents Guillermo J. Villaseñor and Christopher W. Rose.

Knight was a recipient of the "Customs Partnership Award" for his "support in the implementation of Customs published regulations requiring electronic transmittal of 100 percent of manifest data on all crew and passengers for all passenger flights entering the United States. Manifest data is sent through the Customs Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) to provide critical risk information on international travelers. The accuracy of the APIS data increased remarkably from 53 percent last November to the current rate of 90 percent," according to the event's program. Knight was part of a team of 13 winning the award.



Border Patrol Agent Guillermo J. Villaseñor (right) accepts an award from Customs Service Commissioner Robert Bonner.

Photo courtesy of James Tourletotte

Villaseñor and Rose were recipients of the "Strategic Problem Solving (SPS) of the Year Award" in recognition of their "creative and aggressive approach to an identified local enforcement threat. The Port of Eagle Pass, in conjunction with the Resident Agent in Charge, Eagle Pass Office, noticed an increase in the number of vehicles registered for export and a corresponding increase in the number of narcotics and current seizures intercepted at the port

involving those same exported vehicles. In coordination with the U.S. Border Patrol, National Insurance Crime Bureau, and Eagle Pass Stolen Vehicle Task Force, the Operation Phantom SPS team quickly developed and implemented new targeting and investigative procedures to identify the smuggling organizations utilizing these vehicles, which produced immediate and impressive results.

During the six-month operation, results included 59 seizures netting 2,223 kilograms of marijuana; 10 seizures netting 71 kilograms of cocaine; 1 seizure netting 2 grams of heroin; 17 seizures of currency totaling \$343,574; 13 Shippers Export Declaration violations valued at \$118,839; and a total of 73 vehicles seized and 82 arrests effected, with another 25

indictments still pending. Intelligence developed during the operation led to the arrest of a federal officer on charges of bribery. The alternative actions developed as a result of Operation Phantom have become an integral part of the port's standard operating procedures, improving the overall number and quality of investigations, seizures, and arrests," according to the program. The agents were part of a team of 12 winning the award.

"Keep going," O'Neill said in closing.

CENTRAL REGION

Continued from page 11

Central Region Deputy Assistant Regional Director for Investigations Daron Mrkva said the INS Quick Response Teams (QRTs) consider it invaluable having an INS "1-800" number available to call from anywhere at anytime.

"When the QRTs go to remote locations, these guys call the command center constantly," he said. "If there's any type of trouble, there is somebody to help them."

Telephones answered "no matter what"

Ashurst said the command center answers the telephones and fields inquiries "no matter what." That means trouble-shooting

QRTs in dangerous situations and assisting INS agents from around the country and as far away as Europe and the Caribbean who require assistance in the middle of the night. As such, he said, the biggest obstacle the command center is facing is the overwhelming demand for its services. More jails are interested in applying for COPS grants, coming online, and eliminating processing delays than the command center currently can handle.

"Just image if the center were staffed with seven per shift instead of two or three," he said. "Imagine what numbers would be coming out of there. It has legs of its own. It wants to take off."

Mrkva agreed, saying he'd like to see the center grow.

"The potential of the whole project is staggering," he said.

INS NEWS FROM *the Field*

ELDERLY COUPLE, UNAWARE OF IMMINENT RV EXPLOSION, SAVED BY SPECIAL AGENT

By Sharon Rummery

IT'S not always easy for a man to turn his back on his old profession. When Special Agent Kevin Loker joined INS in 1997, he'd been a firefighter for six years. That training came in handy for him on Aug. 13 when he was driving to work in Fresno, Calif., and spotted a recreational vehicle that appeared to be on fire.

Loker pulled alongside and saw smoke coming from a wheel well. It was a double-wheeled recreational vehicle with a flat on one of the paired wheels, and he feared that the flapping remains of the tire might have ruptured the fuel line—which he knew from his fire-fighting experience was a dangerous situation. But when he pulled up and tried to get the driver's attention, Don Dixon, 82, of San Luis Obispo, didn't notice him.

Driving with flat

"They thought they'd be able to drive on the flat because they had double tires," Loker said.

He then sped ahead to an intersection, did a 180-degree turn, put on his strobe, and waved the recreational vehicle driver over. A passing motorist offered a fire extinguisher, but nothing Loker could do would stop the flames now licking out under the recreational vehicle's shell. Things were getting dangerous—he phoned Investigative Clerk Debbie Nelson at the INS office, asking her to call 911.

"His voice was different," Nelson remembered. "It had a certain urgency. I haven't heard him sound so tense."

The travelers didn't sense the danger, and Loker pulled them away as the propane tanks began to explode.

Burning under propane tanks

"I had to yell at Mrs. Dixon to get her back from it," Loker said. "It was burning right under where there are propane tanks in an RV."



Special Agent Kevin Loker (left) discusses rescuing an elderly couple from near death with Investigative Clerk Debbie Nelson.

Nelson was working hard to get a fire truck to the scene, complicated by the fact that the highway runs through two counties, and nobody was quite sure which one had jurisdiction.

Loker then punched in another call to Nelson, to let her know the entire recreational vehicle was in flames. Emergency personnel arrived too late to save the vehicle.

Nothing left of RV but frame

"There's nothing out there now but a frame," Loker said the following day. He phoned in for authorization to transport the couple in his government car and took them to a rental place so they could rent a car and return home.

"Kevin is a swell guy," Mr. Dixon said. "I'm a believer in the INS. He really took care of us."

These heroics weren't a "first" for the special agent who just can't stop being a firefighter. Just a few weeks before, he'd pulled a Volkswagen driver over on the same highway. The car's engine was on fire, and Loker neatly extinguished it, putting it out a second time when a broken fuel line re-ignited it.

"He's not a fireman anymore, but he's still got the touch," Nelson said.

OPERATION BROKEN VOWS UNCOVERS VAST 'MARRIAGE FOR MONEY' SCHEME

OPERATION Broken Vows, a federal probe into a scheme that paid women between \$1,000 to \$6,000 to marry illegal aliens, largely from Pakistan, ended with a federal grand jury indicting 175 people on Oct. 22.

"This investigation serves to protect the integrity of the immigration process and would not have been possible without the assistance of the U.S. Secret Service and the Spartanburg Department of Public Safety," said Atlanta Acting District Director Fred Alexander.

A few days earlier, INS, Secret Service, and FBI agents along with Spartanburg (S.C.) police arrested the 107 women accused of agreeing to the sham marriages—most single mothers from the Spartanburg and Greenville, S.C., area. They also arrested 19 of the men in Washington, D.C.; New York; Texas; North Carolina; Pennsylvania; and elsewhere. Warrants were issued for another 80 men.

"After Sept. 11 last year, the President asked law enforcement and citizens to be vigilant," U.S. Attorney Strom Thurmond Jr. said. "These arrests are the result of the exercise of that vigilance."

The indictments by the federal grand jury in Columbia, S.C., allege that the 107 sham marriages took place between January and April 2001 in South Carolina, where there is only a 24-hour wait for a marriage license, and no blood tests are required. The recruited women usually would meet their grooms for the first time at the courthouse, get married in front of a probate judge, then leave in separate cars, never to see each other again, according to the indictments.

The grooms usually would return to their home states shortly after the marriage, the indictments allege, and then the brides and grooms would submit documentation to the INS seeking legal resident status and work authorization for the grooms based on the marriages.

Thurmond said investigators learned of the marriages last spring when one of the women, facing charges in an unrelated Secret Service case, came forward. He expressed special gratitude to U.S. Attorney Kevin McDonald for overseeing Operation Broken Vows, a joint investigation between INS, Secret Service, the Spartanburg Department of Public Safety, and the FBI. He also specifically commended INS Special Agents Paul Anderson and Andrea Roubal.

"I commend the cooperation among the investigative agencies and the hard work that went into making this investigation possible," he said.

The grand jury issued a total of 110 indictments in connection with the case. Three charged two people with conspiring to organize the sham marriages, 62 charged the female citizens and the male foreign nationals with entering into the fraudulent marriages, and 45 charged the male foreign nationals alone with entering into the fraudulent marriages.

Thurmond said the maximum penalty each defendant could receive is a five-year sentence and \$250,000 fine. But he said prosecutors dropped most charges against the women who entered pleas to misdemeanors, and most of them received six months of probation. The men will make court appearances in the states they reside in before being transported to South Carolina for prosecution or deportation.

The indictments identified as the scheme's organizers Pauline Williams, 56, of South Carolina; Sheila Tanveer, age unknown, of South Carolina; Ali Choudhry, age unknown, of Alexandria, Va.; Tanveer Ahmad, age unknown; Kashannon Jones, 36, of South Carolina; and Mohammad Naseem, age unknown. They face conspiracy charges as well as the other charges.

FOUR-STAR GENERAL VISITS MARFA TRAINING FACILITIES

A four-star Air Force general visited the Border Patrol Marfa Sector Oct. 18 to evaluate the local Joint Task Force Six (JTF-6) program and tour the new training facilities the U.S. Marines volunteered to build under JTF-6 to enhance counter-drug and law enforcement training.

Chief Patrol Agent Simon Garza Jr. discussed with General Ralph E. "Ed" Eberhart, commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command, and commander, U.S. Northern Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colo., the 91 missions JTF-6 has successfully completed in the Marfa Sector and how significant those missions have been to the sector, other law enforcement agencies, and local communities.

"As a direct result of JTF-6 efforts, we are better prepared to respond to emergency situations and execute our law enforcement duties along the Mexican border," Garza said.

JTF-6 is a multi-service Department of Defense unit, assigned to Joint Force Headquarters/Homeland Security, providing counter-drug support to the nation's law enforcement agencies. The unit has been assisting the Marfa sector with detecting, deterring, disrupting, and dismantling illegal drug trafficking organizations.

Under JTF-6, about 100 active-duty U.S. Marine Corps engineers, based in Camp Lejeune, N.C., constructed new Border Patrol training facilities at Marfa Municipal Airport in October. The new facility includes a rappel tower, a weapons firing range, and an obstacle course complete with electrical support enabling day and night training.

"The project will not only provide agents with a safer training environment, but will also contribute immeasurably to overall officer safety," Garza said.

He emphasized that the Marines volunteered for the mission and the sector is looking forward to the benefits resulting from their efforts. They volunteered following the sector's request to JTF-6 for military construction support.

"The facility will not only be used to train border patrol agents, but will also provide counter-drug and law enforcement training support to other local agencies," Garza said.



The general tours the new training facilities the U.S. Marines volunteered to build for the Border Patrol at Marfa Municipal Airport.

NEW FEATURE FOR ANNUAL FLEET CELEBRATION; SAILOR IS NATURALIZED IN OPENING CEREMONIES

By Sharon Rummery

EVERY year since 1981, the U.S. Navy in San Francisco has celebrated Fleet Week over the long Columbus Day weekend with a parade of ships, ship visits, demonstrations, and the Blue Angels, flight team screaming across the sky.

This year was different—especially for a sailor named Petty Officer Enrique Rene Licona. Licona's naturalization interview was scheduled for late September, so his commanding officer asked INS, San Francisco District, if the sailor could be naturalized as part of the annual event's opening ceremonies.

And so it happened that, on the morning of the traditional bay parade of ships, District Adjudications Officer Claude Laghi found himself on a stage at the end of San Francisco's Municipal Pier with San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown to his left and Petty Officer Licona to his right. As ships began to materialize from a bank of fog that stood just outside

of the Golden Gate Bridge, Laghi asked Licona to raise his hand and repeat the oath.

Oath complete, the audience of local luminaries burst into applause. After the ceremony, Licona re-enlisted, and the city's famed Mayor Brown officially congratulated the delighted sailor.

"It's an honor for me to become a citizen of the United States of America," said Licona. "I'm very grateful."

Participating in the day's festivities caused Officer Laghi to reflect on his own immigration, 30 years before.

"I can understand this sailor's joy," said Laghi, who immigrated from Italy. "I felt the same when, as a foreign student, I visited West Point. Then later, when I was on official visit to West Point as an American and a commissioned officer, my own dream was fulfilled."

Michigan fraud scheme shut down

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FOURTEEN people, many of them psychiatrists and psychologists, were recently arrested for helping 600 immigrants in four states fraudulently obtain U.S. citizenship.

"Immigrants from at least 14 countries have filed suspect applications, but roughly 90 percent were received from citizens of Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon," U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Collins said as he announced the indictments Sept. 3.

The defendants are accused of being part of a fraud scheme assisting immigrants obtain phony disability diagnoses in order to get U.S. citizenship without learning English or passing literacy and civics tests. The doctors and psychologists are accused of signing INS forms with the phony disability diagnoses and making fraudulent representations.

According to the indictment, many immigrants paid \$500 for the false documents, and the operation went on from January 2000 until April 2002. The case was presented to a federal grand jury in Flint, Mich., in August, after a lengthy investigation by the INS Detroit District and the Chicago Field Office of the Justice Department's Office of the Inspector General.

"These indictments send a clear message to those who would exploit our laws for their own purposes

that their fraud and deceit will not stand," Kim Ogden, Detroit's deputy INS director, said.

Although it's unclear how many became U.S. citizens, once naturalized, these applicants would have become eligible to vote, hold public office, and petition for a wide array of relatives to immigrate to the United States.

Following the indictments, all 14 defendants were arrested or turned themselves in. They all had initial appearances in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan on a charge of conspiring to defraud the United States, which carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. All were released on personal bonds. Six defendants are for-profit immigration consultants or employees/associates of immigration consultants, and nine of them are medical doctors or clinical psychologists.

"This case is the result of a coordinated effort on the part of the Examinations and Investigation programs. The exemplary work and dedication of our District Adjudications Officer and Special Agents was the key element in ending a practice that exploited the generosity of the American people," said Detroit District Public Affairs Officer Greg Palmore. "I extend congratulations to them for a job well done."

110 DENVER AIRPORT WORKERS INDICTED FOR USING FAKE SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

A federal grand jury indicted 110 Denver International Airport (DIA) workers with access to high-security areas Sept. 10 for using fake Social Security numbers to get the security clearance necessary for their jobs.

“The INS began laying the groundwork for this initiative shortly after the terrorist attacks against our nation,” said Acting Denver District Director Michael M. Comfort said. “The goal here was and is to work with federal, state, and local agencies in shoring up our nation’s homeland security in a post 9-11 environment.”

Post-Sept. 11 initiative

The multi-month investigation, termed Operation Safe Sky combined two national initiatives—the Social Security Administration’s Operation Safe Travel and INS’ Operation Tarmac. The two initiatives were designed after Sept. 11 to ensure that all airport workers with access to security-sensitive areas meet certain background security standards and verify that all airport employees are properly documented and authorized to work in the United States.

Investigations under these operations have led to arrests at most major airports, including those in Atlanta; Baltimore; Boston; Charlotte, N.C.; Dallas-Fort Worth; Las Vegas; Orlando, Fla.; Phoenix; Portland, Ore.; Sacramento, Calif.; Salt Lake City; San Diego; San Francisco; San Jose, Calif.; and Seattle. Similar sweeps are expected eventually at all 429 commercial airports in the United States.

Key to national security

“A key element to the national security infrastructure is the safety of the traveling public,” Comfort said. “The American public deserves nothing less than the highest priority of protection.”

The 110 indicted in Denver were mostly food service workers, construction workers, security personnel, ramp agents, cleaning crews, and transportation workers, although one was a United pilot charged previously with sexually assaulting two girls, according to the Colorado District U.S. Attorney’s Office.

Authorities don’t believe any of the charged workers have terrorist links but were concerned that persons using false identification had access to

planes and secured areas at the airport. All of the employees indicted had access to restricted areas, including the tarmac, airplanes, and other secured sensitive locations, and some had the ability to escort up to six people into restricted areas.

The charges against the defendants include misuse of a Social Security number, making false statements, and perjury.

Two are charged with making a false claim of U.S. citizenship and one is being prosecuted for unlawful reentry of a removed alien and misuse of a Social Security number. All charges are felony violations of federal law.

“The goal of this project is to remove individuals with unknown or questionable identities from being able to access the restricted areas of DIA and to deter others in the future from attempting to obtain these types of jobs by fraudulent means,” said U.S. Attorney John Suthers. “These indictments were sought following a thoughtful, careful, and complete review of those who obtained restricted access at Denver International Airport using false information.”

If convicted, many of the defendants face maximum penalties that range from two to five years in prison, plus fines of as much as \$250,000 and deportation.

Joint investigation

The investigation was conducted by the Social Security Administration’s Office of Inspector General, the INS, Department of Transportation’s Office of Inspector General, and the Transportation Security Administration. Representatives from the Customs Service, Denver Police Department, and the FBI assisted in making the ensuing arrests.

“A key element to the national security infrastructure is the safety of the traveling public. The American public deserves nothing less than the highest priority of protection.”

—District Director Comfort

TEMECULA AGENTS DARE KIDS TO STAY OFF DRUGS DURING RED RIBBON WEEK

TO assist Riverside County, Calif., residents mark Red Ribbon Week and promote its anti-drug message Border Patrol agents and canine handlers from the Temecula Station visited several area elementary schools Oct. 23 to 31.

“Red Ribbon Week is a chance to be visible and vocal in the Border Patrol’s desire for a drug-free community,” said Supervisory Agent David Garrett. “Research shows that children are less likely to use alcohol and other drugs when parents and other role models are clear and consistent in their opposition to substance use and abuse.”

Wearing red ribbons began as a grassroots way of honoring Enrique “Kiki” Camarena, a Drug Enforcement

Administration agent from Calexico, Calif., killed by drug traffickers in 1985 while working undercover in Mexico.

That message and its symbol, the red ribbon, spread rapidly, and the National Family Partnership organized the first nationwide Red Ribbon Week campaign in 1988 as a way to educate kids about drugs and promote a drug-free lifestyle. Since that time the campaign has reached millions of U.S. children and has been recognized by the U.S. Congress. Border Patrol agents from around the country participate in local events.

Garrett said the Temecula Station tends to be the primary sponsors of the police’s Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program in southwestern Riverside County



Canine Handlers Doug Dodson and Felipe Pou of the Temecula Station, with Canine “Margo,” speak to elementary school children about maintaining a drug-free lifestyle.”

and plays a key role in Red Ribbon Week activities.

“We generally will present programs at between 10 to 15 local schools and approximately 2,000 to 2,500 students,” he said. “The canine handlers tend to be the main focus of the presentations as the kids are, by and large, attracted by the dogs.”

CHICAGO MAN, 6 OTHERS INDICTED FOR SHAM MARRIAGE VISA SCHEME

A Chicago man who allegedly helped foreign nationals, primarily from India, enter into sham marriages is facing federal racketeering and other charges, together with five “brides” and a sixth woman who helped recruit them.

“This indictment reflects the lucrative nature of this kind of illegal criminal enterprise,” said Chicago District Director Brian Perryman. “The INS warns those who choose to commit such immigration fraud that we are using every appropriate statute to seek the stiffest penalties possible.”

A federal jury Sept. 25 returned a 35-count indictment against the seven defendants, including Jessie Isaac, 51, the alleged ring leader. The indictment, announced by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, alleges Isaac presented false documents to the INS, the Department of Labor, and the Illinois Department of Employment Security—at times concealing the fraud from his customers and misleading them to believe that he would obtain the benefits on their behalf.

As part of the enterprise, the indictment alleges Isaac advised foreign nationals that they could obtain work authorization quickly if they married a U.S. citizen and he offered to arrange such marriages. Once a customer agreed, Isaac, allegedly directly or indirectly recruited a U.S. citizen to serve as a sham spouse for about \$600.

The citizen was told that she would not have to live with the foreign national and would receive a monthly fee, along with additional money when it came time for the INS interview. At the same time, Isaac advised the foreign national to add the sham wife’s name to utility accounts and to open a joint checking account. After the marriage was performed, Isaac allegedly

assisted in completing and submitting immigration documents seeking work authorizations and permanent resident status based on the sham marriages.

“We thank the Department of Labor and the Illinois Department of Employment Security for their assistance in this investigation as we strive to protect our nation’s legal immigration process for those who are rightfully entitled to its benefits,” Perryman said.

The indictment also alleges that Isaac, together with associates and various business entities, presented and caused to be presented various false statements in forms seeking, in some cases, H-1B visas, a nonimmigrant visa initiated by an employer for a foreign national working in a “specialty occupation.”

Isaac was charged with racketeering, five counts of aiding and abetting marriage fraud, and 29 counts related to visa or immigration document fraud. The indictment also seeks forfeiture of Isaac’s alleged \$402,000 in racketeering proceeds.

Also indicted was Hilda Rosa Figueroa, 30, Chicago, who was charged with two counts of aiding and abetting marriage fraud for allegedly helping Isaac to recruit U.S. citizens to marry foreign nationals to unlawfully obtain immigration benefits. The five women charged with entering into sham marriages are Christina Murillo, 24, Chicago; Stephanie Kirgan, 21, Springfield, Mo.; Marie Wordlaw, 23, Chicago; Theresa Robinson, 35, Chicago; and Luz “Nelly” Vega, 42, Chicago. Each of the five was charged with one count of marriage fraud.

If convicted of racketeering, Isaac faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine, while each count of visa or immigration document fraud carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. For Isaac and the other defendants, each count of marriage fraud or aiding and abetting carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

NEXUS

Continued from page 6

Through radio-transponder and smart-card technology, the occupants' identities are immediately flashed on a computer screen.

"These cards entitle people to travel across the border in dedicated lanes where there will be little or no delay for inspections," Bush said.

Similarly, under the FAST program, shippers can register trucks, drivers, and cargo. Approved truck drivers use dedicated lanes where they present registration cards and, using bar code or transponder technology, identify their pre-approved shipment.

After Sept. 11, bottlenecks developed at U.S.-Canadian crossings because of intensified security procedures. The NEXUS and FAST initiatives are key elements of the 30-Point Action Plan outlined in the December 2001 "Smart Border" Declaration promoting the movement of low-risk travelers and goods between the two countries.

"Let us celebrate today together the ingenuity and resolve that Canada and the United States have shown to ensure that our people can get on with their daily lives and our business can get on with business," the Prime Minister said.

INS Commissioner James Ziglar also arrived in Detroit with the President. The visit by the Commissioner, the President, and the Prime Minister marked the kickoff of NEXUS and FAST registration for the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit and the Peace Bridge in Buffalo, N.Y. NEXUS and FAST lanes are expected to be operational in Detroit and Buffalo by January 2003.

NEXUS is already aiding travelers in four locations: three border ports connecting Washington and British Columbia as well as the crossing linking Port Huron, Mich., with Sarnia, Ontario. It is a collaborative effort involving four federal agencies: the INS, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, and the U.S. Customs Service.

Before their speeches, the President and Prime Minister received close-up demonstrations of both



Under the flag-adorned Ambassador Bridge, the President and Canadian Prime Minister applauded the NEXUS and FAST programs.



INS Supervisor Brad Borowiak (right) and his Canadian counterpart Pauline Lutsch demonstrate the NEXUS system for President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

systems from port employees. INS Inspections Supervisor Brad Borowiak (now Training Officer at Port Huron) explained the NEXUS system along with Canadian colleague Pauline Lutsch, a senior examining officer.

Port employees reported they were amazed at the amount of time required for such an event. They gave up much of their weekend to be present to work with the advance teams and showed up five hours before the President, Prime Minister, and Commissioner to clear before the security sweep of the area. But they reported that the extra effort was worth it.

"The experience with the President and Prime Minister was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that left an impression on me that will not be forgotten. Just to be in the presence of the most influential leaders in the world was truly inspirational and surreal," Borowiak said. "The opportunity for me to educate them both on a matter of such importance as the NEXUS program left me with a great sense of pride and accomplishment."

Port employees also got the chance to hear first hand the President thank them and their colleagues for their hard work.

"We have hard-working inspectors at this border, and I want to thank all the folks who work hard to expedite the traffic here," Bush said.

Photo courtesy of Marie Gebrechts

GOOD NEWS

INS*ide*



Deputy Chief Patrol Agent Darryl E. Griffen of the El Centro Sector participated in the Attorney General's Leadership Development Program.

GRIFFEN FINISHES HARVARD LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Deputy Chief Patrol Agent **Darryl E. Griffen** of the El Centro Sector graduated from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government's Mid-Career Program for Public Administration on June 6. He received a master's in Public Administration. Griffen was selected to study at Harvard in July 2001 through the Attorney General's Leadership Development Program.

CANINE 'DON' MEDALS AT POLICE COMPETITION

Border Patrol canine "Don" of the San Clemente Station in the San Diego Sector recently medaled at two California competitions. In June, the 5-year-old German Shepherd placed third in vehicle searches and fifth in luggage searches in the California Police and Fire Games in Santa Ana, Calif. In April, he received trophies for second place in narcotic finds and third place for open field searches in the Cops for Canine Competition in Carlsbad, Calif. Agent **Peter Dame** has been his handler for the past four years.



Canine "Don" poses with his trophies.

YUMA SECTOR AGENT RESCUES ELDERLY MAN

Senior Patrol Agent **Joseph Mujica** of the Yuma Sector rescued a diabetic 69-year-old man who was in shock Oct. 11 after having a seizure while driving in a remote area near Palo Verde, Ariz. The agent spotted the man's wife standing next to their vehicle along Highway 78 in distress, and pulled over to assist and discovered the woman's husband on the ground on the verge of unconsciousness. Mujica responded with first aid, and within a few minutes the elderly man was talking and drinking water. The elderly man was later transported to the hospital and made a full recovery.

APONTE APPOINTED TO PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL

Miami Assistant District Counsel **Milton Aponte** was appointed to serve on the President's National Council on Disability. The U.S. Senate confirmed his executive nomination Sept. 26. Aponte will serve on the council through Sept. 17, 2005.

2 INS AGENTS MEDAL AT ARIZONA COMPETITION

Two INS agents recently won medals in the Arizona Police/Fire Games held Oct. 17 through 20 in Mesa, Ariz. Phoenix District Special Agent **Dana Aguilar** played softball and won a bronze medal, and Senior Special Agent **Jeff Barczak** from Central Region Investigations played soccer and won a silver medal.

BORDER PATROL FOILS KIDNAPPING ATTEMPT

Border Patrol Agent **Christine Jones** from the Tucson Sector rescued an elderly couple on Sept. 11 after the couple was kidnapped from their home. The agent was driving near Sonoita, Ariz., and noticed the female victim, who was driving a truck with several people, looked very nervous. After she turned around and pulled the truck over, the driver fled the vehicle screaming for help.

The couple had been kidnapped by two undocumented migrants from Mexico who had ordered them to pick up and transport five other undocumented migrants. One of the two kidnappers escaped, and the remaining suspect was taken into custody on charges of aggravated assault and kidnapping. A detainer was placed on him, and the other five persons were processed and granted voluntary return to Mexico.

"The Border Patrol Agent in this case was able to intervene and stop the situation from escalating because of her awareness of her surroundings," said

Chief Patrol Agent **David V. Aguilar**. "Her law enforcement experience told her that something was wrong and to investigate further. This good piece of law enforcement work prevented a potential tragedy from occurring."

VIZCAINO HONORED FOR SERVICE EXCELLENCE



Chief Patrol Agent Simon Garza Jr. (right) presents Maria Vizcaino with a certificate of appreciation.

Chief Patrol Agent **Simon Garza Jr.** presented **Maria Vizcaino**, a Marfa Sector Border Patrol employee for more than 27 years, with a certificate of appreciation on Sept. 18 for serving on the Equal Employer Opportunity

(EEO) Committee as a Federal Women's Program Manager from December 1995 through Aug. 27 of this year. "Her stepping forward and asking for additional work without compensation is evidence of her outstanding service," Katie Arnette, EEO manager said. "Employees of this caliber are rare in any organization and help make it a better place to work."

SERVICEMAN VOLUNTEERS TO PAINT MURAL IN BUFFALO

Sergeant **Tim O'Brien** of the New York National Guard 642 Military Intelligence Battalion volunteered to create a mural for the Buffalo Sector in his off hours depicting the various duties sector agents perform. Sgt. O'Brien was assigned to Buffalo Sector Headquarters from March through August as part of Operation Noble Eagle.



Sergeant Tim O'Brien (left) and Buffalo Sector Deputy Chief Patrol Agent Ed Duda view O'Brien's mural.

To get a blurb and photo published in **Communiqué's** "INS*ide*" column, e-mail it to ins@casals.com or mail it to **Communiqué**, 1199 North Fairfax Street, Third Floor, Alexandria, Virginia 22314.