



CommuniQUÉ

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RIDGE STRESSES COOPERATION

Presidential nominee speaks to future Department of Homeland Security employees at a 'town hall' meeting in Washington, D.C., as thousands more watch over C-SPAN and Webcasts to their offices

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Ziglar treated to a farewell reception full of praise, appreciation, and presents

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New tradition started to honor key field executives

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Agent becomes celebrity after heroic apprehension

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HEADQUARTERS *News*

RIDGE STRESSES OPEN COMMUNICATION, TEAMWORK AT ‘TOWN HALL’ MEETING

“Because at the end of the day, in order for us to fulfill our mission to protect America and our way of life, we have to fulfill that mission together. And we have to respond to the challenges together.”

—Secretary-designate Ridge

TOM Ridge, the president’s nominee to head the Department of Homeland Security, praised the “good people working in INS offices” at a Dec. 17 “town hall” meeting and stressed to them and other employees moving into the new department the importance of listening to one another and teamwork.

“Because at the end of the day, in order for us to fulfill our mission to protect America and our way of life, we have to fulfill that mission together,” he said. “And we have to respond to the challenges together.”

No “huge dislocation” forthcoming

More than 600 federal employees attended the town meeting at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, D.C., as thousands more around the country watched over C-SPAN and through Webcasts to their offices. During the hour-long program, Ridge discussed the mission of the new Department of Homeland Security, praised employees for their hard work and dedication, and reassured them that they would not face a “huge dislocation” because of the merger.

“I know there’s a lot of anxiety. I suspect there’s an enormous amount of uncertainty,” he said. “Hopefully, there’s a little bit of excitement because we have the opportunity to do something that happens in this town every 50 or 60 years, and that’s create a new department.”

More than 170,000 federal employees from 22 agencies will transfer to the new department next year, many of them on

March 1. Ridge told the audience that shortly after March 1, the department will get to work merging the 22 different management and personnel systems into a “contemporary” one that rewards top performers.

“In time, we hope that we can empower them and enable them, through a variety of different means, to do an even better job than they’re doing now,” he said.

In reassuring employees that they would not face a “huge dislocation” because of the merger, Ridge predicted that most of them would keep going to work in the same offices, at the same land and seaports and airports as they do now.

“I think everyone understands that for a year after their unit or department moves into the Department of Homeland Security, everything about them remains the same—their pay, benefits,” he said. “By and large, we want people to remain at their station. We’re just going to give them a little bit more help in the process.”

Standard protections to continue

Employees also will continue to benefit from the standard civil service protections.

“All of the civil service protections that are very appropriately associated with the men and women who wear the public service uniform—the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Hatch Act and the whistleblower protection and a variety of these other protections—they move right along in the department,” Ridge said.

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Photo courtesy of Marie Sebrechts

Thousands of INS and other future Department of Homeland Security employees around the country watched Tom Ridge speak at the Dec. 17 "town hall" meeting over C-SPAN and through Webcasts to their offices.

During the question-and-answer period, an INS employee asked if the department was open to hearing ideas for change and improvement during the merger.

Employees' suggestions welcome

"As we go about creating this new 21st century department, it will be very important for us to hear how you think you can do your job better," he responded. "And I am sure you [will] have the opportunity to do that."

Ridge's appearance before the employees was somewhat unusual because presidential nominees awaiting Senate confirmation usually keep a low profile before their hearing.

"I guess I'm allowed to be a little optimistic because I'm here," Ridge joked, adding "but the fact of the matter is that this is a unique and it's an historic opportunity ... not only to build a department, but to make America a safer place."

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The INS *Communiqué* is published by INS Headquarters under a contract with *Casals & Associates, Inc.* of Alexandria, Va. The publication is committed to informing the employees of the Immigration and Naturalization Service about official and unofficial activities. Readers are encouraged to submit articles, photographs, and letters to the editor. Write to *Communiqué* c/o Casals & Associates / 1199 North Fairfax Street, Third Floor / Alexandria, VA 22314 / attention: INS *Communiqué* Editor. Submissions in electronic format may be sent to << ins@casals.com >>.

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ZIGLAR IS TREATED TO A SEND-OFF OF PRAISE, APPRECIATION, AND PRESENTS

CALL it a long decommissioning.

The INS has been aware Commissioner James W. Ziglar would be departing since August, when he announced his intention to retire from federal service. At the request of the White House, Ziglar agreed to stay at the helm through December and lead the agency until passage of the Homeland Security Bill.

Then Monday, Dec. 2—a week after President Bush signed the Homeland Security Act into law and two days after Michael Garcia stepped on board as acting INS Commissioner—came his long-anticipated farewell reception at Headquarters. The depth of the senior staff's appreciation and respect for Ziglar, who guided the agency during the post-Sept. 11 tempest, was evident as he received thanks—in some cases tearful—from each of the agency's divisions and a boatload of mementos for his service.

"Anyone can pilot a ship in calm seas, but we know that these were not calm seas," said Deputy Executive Associate Commissioner for Immigration Services William Yates. "What kind of individual—voluntarily, I mean a man who did have a job—a little over a year ago would sacrifice himself to take on this kind of challenge?"

Answering the question he posed, Yates said the kind of individual to accept this challenge is someone who cares about his country and the things that are of historic importance: welcoming new citizens, permanent residents, guest workers, and the relatives of U.S. citizens.

"The Perfect Storm"

Yates likened the situation the Commissioner faced during his 16 months of service to the one faced by Captain Billy Tyne, the character George Clooney played in "The Perfect Storm." The movie is about the crew of the *Andrea Gail* who go fishing for swordfish off the coast of Nova Scotia only to run straight into the middle of three colliding storm fronts (including a hurricane) that create a "perfect storm" of colossal force.

"You sailed a good ship, you were our leader, and we appreciate all you've done for us," Yates said.

Executive Associate Commissioner for Policy and Planning Stuart Anderson said, "You can't change the facts that are presented to you. What you can affect is how you respond to those facts, and I think all of us around him know that he responded without fail with grace, dignity, and, most importantly, with respect for other people."



Commissioner James W. Ziglar shows his wife, Linda Ziglar, a framed set of INS badges he received from the Office of Field Operations.

He said one of the most important things the Commissioner did following the post-Sept. 11 stormy seas was speak out on behalf of immigrants.

"Instead of staying silent, he specifically said that America is a nation of immigrants and that we should honor that tradition," Anderson said. "But, more importantly, he said that Sept. 11 was caused by evil, not by immigration, and I think that had an important impact on the public debate."

The farewell celebration also honored Linda Ziglar, the Commissioner's wife, who stood by throughout his tenure. She stood next to him as he accepted gifts and mementos, including a Border Patrol ceremonial flag, a hunting vest, hot sauce, golf balls, the INS flag from the Commissioner's office, copies of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, a framed collection of INS badges, and a pen from the Leadership Development Center reading "anyone can pilot a ship in a calm sea." Mrs. Ziglar's support and dedication were praised throughout the speeches and gift-giving.

A role model in many ways

"It was a particular pleasure for me personally to watch the interaction between Jim Ziglar and his wife, who has been there as we've gone through these times," said General Counsel Bo Cooper. "They obviously have a very supportive relationship, and one, I think, stands as a model for all of us."

The models Ziglar provided for leadership, humility, straightforwardness, and core values also were commended time and again.

“Very early on I heard you talking about leadership, and how everyone can be a leader. And when you first said it, it really struck me then, and every time you said it after, it struck me again,” said Eastern Region Director Scott Blackman. “I’ve used that a number of times since I first heard you say it, and that is something, I personally, will take away from your time here, and I very much appreciate that you gave me that.”

Calling Ziglar’s departure a “bittersweet day,” Director of Internal Audit John Chase recalled when the Commissioner found out the INS did not have core values written down, he said “make it happen.”

“We set out to work and then the world changed,” he said, referring to Sept. 11. “He continued to make us make that happen.”

Chase said the core values the INS employees decided upon—professionalism, accountability, integrity, respect, and service—reflect not only the agency, but also Ziglar himself.

“These are the INS core values that I know Commissioner Ziglar lives and wants us to live,” he said. “Our pledge to you is that we will bring some life to these words.”

Dominica Gutierrez, executive director of the Data Management Improvement Act Task Force, said the best thing about Ziglar is that he is not a bureaucrat.

“Early on we were having some meeting about something and how we were going to change things, and everything is going to be better,” she remembered. “And he said, ‘all right now, I want you all to go back to your offices, and take a look at what your folks are doing, and what you’re doing, and if you’re doing anything that’s stupid, stop doing it.’ That’s the Commissioner, bottom line.”

Cooper recalled a similar conversation at the beginning of Ziglar’s tenure.

“The Commissioner sat us down and said ‘I am looking for lawyers that will help think through problems. It’s very easy to just throw up a roadblock and say this is why such and such can’t be done. It’s harder to be creative, and it’s harder to help someone achieve a solution even after you’ve helped to point out problems,’” Cooper said. “He took that problem-solving and straight-forward attitude into every interaction we have had with him.”

Gutierrez received a long round of applause when she thanked the Commissioner for always sticking up for INS and its employees.

“Jim Ziglar has been there whether it’s on Capitol Hill or with the press. He has said there are some very, very fine people at INS,” she said. “And he has always defended the people at INS, and people will remember that.”

When his time to speak came, Ziglar returned the gratitude by thanking employees for the job they do. He said the problems INS has are not any different than any other government agency or private sector entity, and that INS employees accomplish amazing results with the resources they have.

Gratitude returned

“The reason this agency has succeeded in spite of this adversity is because it has an enormous number of people dedicated to getting the mission done,” he said.

Ziglar also asked INS employees “to keep their eyes on the ball” as they move into the Department of Homeland Security and not to forget the nation’s tradition of welcoming immigrants. He warned if they were to forget, it would be “the beginning of the end of the greatest democracy on the face of the earth.”

In closing, he said how choked up he got listening to all the kind remarks made about his wife.

“The truth is, I would never have made it through this past year without her,” he said. “At the toughest times, she was there.”

The final round of applause went to Mrs. Ziglar, and the farewell to the last INS Commissioner to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate was over. Then, as with the decommissioning of a ship, the senior staff got ready to report to new leaders within new bureaus as the INS and its office of Commissioner were about to pass into history.

Executive Associate Commissioner George Bohlinger reads a letter about the Commissioner’s exemplary leadership as the Commissioner and his wife look on.



INS NEWS *of Note*

Arizona Agents nab suspect in 'Good Samaritan' murder

CHIEF PATROL AGENTS HONORED AT AGENCY'S FIRST BADGING CEREMONY

PROMOTIONS for field executives are now ceremonial events.

One of the first initiatives of Acting Commissioner Michael Garcia was to change the way INS swears in key field executives, and Dec. 18 was the beginning of the new tradition. Nine Chief Patrol Agents were honored at INS' first badging ceremony at Headquarters.

"This ceremony is the very first of what will be the future of a tradition we intend to start, the swearing in of key field executives, such as Chief Patrol Agents, when they take over this very time-honored position," said Executive Associate Commissioner for Field Operations Johnny Williams. "For too long we had a phone call and an e-mail to notify our chiefs and key executives of the promotions they had just had."

The badging ceremony marked the promotion of eight Chief Patrol Agents to the GS-15 level and honored the new Swanton Sector Chief Patrol Agent Stan Spencer.



Photo courtesy of Mario Villarreal

Chief Patrol Agents Pete Moran, Buffalo Sector; Glen Shroeder, Grand Forks Sector; Robert Finley, Havre Sector; Ray Ortega, Spokane Sector; Ron Henley, Blaine Sector; and Johnny Back, New Orleans Sector (left to right) stand as they are honored at INS' first badging ceremony at Headquarters.

"Thank you all genuinely for the incredible pressure you put up with ever since 9/11," Williams said. "Thanks on behalf of Field Operations and Headquarters."

Garcia also thanked the chiefs for their deep dedication, tireless efforts, and extended responsibilities following Sept. 11.

"There is no question that our borders are more secure than they were before those attacks and much of the credit goes to you," he said.

The Commissioner also commended the Border Patrol for being at the forefront of the nation's efforts to secure its borders for more than 78 years. He said that service record will be honored as the Border Patrol moves into the Department of Homeland Security.

"One thing I wanted to assure you is that the Border Patrol will be a key component of that new department—one of its most important," he said.

Following his comments, Garcia administered the oath of office to Spencer. All the promoted chiefs then stood and were acknowledged. They were Pete Moran, Buffalo Sector; Glen Shroeder, Grand Forks Sector; Robert Finley, Havre Sector; Ray Ortega, Spokane Sector; Ron Henley, Blaine Sector; Johnny Back, New Orleans Sector; and Dan Geoghegan, Ramey Sector.

Moran said he and the other chief patrol agents appreciated the new tradition.

"From a chief's perspective we think it's a nice start to a very good tradition," he said.

A suspect in a highly publicized, gang-related murder of an aspiring clergyman in Washington, D.C., was captured Dec. 18 by the Border Patrol in Arizona after being identified through a computerized fingerprint check.

The suspect, 24-year-old Jorge Luis "David" Naverette-Camacho, a Mexican national, was wanted in connection with the murder of 28-year-old Warren Helm of Arlington, Va. Helm—a theology student who was visiting Washington, D.C. on spring break—was stabbed to death March 15, 1998, when he and some friends intervened when they saw a group of men beating a homeless man.

Agents from the Douglas station captured Naverette, who was using a false name and date of birth, after he tried to hop a fence and sneak into the United States near Douglas, Ariz. The agents learned of Naverette's fugitive status after running his fingerprints through the Automated Biometric Identification System (known as IDENT). The system, started in 1994, stores digital fingerprints, digital photographs, and other personal information (such as height, weight, tattoos, scars, etc.). It enables agents to run searches in about two minutes to verify identity and determine how many times an individual has been apprehended crossing the border illegally.

According to a press release from the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Police Department, Naverette is the fifth suspect arrested in the case—two of the suspects were arrested at the scene, and two other suspects were arrested later. Naverette faces two federal counts of unlawful assault and threatening a person, and conspiracy to commit assault and murder. Naverette was turned over to the U.S. Marshal Service's office in Tucson and awaits extradition to Washington, D.C.

PUBLIC OUTREACH CAMPAIGN REACHES OUT TO POTENTIAL PERMANENT RESIDENTS

THE INS is beginning a public outreach campaign to encourage thousands of eligible individuals to file applications to adjust their status in the United States to that of permanent resident.

"This public outreach campaign provides a golden opportunity for eligible individuals to apply for Life Legalization benefits," Acting Commissioner Michael Garcia said. "It reflects the agency's commitment to assist individuals who want to come into compliance with U.S. immigration laws."

The public outreach campaign aims to reach more than 200,000 long-term U.S. residents who are believed to be eligible to apply for legal status under a provision of the Legal Immigration and Family Equity Act. The deadline for filing such applications is June 4. As of Oct. 31, only about 55,000 individuals had filed.

"We are fast approaching the last six months of registration, and this important window of opportunity will be the focus of our public information efforts," said Deputy Executive Associate Commissioner for Immigration Services William Yates.



An INS poster (lower right) hangs in front of a New York Hispanic grocery store.

The LIFE Act provides eligible applicants with work authorization, and even a stay of removal or deportation proceedings or orders, while their adjustment applications are

pending. It also protects from removal and provides employment authorization for certain spouses and minor children of eligible applicants for the period of time in which they are afforded Family Unity protection.

Beginning in mid-January, the INS will take to the airwaves with 30-second radio and television spots, urging potential applicants to protect their futures by filing applications before the June 4 deadline. Similar messages appear on posters and fliers being distributed in Hispanic communities. In addition, INS managers in the agency's 33 district offices will take the message to local news media through interviews and public appearances.

"The active participation of our field leadership in partnership with community-based service providers will further enhance our presence and message during the coming months," Yates said.



The public outreach program is national in scope but concentrated in four metropolitan areas that the INS believes are home to about two-thirds of the eligible LIFE Legalization applicants who have yet to file. Those areas are Los Angeles-Long Beach, Calif.; Chicago, Ill.; Houston, Texas; and New York, N.Y. The INS also estimates the majority of eligible applicants are Hispanic with the largest number being natives of Mexico.

To be eligible for LIFE Legalization, an individual must have entered the United States before Jan. 1, 1982, and resided in continuous unlawful status through May 4, 1988, including being physically present in the United States from Nov. 6, 1986 until May 4, 1988. Among other requirements, they must also have filed a written claim for class membership in one of three class action lawsuits arising from the 1986 Legalization, or Amnesty, program for illegal immigrants. The three lawsuits are entitled *Catholic Social Services, Inc. v. Meese*, *the League of United Latin American Citizens v. INS*, and *Zambrano v. INS*.

Individuals who meet the U.S. residency requirements and who, before Oct. 1, 2000, filed a written claim for class membership in any of the lawsuits, are eligible to apply for adjustment to legal status under the LIFE Act Legalization provision.

Executive Liaison Officer Mariela Melero (right) appears in Spanish-language television spots, filmed in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington D.C., urging potential applicants to protect their futures and register.



A youth contemplating what to buy with \$100.



Senior Patrol Agent Haldo Domingez and his buddy wave at Santa during the parade.



As part of the "Shop with a Cop" program, Assistant Chief Patrol Agent Steve Martinez helps his assigned child pick out presents.



The youth buddied with Senior Patrol Agent Haldo Domingez examines some toys he might buy.

EL CENTRO 'SHOP WITH A COP' PROGRAM GIVES AGENTS, CHILDREN CHRISTMAS CHEER

WHEN the 13-year-old girl got into Joe Rivera's unmarked vehicle, the Calexico Station assistant patrol agent in charge could sense some nerves. But he's seen that nervousness before and was prepared.

"She was trying to act like it was no big deal," Rivera said. "But I could tell that she was excited. After a while she settled down and things were better."

For many teenagers, a ride in an unmarked law enforcement vehicle with its sirens blazing could be cause for concern. But Rivera's passenger was there for a good reason and a good cause. She was taking part in the "Shop with a Cop" program, a joint effort of the community of El Centro, Calif.; the agents of the El Centro Sector; and other local law enforcement officials to ensure lower-income children receive Christmas presents.

"The 'Shop with a Cop' program is something that started in San Diego

and just filtered to our community," Rivera said. "Some of the law enforcement officials decided to try and push it, and it turned out to be quite a success."

In the first year of the event—which took place Dec. 7—65 children from Imperial County first ate lunch with a law enforcement official at the local Eagles Lodge.

"They just paired us up," Rivera said. "We had hot dogs and food like that, and we also got the chance to talk and get to know each other."

After the meal, the children took a ride in a squad car to Wal-Mart, sirens blazing. Once at the store they were given the chance to purchase \$100 worth of merchandise. Santa also made the trip to Wal-Mart, using the California Highway Patrol's helicopter as opposed to his sled. Some of the younger children visited with Santa.

Rivera said the 13-year-old he was paired up with focused on getting

“ I don’t know who had a better time, them or us.”

—Senior Patrol Agent Nieto



INS Inspector Cliff Herzog and his daughter Emily play Santa and his elf helper, making their appearance in a California Highway Patrol helicopter.



One of the youths waves along with Santa as she sits on Santa's lap.

clothes. “She’s a teenager so I didn’t expect her to get toys like some of the smaller kids,” he said.

Organizers raised more than \$9,000 through donations and fundraisers to pay for the presents, meals, and other expenses. Rivera considered the event

a success, both from the children’s standpoint and from his own.

“This is definitely a win-win situation for the entire community,” Rivera said. “I didn’t know what to expect, but it was great to spend a couple of hours with her. I feel privileged to be involved and look forward to it next year.”

Intel Supervisor Richard Ransdell also enjoyed the experience. “The event turned out fantastic. The kids had a great time. The officers had a great time. It was good for the Border Patrol to give to the children and to the community,” he said. “It was also a time to interact with other law enforcement agencies, which is also important.”

Senior Patrol Agent Al Nieto agreed that the “Shop with a Cop” program offered a pleasant opportunity to interact with the community and other law enforcement agencies in pursuit of a worthwhile cause.

“All the children seemed to have had a wonderful time,” he said. “I don’t know who had a better time, them or us.”

MARFA SECTOR DELIVERS TOYS TO LOCAL CHILDREN

By William Brooks

“JUST for the smiles,” said Yvonne Zubiata, “... just for the smiles on the faces of those happy kids.”

For the past six years, Zubiata has been gathering up toys and handing them out to children in Redford and Candelaria, Texas, “just for the smiles.” She is an office automation assistant at the Presidio Border Patrol Station in the Marfa Sector, and she has personally taken charge of the operation.



A happy child holds the Christmas present he received from the Border Patrol.

“It gets bigger every year,” she said. “This year we provided gifts to 165 children in our community.”

On Dec. 19, Zubiata; friend Trini Villa; and Border Patrol Agents Jay Reed and Ricky Velasco delivered packages to the Escuela de Esperanza in Redford where the children

and their parents had gathered. Zubiata played Santa Claus, calling out the names of the children and handing them their present. Each package had been wrapped and labeled with a child’s name before being taken to Redford.

“It takes two to three weeks to wrap all the presents,” said Zubiata. The presents are selected by age group and whether the child is a boy or a girl.

The next day, Zubiata and her team, along with personnel from the INS Presidio Port of Entry, delivered gifts to the children of Candelaria.

“We always have enough,” Zubiata said. “The employees of the Marfa Sector always come through. Some give money, and I go and buy

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Yvonne Zubiata unloads gifts she has gathered for local children.

Photo courtesy of William Brooks

INS NEWS FROM *the Field*

AGENT'S COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, HELPING VICTIMS GETS RECOGNIZED

AN INS agent involved in Operation Sonic, a human trafficking case in which young Mexican juveniles were forced into prostitution, did his best to do the right thing and received more than the satisfaction of knowing justice was being served.

Special Agent Damian DeArmas' work on the case and the commitment he showed in helping the victims earned him the Executive Board of Metropolitan Northern New Jersey's 2002 Enforcement/Security/Investigative Employee Annual Award—for the second time. The board gives the annual award to an agent from a federal agency for outstanding work.

"The first time I received the award was when I was an agent for the Department of Labor in 1984," DeArmas said. "It speaks for itself how competitive it is to be nominated and is more significant when other agents from many federal agencies were considered."

Operation Sonic began for DeArmas when the New Jersey

Division of Youth and Family Services called the INS regarding four juvenile prostitutes it had in custody. DYFS wanted the INS to deport the underage girls since they had no place to live.

Case involved minor girls

"The most difficult aspect of a case like this is to know that only a few of the victims have been rescued since there are so many more out there," DeArmas said.

He said after agents began conducting interviews over a two-day period and details of the crimes became evident, they saw a case forming.

"Trust was built between the four girls—whose ages ranged from 15 to 18 years—and the agents," DeArmas said. "Eventually, they each told a detailed story of abduction, rape, torture, and beatings."

After months of investigation by many agents, the INS was able to apprehend the leaders of the prostitution ring. But that is not where DeArmas' commitment ended. He and the other agents made sure the victims received compassionate treatment, and DeArmas went as far as enlisting his family's support.

"I rarely talk about my investigations with my family. I made an exemption in this case," he said. "I have daughters that are the same age. I wanted to help them appreciate how lucky we are to be a part of a close and loving family."

Agent's daughters donate clothing

His daughters were so touched by the investigation that they donated some of their own clothes to the four victims so they would not have to wear their "working" garments after being released from the detention center to go into foster care, DeArmas said.

In addition, DeArmas and the other agents involved in Operation Sonic took on locating a known fifth victim, who had returned to Mexico.

"We traveled for long hours to remote areas until she was finally located," DeArmas said. "The 16-year-old victim will soon come to the U.S. to testify in the upcoming trial."

As a result of Operation Sonic, eight defendants have been charged with sex trafficking in the U.S. District Court for the District of New Jersey.

Another three are expected to be charged with the same charges, which is something that pleases DeArmas, but doesn't satisfy him.

"For now it's just a partial reward because children were rescued," DeArmas said. "The final reward will come when the individuals who perpetrated this atrocity are behind bars."

*"I have daughters that are the same age. I wanted to help them appreciate how lucky we are to be a part of a close and loving family."
—Agent DeArmas*

COMPUTER WIZ FROM EL PASO MAKES JOB EASIER FOR INSPECTORS NATIONWIDE

IT all started about five years ago as a result of Immigrant Inspector Cesar Castro's frustration with typewriters.

"I was told to type an I-213 form by my supervisor one day, and I made a mistake on it," said Castro of the El Paso District. "When I found out I could not make a correction on it, I instead decided to create the forms on the computer."

That mistake has turned into a positive for not only employees in the district office, but also for employees in more than 90 ports of entry around the country.

Since creating the form on the computer that day five years ago, Castro has gone on to create more than 12 computer programs and forms used in different district offices. These include everything from computer-based versions of regular forms to his pride and joy, the Inspector College, a program that catalogues service reference material by subject matter and can be accessed via the INS Intranet site using the El Paso District link located at <http://10.54.37.10/IC0411/Index.htm>. This INS in-house Web site enables INS inspectors to serve people quickly and efficiently.

The creation of this program, along with others, resulted in Castro's receiving the 2002 Officer Corps Employee of the Year award during a recent ceremony in Washington, D.C.

While he said the recognition is great, it is the gratitude that other employees express that makes him want to keep developing new programs.

"Officers are actually offering to take over my lane time, so I can work on the programs, which is the ultimate sign of gratitude for me," Castro said. "They tell me to work on it and make it better."

The Inspector College program is also being used as a training tool for officers-in-training in different districts, which Castro sees as a sign that the



Immigrant Inspector Cesar Castro of the El Paso District sits in front of his computer where he has created more than a dozen computer programs and computer-based forms.

program is efficient. "It brings the knowledge of hundreds of inspectors to one place."

"The way I look at it is that I have worked the line," said Castro, who has been with the INS for six years. "I know the process, which can be an advantage in the sense that it saves money that would be used in hiring a contractor who may not know the way things work. At the ceremony the speaker said the programs have saved millions of dollars, which is not why I do it. The biggest payoff is when officers say thanks."

The projects have become such a success that Castro now is allotted time during his normal hours to create new programs.

"I am currently working on a program that will help us identify and apprehend identity thieves," he said. "Once the project's done, then I will let them use it and get input on it to make it better."

Castro said he appreciates the e-mails and other support he has received from inspectors and managers across the country.

"It's something I happen to like and be good at doing," Castro said. "I'm just glad to be able to help make things easier for myself and others."

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS

Continued from page 9

presents. Others give presents, but we always have enough."

Chief Border Patrol Agent Simon Garza Jr. praised Zubiata and his agents for taking on the operation every year.

"The children of South Presidio County are fortunate to have friends like Yvonne and the men and women of the Marfa Sector," he said.



Photo courtesy of William Brooks

A child dances with her Christmas present.

BORDER PATROL SPOUSES FORGE WEB-BASED SUPPORT NETWORK

VANESSA Crelia knows something about moving a family to a new community. Now she hosts an Internet Web site that helps other spouses of Border Patrol agents face similar challenges.

Her husband, Michael, felt the call to join the Border Patrol five years ago, leaving behind a steady, secure job in a family business.

"This didn't hit me out of the blue," Crelia said. "He had always wanted to do the Border Patrol or the U.S. Marshals Service. I knew that he was unhappy working for his family, which provided really well, but which wasn't his dream job."

So, like thousands of other spouses of Border Patrol agents before her, Crelia prepared for a household move. It would take her family of four across three states and 1,200 miles to a community along the Southwest border in Arizona. The relocation aroused the usual array of fears and anxieties about adjusting to a new community.

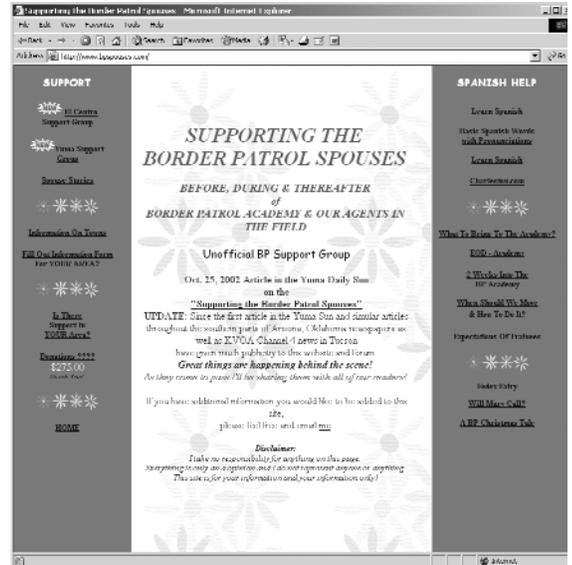
Family and friends in Oklahoma unintentionally fueled the concerns. Crelia's mother, a lifelong Sooner, worried that her daughter was moving away from the comfort of nearby relatives and lifelong friends in Seminole, Okla. (Population: 7,500). Although she had never visited southern Arizona, she envisioned her daughter and her family heading to some dusty border town too small for a traffic light and boasting few paved roads. A family friend suggested that in southern Arizona the Crelias were likely to wake most mornings to find rattlesnakes curled up on their lawn. (Crelia reports that she has not seen a live snake since she moved out of Oklahoma.)

"Dealing with all the misconceptions of friends and family can be intimidating," Crelia said. She steadied her nerves by gathering the facts, both about the Border Patrol and their host community.

Another unofficial Border Patrol Web site—www.Honorfirst.com—provided plenty of helpful information for Border Patrol applicants and incoming agents but few tips for their spouses and families.

Crelia connected with another, now defunct, Web site used by some Border Patrol employees and their families. The Web site's forum put her in contact with the spouse of an agent at their destination, Yuma, Ariz. (Population 70,000).

Today, that same concept of "spouse helping spouse" guides the Web site that Vanessa created three years ago with the help of friends, www.BPspouses.com.



The "Supporting the Border Patrol Spouses" Web site online at www.BPspouses.com.

"Each person helps those who follow," Crelia said. BPspouses, which is also known by its formal name, "Supporting the Border Patrol Spouses," operates on the belief that "you have to have been through the process to be helpful." Through their collective experiences, Border Patrol families possess a library of useful information that can ease the transitions facing other families.

BPspouses functions as a connection point for such information. It offers help on a variety of topics, including organizing a household move and even basic Spanish language instruction. It is gradually accumulating information about specific Southwest border communities, including advice on schools, stores, community organizations, and public facilities. Some information is from formal sources, such as city governments and chambers of commerce, but a lot is contributed by Border Patrol family members.

BPspouses is considering development of similar information about Northern Border communities, where Vanessa's husband was recently detailed on a temporary assignment.

The site also connects to a forum where registered participants are invited to post questions and share ideas. Participants are given wide latitude to express their thoughts, although they are tactfully reminded "that the whole world is watching," Crelia said. "For the most part, you won't see any negatives" about the Border Patrol.

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AGENT TACKLES, SUBDUES FLEEING FUGITIVE AS HELICOPTER NEWS CREW BROADCASTS LIVE

TACKLING skills perfected from playing fullback on her college rugby team combined with good instincts, determination, and Border Patrol training made San Diego Sector Agent Barbara Kremzner an instant celebrity on Dec. 20.

As a television news helicopter flying above broadcast live, Kremzner tackled, wrestled, and subdued a much larger teenage fugitive in a pool of mud, preventing him from crossing the border into Mexico after eluding the California Highway Patrol during a two-hour, 130-mile, high-speed freeway chase. In the days afterward, the seven-year veteran was asked to appear on several national talk shows.

"I was just doing my job and that's the extent of it," Kremzner said, noting she was a little surprised by all of the attention.

The pursuit, ranging in speeds from 60 to 110 mph, began in Fontana, Calif., after patrol officers attempted to pull the suspect over for a mechanical violation. Several attempts to stop the car with spike strips failed, and as the car approached the International Border, the suspect stopped the car, got out, and started running toward Mexico.

Kremzner was the only obstacle in his path. After subduing him, she held him on the ground until San



San Diego Sector Agent Barbara Kremzner being interviewed on ABC News' Good Morning America.

Diego police officers responded and provided her with assistance. The overhead news crew filmed the fugitive's multiple attempts to get away and crawl a few extra yards toward the border with the agent on his back.

"We are very pleased that one of our agents was able to capture a fugitive who had led officers on a long and dangerous chase," said San Diego Sector Chief Patrol Agent William T. Veal. "We are proud of her for the determination and professionalism she exhibited in this potentially volatile situation."

OPERATION WHITE LACE SHUTS DOWN PROSTITUTION RING

LOS Angeles authorities announced Dec. 6 that they had shut down one of the largest prostitution rings in city history—one that employed more than 50 smuggled Russian women and netted as much as \$8 million—after a two-year multi-agency investigation dubbed Operation White Lace.

"We are very proud to see our agents joined by other law enforcement agencies assisting in stopping such a heinous crime," said Los Angeles District Spokesperson Francisco Arcaute. "Operation White Lace, which was widely publicized, will hopefully send a message out there that you cannot encourage illegal smuggling, prostitution, and other crimes and not expect to go unpunished."

Agencies taking part in the investigation included the Los Angeles Police Department, U.S. Customs Service, the Internal Revenue Service, and the INS.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office made the Grand Jury indictments, returned Oct. 24, public Dec. 6 when five of the six alleged ringleaders were arraigned and pleaded not guilty to conspiracy, pimping, pandering, and money

laundering. The six allegedly operated a business called Russian Fortuna, advertised in the Yellow Pages, in newspapers, and on the Internet. Posing as a travel agency that provided limousine and escort services, the business allegedly functioned solely as a prostitution agency, according to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office.

Indicted were Rimma Fetissova, 42, and Elena Fetissova, 22, both from the Ukraine; Lev Levas, 55, and his 38-year-old son, Mark Levas, both naturalized U.S. citizens from Latvia; Elena Piyanzina, 24, from Russia; and Iryna Kovalenko, 37, from the Ukraine. The co-defendants allegedly assisted Rimma Fetissova in the daily operations of the business as either dispatchers or drivers who also provided security.

The female Russian nationals employed by the ring were using their prostitution earnings to pay back their smuggling debts.

"The INS is absolutely against human smuggling," Arcaute said. "Human smuggling only makes victims out of the families it leaves destroyed and the communities where it invades."

AGENTS SAVE 3 PEOPLE FROM DROWNING IN ALL-AMERICAN CANAL'S SWIFT WATERS

TWO children and a female relative who were in a sedan that crashed into the All-American Canal's dangerously swift waters on Dec. 13 are alive today thanks to four Border Patrol agents from the El Centro Sector.

Calexico-based Agents Ray Witt, Mark Battaglini, Angel Camarena, and Lloyd Frers jumped in the canal near Calexico, Calif., and fought its swift currents to rescue three of the sedan's four passengers: a 16-year-old girl, an 8-year-old girl, and a female family member in her 30s, all from Mexicali.

"It took the corner too hard and ended up upside down in the canal," Supervisor

Jerry Ulibarri said. "The vehicle was completely submerged in the water."

The driver of the vehicle, a 36-year-old woman, was the only person not to survive the crash. She was believed to have drowned before rescuers got to her.

"The agents were in the water approximately 10 to 15 minutes," Ulibarri said. "It was only when the fire department arrived that they were asked to get out of the water because it was an unsafe situation."

Several motorists passing by stopped to help the agents as they were pulling the three from the canal.

"One woman took off her shoes and got into the shore of the canal to help the

agents in getting the people out," Ulibarri said.

Witt suffered a cut finger that required stitches while attempting to cut the seatbelt off the sedan's driver. All four agents also suffered from burns to the eyes as a result of the gasoline that had leaked into the canal from the vehicle. All of them have since recovered from their injuries.

"They could taste the gas in the water and had to battle that while attempting to get them out," Ulibarri said. "In my 18 years with the Border Patrol, it was the most heroic thing I've ever encountered."

AGENTS THWART SMUGGLING ATTEMPT, DISCOVER MOBILE RAMP

A mobile ramp that smugglers were using to drive vehicles over a fence along the U.S.-Mexico border was seized Dec. 18 after Border Patrol agents discovered it in use about 60 miles east of San Diego.

As the agents approached, two occupants ran away on foot, leaving behind a vehicle packed with 266 pounds of marijuana on the U.S. side and a truck



A truck with a metal ramp built on it that smugglers used to drive over the U.S.-Mexico border near San Diego.

with a metal ramp built on it on the Mexico side, reported Senior Patrol Agent Raleigh Leonard.

The ramp extended up over the fence and down onto U.S. soil. Mexican authorities took possession of the mobile ramp system while the Border Patrol seized the abandoned vehicle and marijuana and turned them over to Operation Alliance.

LAWYER CONVICTED OF BILKING THOUSANDS OF IMMIGRANTS

THE owner of an immigration-law firm that filed thousands of work-permit applications with false information and phony signatures was convicted of 57 felony counts of conspiracy, labor certification and immigration fraud, and money laundering Dec. 11 in U.S. District Court in Alexandria, Va.

Samuel G. Kooritzky, 63, of Vienna, Va., an attorney and owner of the Capital Law Centers in Arlington, Va.; Washington, D.C.; and Takoma Park, Md., faces a probable prison sentence of eight to 10 years and may also forfeit as much as \$2.5 million in proceeds from the criminal activities.

"This investigation and subsequent conviction shuts down an operation that

smear the legitimate process of providing employment in areas of the United States that most need it," said Washington District Director Warren A. Lewis.

Several thousand illegal immigrants paid the firm between \$7,000 and \$25,000 each to file applications for alien employment certification with the Department of Labor. Lewis said Kooritzky and his associates filed more than 2,700 fraudulent applications between January 1998 and April 2002, making this case one of the largest labor certification frauds ever prosecuted.

The fraudulent applications would certify that an employer needed a foreign worker for a job because no U.S. citizens were available, even though the businesses

and their managers were unaware they were being used as "sponsors." The firm forged managers' signatures to make it appear that the applications were real, and placed employment ads in a local newspaper, submitting them as evidence that they had tried to hire local workers. The immigrants were unaware of the fraud, and most of them never got green cards.

A Kooritzky associate, Ronald W. Bogardus, 65, of Arlington, Va., was sentenced to eight years in prison for his role in the scheme. Two other employees pleaded guilty and await sentencing. The case stemmed from a year-long investigation by the departments of Justice, Labor, and State; INS; and IRS.

INS RUNNER FROM EL CENTRO WINS 8 MEDALS IN ARIZONA POLICE GAMES

By Cecilia Perez

ROY Freeman is at it again. Last year, the 38-year-old INS cook won seven medals—four gold and three silver—at the Arizona Police and Fire Games.

This year he improved on that performance, bringing home eight medals—four gold and four silver—in various track and field events at the games in Mesa, Ariz., from Oct. 18 to 20.

“It’s fun. I love running, I love competing,” said Freeman of the El Centro Service Processing Center. “If somebody beats me, I train and see if the next year I can beat them.”

Freeman won gold in the 100-meter high hurdles, 400 low hurdles, 4x100 relay, and 4x400 relay. He took silvers in the 50-, 100-, 200-, and 400-meter dashes.

“I’m thankful for the ability to run competitively. I love it. It’s fun,” he said.

The Williamsboro, La., native said he likes competing in the events because “it allows you to meet people from other agencies who have the same thrill you have about running, and it’s nice. And it’s even nicer to win.”

Freeman started running in 1985 when his friends told him he was fast and should think about



Roy Freeman of the El Centro Service Processing Center sports his eight medals, four gold and four silver.

competing. He did and the rest is history.

Freeman will start training to play in an annual charity football game that matches players from Centinela and Calipatria state prisons against Imperial Valley law enforcement personnel. After the football game he will prepare himself for next

year’s California Police and Fire games that will be in Sacramento. The games are set for August so, “I have a long time to train,” Freeman said.

“The California games are very competitive,” he said. “They have a lot of people from northern and southern California and law enforcement from as far as Georgia and Louisiana.”

Freeman said he’s looking forward to next year’s Arizona games in Tucson.

“It’s nice being a representative of INS and supporting them,” he said. “It’s an extra (incentive) to win and bring home some medals.”

WEB SITE

Continued from page 12

Discussions run the range of practical and personal issues, such as living temporarily apart from a spouse who is undergoing training and contending with the irregular work shifts that are part of every new agent’s life. After a recent spate of news stories about the site, the BPspouses forum has picked up between 30 and 50 new registrants per week.

Forum administrators periodically clear the forum of last names and home phone numbers, which are banned for security reasons. They will occasionally shut down a discussion if it becomes overheated or involved in personal attacks. A software program automatically culls out cuss words. This is, after all, a family site, Crelia said.

Helping Crelia to set up the BPspouses site was Sue Cabe of Nogales in the Tucson Sector. She and Angie Twombly of Yuma serve as board administrators, completing the troika of unpaid volunteers who run the site.

Like the Honorfirst website, BPspouses has no official connection to the Border Patrol or INS, nor does it receive any government funds. Their efforts,

however, occasionally receive praise from Border Patrol officials, and the site is gaining wide public recognition.

In October, a feature story about the Web site appeared in the *Yuma Sun* newspaper and spurred similar news coverage by a Tucson television station and other newspapers along the Southwest border. A New York state resident with family connections to law enforcement saw one of the stories and was inspired to send a donation—in a three-figure amount—to support the service.

Crelia hopes that the Web site will encourage every Border Patrol sector and station to take an additional step to assist new arrivals. She envisions support groups springing up to help families get settled. They would function like a non-commercial version of the Welcome Wagon that once greeted newcomers to U.S. communities.

In Yuma, that service is already underway. Crelia and Twombly present new arrivals with an information packet and offer a guided tour of the community.

GOOD NEWS INSide

CENTRAL REGION DIRECTOR

HONORS REGIONAL COUNSEL

Central Region Director **Robert A. Wallis** presented a book and plaque for outstanding achievement and support to departing Regional Counsel **Patrick T. McDermott** on Dec. 12.



Departing Regional Counsel Patrick T. McDermott (left) holds a book and plaque he received from Central Region Director Robert A. Wallis.

McDermott served as regional counsel for 17 years and served collaterally on the Field Advisory Board with INS' Office of Transition and Restructuring during the last year. McDermott has been selected to serve as an immigration judge for the Executive Office for Immigration Review in Los Angeles starting in January.

INS INVESTIGATIONS

RESULT IN DRUG SEIZURE

The investigative work of INS Agents **Paul Dubois** and **Curtis Hemphill** resulted in the Dec. 12 seizure of more than 4.5 pounds of methamphetamine in Reno, Nev., during the execution of a search warrant of an apartment. The agents apprehended the resident of the apartment, a permanent resident from Mexico, and filed an INS detainer after records checks revealed he was convicted of battery/child abuse; driving under the influence of alcohol; and larceny from a person, an aggravated felony.

During their investigation, the INS agents worked closely with the Reno (Nevada) Police Department and Reno Police Gang Unit officers as well as Reno's Consolidated Narcotics Unit. The methamphetamine and precursor chemicals also seized have an estimated street value of \$44,500.

SANTA TERESA AGENTS

SEIZE TON OF MARIJUANA

Agents from **Santa Teresa, N.M.**, seized nearly a ton of marijuana with an estimated street value of \$1.5 million Dec. 2 after the suspected smuggler rammed a Border Patrol vehicle during an attempt to return south to Mexico in a stolen vehicle. The incident began when

the suspect, identified as a 20-year-old Mexican national, was spotted crossing the International Boundary about two miles west of Santa Teresa. After the suspect rammed the Border Patrol vehicle, rendering it inoperable, agents set up a tire deflation device and successfully deflated the suspect's right front tire. They then apprehended him as he attempted to flee on foot to Mexico. The 1,865 pounds of marijuana, the suspect, and the vehicle were turned over to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

YUMA AGENTS SEIZE

838 POUNDS OF POT

Border Patrol Agents from the **Yuma Sector** seized nearly 838 pounds of marijuana with a street value of \$670,000 near the Colorado River on Dec. 10. While patrolling the river near Gadsden, Ariz., the agents saw a vehicle suddenly rush off as they approached. The agents followed the van's trail, discovered it abandoned, and then tracked the van's two occupants who had run back to Mexico.

MCALLEN AGENTS' 5-DAY

SEIZURES TOTAL \$62 MILLION

Border Patrol agents of the **McAllen Sector** seized 1,792 pounds of cocaine, 5,484 pounds of marijuana, and 12,000 Ecstasy pills during 37 separate seizures between Dec. 11 and 15. Falfurrias, McAllen, Kingsville, Harlingen, Fort Brown, and Rio Grande City Border Patrol stations were all instrumental in these seizures with a combined street value of \$62 million.



Detention Enforcement Officers John Langer and Terry Florian and Supervisory Detention Enforcement Officer James Wilson (left to right) hold an American flag in front of an armored desert Humvee in Saudi Arabia.

DETENTION OFFICERS

CALLED TO ACTIVE DUTY

Three INS detention officers who are also technical sergeants with the Air Force Reserve are serving together in Saudi Arabia after their units were called to active duty with the Air Force Security Forces in

support of Operations Southern Watch and Enduring Freedom.

Detention Enforcement Officers **Terry Florian** and **John Langer** are assigned to the Buffalo Federal Detention Facility-Batavia and are members of the 914th Security Forces Squadron, Niagara, N.Y. Supervisory Detention Enforcement Officer **James Wilson** is assigned to the Newark District and is a member of the 108th Security Forces Squadron, McGuire Air Force Base, N.J.

Wilson, Langer, and Florian were activated on presidential orders with the Air Force Security Force units last summer and were told that they would be placed on military active duty status for up to two years. The three patrol a 267-square-mile area of remote and desolate terrain near Prince Sultan Airbase.

MARFA ASSISTANT CHIEF

RETIRES AFTER 30 YEARS

Marfa Sector Assistant Chief Patrol Agent **V. Dan Bolner** retired Dec. 31 after serving nearly 30 years in the Border Patrol. Bolner joined the Border Patrol in El Paso, Texas, in 1973 and was promoted to supervisor in the Del Rio Sector in 1984.

At Del Rio he also served as a field operations supervisor and a watch commander. In 1992, he was selected as a deputy assistant regional director at INS' Central Region in Dallas.



Retiring Marfa Sector Assistant Chief Patrol Agent V. Dan Bolner

DEL RIO SECTOR DECEMBER

SEIZURES TOP \$4.2 MILLION

Border Patrol Agents from the **Eagle Pass Station** in Texas seized 436 pounds of marijuana on Dec. 20 after pursuing a car near Normandy. The seizure, with a street value of more than \$300,000, brought the grand total of Del Rio Sector drug seizures for the month of December to 5,353 pounds with a street value of \$4.2 million.

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