



U.S. CUSTOMS TODAY

TRADITION

SERVICE

HONOR

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE



Robert C. Bonner
Commissioner

The ongoing terrorist threat to our country has required a rapid readjustment by U.S. Customs throughout our agency. Immediately following the terrorist attacks of September 11, we implemented a Level 1 alert that called for sustained, intensive anti-terrorist operations across the country. We remain at a Level 1 alert today.

As part of our response, we ordered every port of entry, even those in our most remote locations, to be staffed with at least two officers, twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week. To fulfill this requirement, approximately 100 Customs inspectors have been detailed temporarily to northern border ports to enhance security along our frontiers.

Despite the demands of long days and an even greater workload, U.S. Customs inspectors, canine enforcement officers, import and entry specialists, and other frontline personnel are keeping America moving. Thanks to their efforts, the lengthy wait times encountered at border crossings in the days immediately after the attacks were quickly minimized, and brought back to pre-September 11 levels.

On the investigative front, U.S. Customs special agents and intelligence analysts have been working side-by-side with the FBI and other federal law enforcement agencies coordinating the counter-terrorism response. They have been following leads on terrorist suspects, supplying information, and assuming a leadership role in the offensive against money laundering by terrorists and those who give financial support to terrorist groups.

U.S. Customs employees are doing an outstanding job protecting America, at all levels of our agency. At the same time, I realize the tremendous demands this unprecedented challenge is placing upon us. I have been seeking additional support for U.S. Customs to alleviate the strain on our employees and our resources. I will continue to look at every means possible to support the efforts of our people on America's frontlines. As Commissioner, this is and will remain my top priority.★

Office of Investigations responds to terrorist attacks

The Office of Investigations (OI) response to the terrorist attacks of September 11 began immediately after the planes struck, and has continued and expanded every day since.

Within minutes additional OI personnel were dispatched to the command center in FBI headquarters. They established a round the clock presence there, playing a key role in relaying information integral to the investigation between Customs and the FBI. At Customs headquarters, intelligence specialists immediately began collecting and analyzing data contributing significantly to the rapid identification of participants in the attacks. Customs P-3 surveillance aircraft were directed to assist in efforts to identify other potentially hostile aircraft. The Air and Marine Interdiction Coordination Center in Riverside, Calif., began providing 24-hour a day support to the North American Air Defense Command.

OI was positioned to react so quickly because it has had a role in antiterrorist activities for several years. By national policy, the FBI is the lead agency for enforcement of federal terrorism statutes, with other agencies providing support in their particular areas of expertise. Customs special agents, along with their counterparts from several other organizations, have been full-time participants in 30 FBI-sponsored Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) in major cities throughout the United States. OI contributes especially in terrorist-related import/export and financial investigations, and by providing aviation resources in certain situations impacting on national security.



Photo by James Tourtellotte

U.S. Customs Special Agent Nick Raudenski removes property from the seizure vault in the ruins of the New York Customhouse.

That support role has expanded exponentially since September 11. Close to 1100 OI personnel are presently assigned to duties related to the terrorist attacks. At Customs headquarters, an interdisciplinary team of special agents, intelligence research specialists, and inspectors was formed to receive, review, and coordinate all intelligence information and investigative leads relating to the attacks. This information, received 24/7 from the field, has been consolidated and routed to the FBI through the Customs liaison personnel at the FBI Command Center.

Agents assigned to the various JTTFs receive, task, and coordinate local investigative leads. In many cities, Customs special agents are partnered with FBI agents to conduct interviews, searches, seizures, and arrests as required by the investigation. Other Customs agents have been detailed to the

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Customs inspectors, ever vigilant

Since September 11, Customs inspectors have been working 12 to 16 hour shifts, being especially vigilant in their responsibility of guarding the nation's borders against terrorism during the highest level of security alert (Level 1). The highest priority for Customs inspectors now is preventing implements of terrorism and weapons of mass destruction from entering the country.

Level 1 alert calls for substantially increased vigilance by Customs officers during the processing of passengers and private and commercial vehicles entering the country. To minimize processing delays, Customs has temporarily deployed 98 inspectors to land ports along the northern border to enhance the Level 1 alert status. Ports are being manned 24/7, by at least two inspectors.

All Customs Management Centers are required to submit a daily summary of all investigative and pertinent search, arrest, and seizure activities to headquarters. These facts are then shared with Customs offices and other agencies.

In addition to the regular inspection duties at international airports, Customs reassigned 380 inspectors to 19 international airports around the country to strengthen the already heightened security measures being implemented by the U.S.

U.S. CUSTOMS SERVICE ALERT LEVELS		
	4	Normal Operations Update COOPs and action plans. Respond to localized situations.
	3	Normal Inspectional Operations with Heightened Awareness Federal, State and Local Law Enforcement & Public Safety Agencies notified of status change locally by SAIC & nationally by OI/Strategic using existing counter-terrorism investigative and liaison channels.
	2	Increased Operations Federal, State and Local Law Enforcement & Public Safety Agencies notified of status change locally by SAIC & nationally by OI/Strategic using existing counter-terrorism investigative and liaison channels.
	1	Sustained Intensive Antiterrorism Operations Federal, State and Local Law Enforcement & Public Safety Agencies notified of status change locally by SAIC & nationally by OI/Strategic using existing counter-terrorism investigative and liaison channels.

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OIT

New York Lab resumes operations within one week

Thanks to the generosity and support of Customs employees nationwide and other government agencies, the New York Laboratory, which was housed on the 8th floor of 6 World Trade Center (WTC), resumed operations within one week of the attacks.

"Although our WTC workspace was destroyed, Customs employees in New York and across the country pulled together and immediately began making arrangements for a new laboratory location," says Thomas Governo, Director, New York Laboratory.

In less than 24 hours after the attacks, U.S. Customs initiated plans to locate temporary lab space. "Because of the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) in place, we knew of the other federal lab facilities in the New York area," Governo explains. "We met with the regional director of the Food and Drug Administration to inquire about temporary lab space at their regional facility in Queens, N.Y."

And indeed, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had ample space to temporarily locate our NY laboratory function. "FDA was very accommodating and supportive of Customs occupying this space," Governo says.

In the meantime, in the Office of Finance, the Asset Acquisition and Management staff was

working around the clock to assist in acquiring the space and equipment. Ira Reese, Acting Executive Director, Laboratories and Science Services (LSS), Office of Information Technology (OIT), contacted the Office of Finance to investigate the GSA lease of the FDA facility, and to secure funding for the temporary space. A "Lab Alert" was also forwarded to all Customs laboratory directors requesting "loaner" analytical equipment and instrumentation needed in order for the New York Lab to resume operations.

On September 13, LSS headquarters received blueprints of FDA's available space and a list of loaner equipment and instrumentation from other Customs lab offices around the country. "The FDA space was evaluated and found acceptable, and the next day Customs Asset Acquisition Management staff and GSA signed a lease agreement," Reese says.

Over the next few days, New York lab managers and team leaders reported to the new facility. By September 18, laboratory space was secured, computers were installed, and telephone communications were operational.

On September 19, employees of the New York Laboratory reported to work, somber, yet resolute.★

Office of Investigations responds to terrorist attacks

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expanded Federal Air Marshal Program, and to provide additional security at ports of entry. In New York, OI has more than 45 volunteers engaged in recovery efforts at "ground zero" to retrieve Customs property, evidence, and personal effects.

OI's Intelligence Division has dedicated over 50 intelligence research specialists to support the investigation. Thousands of pieces of information have been collected, analyzed, and processed for document exploitation. Customs pilots, P-3 aircraft, and the Aviation Interdiction Coordination Center continue to provide air-space security coverage. Customs aircraft have also transported essential personnel from several agencies to key locations throughout the United States. That assistance has been critical during a period when commercial aviation was either prohibited or severely restricted.

Attention focuses increasingly on the attackers' financial base. OI has assigned intelligence personnel to the Treasury Department's new

Foreign Terrorist Assets Tracking Center, and has intensified investigative efforts to identify terrorist funding mechanisms, seize terrorist assets, and combat money laundering in support of terrorism.

OI headquarters administrative staff have worked diligently to support the overall effort with particular emphasis on restoring investigative and intelligence operations in New York City. Communications management staff in headquarters, the field, and Orlando have spent many extra hours replacing equipment lost in the Trade Center, distributing extra equipment where needed, and making sure that the communications network remained intact.

OI will continue to give the highest priority to assisting in the investigation of the attacks on September 11, preventing future terrorist incidents, and cutting terrorists off from their funding sources wherever possible.

Special thanks to OI headquarters staff for contributing to this article.★

Thank you for your support

In the aftermath of the September 11 tragedies, U.S. Customs has received numerous phone calls and e-mails expressing concern and support for our employees. We heard from members of the trade community, the general public, foreign customs offices, and from current and retired Customs employees. Here are a few of the hundreds of messages received:

Please extend to John Martuge at New York the following: We hope and pray that you, and all that were at the Customhouse yesterday, are safe and sound. Words cannot express our feelings for all of you who were forced to suffer this awful experience, as we helplessly watched this horrendous act of terror unfold on our TV screen. Please convey to all our prayers and heartfelt regards for their safety. Let us know if we can help at this time.

— National Import Specialist Vito Gualario, retired Customs employee, and Virginia Gualario

Having been in Washington, D.C., on September 11 and until this past weekend, I can speak to the outstanding personal effort I saw on the part of all Americans and, in particular, the men and women of Customs. Despite the extent of the crisis, the horrendous personal loss, and the difficult working conditions, I encountered Customs staffs who were helpful, courteous, and wholly professional in carrying out their duties, epitomizing the best of public service. My respect and personal support for the people of the United States and their public service have never been greater. I trust that we can work together to move forward and eliminate terrorism and restore the liberty all of us once knew.

— Deborah Danis, Director of Human Resources, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Southern Ontario Region

Recently I have been in contact with the National Commodity Specialist Division, especially with Director Robert B. Swierupski [6 WTC]. Since the attacks to the towers I have been worried about him and his mates. I would like to give my condolences with the victims of the disaster, and condemn the terrorism that unfortunately we also know here in Spain.

— Gloria Calicó

I am a Customs officer from Germany — City called Mannheim. I saw pictures of this underhand, horrifying attack against your

country in New York and I want to write you how sad we [were to see] those pictures.... You shall know that we, the German Customs officers of Mannheim, are on your side in this dark hour.

— Andreas Plantz, German Customs Office, Mannheim, Germany

My personal sympathy goes out to you at this terrible time. I have had dealings with many of you (from HQ, Washington, D.C.) through electronic commerce and APEC in the mid-1990s, and I trust and hope everybody from the Customhouse in NYC is safe and well. We on the other side of the world are thinking of you and wishing you the best.

— Gareth Lewis, Director, Imports/Exports, Australian Customs Service, Melbourne, Australia

We are a French organization, French customs office (SPNDF), and we want to say that we are very sad and shocked of what's happened [in New York on September 11]. We want to give to U.S. Customs a message of solidarity: We are sure that liberty must be defended, and we are all fighting against the terrorism and the crime.

— Gab

I realize that WTC housed many U.S. Customs offices. I would like to express our best to all of the staff. We hope that all of your staff was able to get out in time. Our best wishes to you all under these most difficult times. We are a strong and united country and we will survive.

— plehman@barnetproducts.com

The events of September 11, 2001, will go down in history as the day that the United States was cowardly attacked and seriously wounded. However, these murderers do not know of the strength and resolve of the American people.... Families are shattered in moments, friends and loved ones are gone, and those who protect and safeguard everyone are killed in the line of duty; this cannot be forgotten....

We are your neighbors and when you cry, we cry. When you grieve, we grieve. And when you fight back, we fight back. We are very, very proud to walk with you through your pain and if you need our help — no matter how great or small, we will be there.

— Peter O'Leary, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Southern Ontario Region

Customs inspectors, ever vigilant

Continued from page 1

Marshals Service and the Federal Aviation Administration. These inspectors augmented the security checkpoints at major U.S. airports until members of the National Guard arrived.

"Although we realize that the tightened border security has been tough on all those affected, our Customs inspectors can be very proud of the role that they are taking in keeping our country and its citizens safe," says Camille Polimeni, Deputy Director, Passenger Programs, Office of Field Operations.

Travelers and importers are encouraged to access the Customs Web site at www.customs.gov to determine border wait times. This resource tool is updated twice daily and may save valuable time for those in private or commercial vehicles.★



Photo by Gerald L. Nino

CI Christopher Ryan, Port of Buffalo, ever vigilant on America's frontline.

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EAP counselors help employees in time of greatest need

When terrorists struck the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the mental health professionals of the Customs Employment Assistance Program (EAP) went into high gear. They arrived in the New York area just two days later to debrief managers and employees.

Small group discussions were held to encourage employees to tell their stories of that day: where they were, what they were doing, what they saw, and what they felt. The discussions allowed people to get other perspectives on what happened.

The EAP counselors discussed the expected reactions to stress and explained that the body and brain have certain natural reactions to unnatural events, such as lack of appetite and sleeplessness. Self-care techniques were also reviewed and encouraged.

EAP counselors are still in the area and are talking with employees that have returned to work. Because each person has a different reaction to tragedy, "Employees need to take it one day at a time and not rush the healing process," says Dorothy Blum, Director, Employee Assistance Program. "We are struggling to regain a sense of normalcy. Acknowledging our changed lives,

both at home and at work, is a vital part of the process."

The EAP counselors are also offering discussion groups for Customs employees at Headquarters and elsewhere. There were employees from New York who were on TDY at other locations, employees who traveled to the area for meetings, and employees who do not work at either New York or Washington, D.C., but were stranded when all the airports were shut down. "For a lot of people in New York it will not only be moving to a new building, but dealing with separations from friends they have had lunch with for years, getting used to new traffic patterns, dealing with fears of bridges and tunnels," says Nancy Little-McGuire, Director, Safe Division.

Some employees had other issues that they were dealing with prior to the attack such as personal or family illness, relationship issues, or other personal stresses, and that stress is now compounded.

Employees who are military reservists are wondering how being recalled will impact their incomes and their families, and inspectors and agents are working longer hours than usual with little time off to spend with friends and family.

Confidential and professional assistance

The assistance provided to the victims of the September 11 attack on the New York World Trade Center is the same type of confidential and professional assistance that is available to all U.S. Customs employees who are experiencing personal problems that may adversely affect work performance or personal health.

EAP counselors are mental health professionals who offer initial assessments, short-term counseling, referral, and follow-up services to Customs employees. Confidential short-term counseling is offered to combat stress and anxiety; depression; alcohol or drug abuse; relationship or family problems; grief; and stress related to financial problems.

The EAP encourages employees to take an active role in problem resolution and to make choices that establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle. For confidential assistance or further information about the program, contact the Employee Assistance Program at 202.927.5550, or 1.800.755.7002.★

Finding a new home

The call came early on September 11 to Logistics Management Specialist Marianne Jaynes in Indianapolis, Ind. Jaynes is responsible for Customs real property within the geographic boundaries of the New York Customs Management Center. She was notified by a coworker to report immediately to her supervisor, Branch Chief John Dickerson, with her telephone contact list. Dickerson informed Jaynes that a plane had struck one of the World Trade Center towers, and asked her to get information on the status of the employees — right away.

Following several failed attempts to contact employees in the Customhouse, Jaynes contacted the General Services Administration (GSA) field office and then the Manhattan Property Management Division. She was informed that the Customhouse had been safely evacuated.

Although the real property staff was unaware of the extent of the damage, they did know that the proximity of the building made it impossible to work from that location. Logistics asked the commercial broker Grubb & Ellis to find space in the Manhattan area for the 800 employees that occupied 350,000 square feet of space in 6WTC. A day after the attack, the broker had identified more than 20 buildings meeting the space requirements.

Because decisions on office space needed to be made right away, the National Logistics Center arranged with the broker to take three Customs managers from the SAIC/NY, Associate Chief Counsel, and JFK Area Director offices to view the proposed space. Although none of the six buildings viewed could satisfy the facility requirements of all displaced offices, space was found in two separate Manhattan buildings.

On September 14 and 15, Jaynes, and Carol Faddis from Field Procurement Service, made arrangements for new workspace, telephone and computer lines, furniture, painting, electrical work, locks, and many other items.

GSA had agreements in place by September 18, permitting Customs to occupy the two facilities. A dedicated group of vendors and contractors, "New York angels" as termed by Jaynes and Faddis, helped support recovery efforts. Rented furniture was ordered and the Office of Information and Technology began installing the telecommunications cable. By October 15, the last of the displaced employees had furniture, computers, telephones, and basic office supplies.

On October 24, GSA executed a lease for 160,000 square feet in the Newark Center Building located at 1100 Raymond Boulevard in Newark, N.J. Pending renovations to meet Customs standards, the Lab and Area Director employees will be housed in temporary space (see sidebar). The Raymond Boulevard site will become the permanent home to the New York Laboratory and the New York/Newark Area Director Trade Operations and Entry branches.



Photo by James Tourtellotte

Old Glory flies precariously from an office window at the New York Customhouse. Customs agents worked diligently to recover the American and Customs flags from within the building.

Relocation information

The employees that worked at 6 World Trade Center were recently relocated to various locations and existing facilities at JFK Airport and Port Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Address and contact numbers:

JFK Airport
Building 77, JFK Airport
Jamaica, New York 11430
Additional information may be obtained at 718.553.1750

NY/Newark Area
1210 Corbin Street
Elizabeth, New Jersey 07201
Additional information may be obtained at 201.443.0200

The following offices are being relocated in 1 Penn Plaza: NY Customs Management Center; Associate Chief Counsel; NY Strategic Trade Center; Regulatory Audit; Field Intelligence Unit/Northeast; National Analysis Specialist Division; National Commodity Specialist Division; Customs Information Exchange; Ferdinand Gallozzi Library; Public Affairs Office; EEO Office; Labor and Employee Relations; National Safety & Occupational Specialist and the Office of Field Operations National Account Manager.

1 Penn Plaza, 10th & 11th Floors
New York, New York 10119
Additional information may be obtained at 201.443.0110

The New York Special Agent-in-Charge office is now located at:

601 West 26th Street, 8th floor
New York, New York 10001
Additional information may be obtained at 646.230.3200

Temporary home and address of the New York Laboratory is:

U.S. Customs Service
C/O FDA
158-15 Liberty Avenue
Jamaica, New York 11433
Additional information may be obtained at 718.662.5800★

Public service is not simply a noble profession, it is an honorable life. Your service to your country makes the ideal of America a daily, living reality. History has never known a nation of such strength and compassion, honor and ideals. Your work and selfless commitment are vital. On behalf of not only a grateful nation but a world in need of America, thank you.

— President George W. Bush



OTD

SCF — Not just another acronym: A roadmap to training

By Julie DeLoria

Special Assistant, Office of Training and Development

Do you know what training is available for your occupation? Do you know when you should participate in training? As an inspector, agent, or secretary, do you know how to find training that increases your professional skills?

Customs now has Standard Curriculum Frameworks (SCFs) — practical, hands-on primers — to help employees and managers in reviewing standard, existing training that is valuable for their occupations. SCFs are individualized to guide training at various career levels. They also list pertinent cross-disciplinary courses that could apply to any occupation such as Contracting Officer Technical Representative and Safety and Health for Safety Officers.

For example, the Import Specialist SCF contains three career levels: entry, mid, and advanced. At each level, approximately seven courses are offered that are core training programs for employees in the job series. The basic training programs are categorized as “mandatory” since those are required by policy. The balance are prioritized as “job skills” or “professional development.” Program guidance for the occupation is also included at each career level, summarizing what is generally expected in terms of who attends training, when, and how often.

SCFs have been developed for the following occupations/career fields:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accounting • Agent • Attorney (OCC) • Attorney (ORR) • Auditor • Automation/Clerk/Secretary • Budget Analyst • Customs Aide/Technician • EEO • Financial Program/Fiscal Operations Specialist | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Advisor • Human Resources • Import Specialist • Information Technology • Inspector • Intelligence Research Specialist • International Trade Specialist • Investigative Assistant • Logistics • Procurement • Scientist |
|--|--|

How were SCFs created?

Over the past year, the Office of Training and Development (OTD) worked with other offices to create SCFs for Customs occupations. The process began in January 2000 when OTD initiated a program to create the first comprehensive National Training Plan (NTP). The FY 01 NTP was the first step toward a multi-year process of realigning the agency's training programs and establishing a career development infrastructure to support all occupations. The NTP identifies the Service's training requirements and establishes a set of priorities for delivering training annually. The NTP outlines the training that will be funded and/or managed centrally during the fiscal year.

The FY 01 NTP focused on 21 major occupations within Customs. Future versions of the NTP will expand to include other occupations as well. For each occupation, OTD created curriculum frameworks in partnership with subject matter experts familiar with these occupations. Task forces were charged with identifying existing training and outlining it for their respective fields. The task forces included managers and employees with extensive knowledge of their respective occupations, experts familiar with training in the occupation, and union representatives for occupations covered by collective bargaining agreements. The goal is to increase the number and variety of training courses offered, particularly through e-learning and other distance learning methods.

SCFs represent a first step in the process of developing a long-term career planning and development system. The following three career development infrastructures are a major component of a multi-level annual needs assessment process which should be conducted by managers and employees within Customs:

- **Organizational training programs** are Customs-wide in scope and often delivered across functional lines. Examples include integrity, firearms and tactical, leadership, and EEO training.
- **Occupational training programs** are defined by an occupation, e.g., auditor, and represent occupation-specific requirements.
- **Individual training programs** address the particular needs of

an employee and are identified through individual manager and employee discussions.



As illustrated in the graphic representation above, the curriculum frameworks are focused on the *occupational* level of the career development infrastructure. The curriculum frameworks developed for each occupation include three major components: a rudimentary occupational structure; identification of standard, recurring training that is both occupation specific and cross disciplinary; and program guidance. Program guidance speaks to the who, when, and why of employee training. In addition, the framework summarizes the development of the NTP and various Customs training initiatives and resources.

According to Dr. Marjorie Budd, Assistant Commissioner, Office of Training and Development, the government is even more dependent on “knowledge workers” than is corporate America: “Customs employees today must be even better prepared and better trained than in previous decades. Through the development of the NTP and related products, such as the SCFs, OTD is taking steps to build the organizational and occupational career development infrastructure necessary to ensure that employees have the knowledge, training, and skills needed to meet the challenges of the new millennium.”★

EEO

National Disability Employee Awareness Month: Focusing on ability

By R.E. Niemann

EEO Specialist, Special Assistant to the Commissioner for Equal Employment Opportunity

Matthew Feuerherd recently completed his Basic Entry Specialist Training at Glynco and returned to duty at the Port of Washington, D.C. in Dulles, Va. For 10 years, Entry Specialist Feuerherd has been moving up the career ladder at Customs, meeting challenges that might have seemed insurmountable.

Feuerherd is one of 21 deaf employees who work for Customs as inspectors, personnel staffing specialists, entry/liquidation specialists, accounting technicians, and customs aides. His Customs career began in 1991, working at JFK airport in New York and then in Baltimore as a Customs aide and Customs technician before earning his recent promotion.

Entry specialist training was his ultimate goal, but even Feuerherd wondered if he set his sights too high: “I had to overcome my fears of not being able to successfully do my job. Today, I feel like I have something special to offer because I see myself in a dual role: being an entry specialist, and educating others to create a better understanding of people with disabilities.”

Feuerherd is able to speak and to read lips, but his colleagues are already responding to Feuerherd's needs — learning sign language one gesture at a time from illustrations tacked up on the walls of their individual workspaces.

“I wish that I had 10 employees like Matthew,” says Pia Hall, Feuerherd's supervisor. “He's a fantastic employee who is very

conscientious about doing a good job — and the trade community loves him.” Supervisor Hall was concerned that she would have some difficulty communicating with a deaf person. This concern, however, was erased shortly after she met him. Hall says that talking with Feuerherd is no more difficult than talking with someone who has an accent.

Feuerherd is living testimony to the idea that there's always more than one way to complete the work of the Customs Service. Like his hearing colleagues, Feuerherd depends heavily on the telephone for public contact, but he also depends on technology such as Relay-Service interpreters, and a “TTY” (Teletypewriter), a special phone that allows both parties to “talk” using a keyboard and monitor. Instead of a ringer, Feuerherd's phone is equipped with a red light that flashes when a call comes in.

All of it — the red light, the use of interpreters, and the technology to facilitate communication — are examples of “reasonable accommodations” required by current law to employees with disabilities.

“Mr. Feuerherd is a shining example of what's right about providing reasonable accommodations to our employees and applicants,” says Darren Goebels, Director Compliance and Analysis, EEO. “Providing reasonable accommodations is a great tool for expanding the pool of qualified candidates, ensuring that Customs continues to attract and retain a high-quality workforce.”

The month of October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, a time put aside each year to recognize the contributions and abilities of people with disabilities.★

FINANCE

Small Business Program wins big

By William Beckelman

Procurement Analyst, Office of Finance

Customs won four awards recognizing Treasury Bureaus for their outstanding contributions to the Small Business Program. Presiding over the ceremony was James Lingebach, Acting Deputy Chief Financial Officer, and James Flyzik, Acting Assistant Secretary for Management and Treasury Chief Information Officer.

The awards presented to Customs were:

- Bureau Chief Procurement Officer Group Award for Customs contribution to meeting the overall Treasury socio-economic goals;
- Outstanding Small Business Program Manager of the Year Award;
- Bureau Management Award for being the only Bureau to meet or exceed each assigned socio-economic goal in FY 2000 — this marked the third fiscal year that the Customs Service met or exceeded this goal; and
- EG&G Technical Services, Inc., one of Customs large business partners, received the Treasury Prime Contractor Partner of the Year Award for their exceptional support of the Customs Small Business Program.★



"President for a day"

The U.S. Customs Service was part of a "wish come true" for a 10-year-old boy from Augusta, Ga., with a life-threatening illness.

Daniel Moretz, with full "Presidential" motorcade and entourage, was greeted at the front door of the Ronald Reagan Building and escorted to the Situation Room for a ribbon cutting and dedication ceremony. "It is my pleasure to dedicate the United States Customs Service's new situation room in honor of the men and women of the Customs Service who dedicate their skill and hard work to make America safe," Moretz stated in his address.

"The employees of the Customs Service went above and beyond to help make Daniel's wish come true," says Jared D. Cohen, Chief Operating Officer of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of the Mid-Atlantic, Inc., the organization's Kensington, Md., chapter that organized Moretz's wish. "It was inspiring to see this little boy who has been through so much adversity during his short lifetime having so much fun. His wish gave him something positive to think about instead of the daily battle with his illness."

In addition to his Customs experience, highlights of Moretz's "Presidency" included meeting Federal Bureau of Investigations special agents, reviewing soldiers of the U.S. Army's Third U.S. Infantry, attending a Department of Defense briefing at the Pentagon, and meeting with representatives of the Consumer Product Safety Commission to discuss toy safety. He even met with representatives of the Office of Personnel Management advocating for



PHOTO BY GERALD L. NINO

"President" Moretz leaves U.S. Customs headquarters with special agents following the "dedication" of the new Customs Situation Room.

additional snow days on behalf of school children. Towards the end of his "Presidency," Moretz laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.

A goodie-bag, with Customs memorabilia, was presented later that day to "President Moretz" and his family members at a reception held in his honor at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel. At the end of his wish, Moretz indicated that what he liked most about his experience was "meeting all of the government employees who made him feel so special." What did he like least? "Having to wear a tie all day."

Did you know there is a Customs connection to the largest wish-granting organization in the world? Read all about it in the September 2001 issue of *U.S. Customs Today*. "Caring is Sharing: The Combined Federal Campaign."

The Make-A-Wish Foundation is a non-profit organization that fulfills the wishes of children fighting life-threatening illnesses. In the year 2000, the Foundation celebrated its 20th birthday and 80,000 wishes granted to children with life-threatening illnesses around the world. The Foundation tries to create a magical wish experience for the child that will last a lifetime. Last year alone, more than 10,000 kids realized their greatest dream and experienced the hope, strength, and joy each wish provides. To learn more about the Make-A-Wish Foundation, please visit www.wish.org or call 800.722.9474.★

Ask the [subject matter] experts

The subject matter experts (SMEs) in the Customs Modernization Office (CMO) are among the many employees who are working behind the scenes to make the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) a reality.

"The role of the SMEs is to take the benefit of all of their hard work, expertise, and knowledge — that they have gained as Customs officers — to write the requirements for what ACE will deliver and do for the Customs Service," explains Vicki Hodziewicz, Business Modeling Executive, CMO. "What better way to ensure that ACE helps Customs officers do their jobs as efficiently and effectively as possible, than to have Customs experts help define what ACE should do."

Most SME positions are detailed to the CMO and few are direct hires. According to James Gleason, Government Task Coordinator for Task Order 3 (requirements and planning): "We currently have a team of 12 SMEs that may eventually grow to as many as 83 over the next five years. Our Customs experts have come from diverse work backgrounds and locations from all across the country to work on ACE development. Our initial group of experts include Customs officers from Alaska, Florida, and California, as well as from headquarters offices and some of the more immediate locales."

U.S. Customs Today asked some of these SMEs about their role and goals in shaping ACE, and how ACE will benefit Customs employees.

What projects are you working on?

(*Roland Suliveras*) We've been given different assignments based on our backgrounds. I'm working in the targeting area. I'm preparing a historical road map: What was done in the past? Where are we going in the future?

(*Laurie Dempsey*) I'm working on the Account Services process. Customs is focusing on account-based processes, as opposed to trans-

action-by-transaction operations, with an emphasis on the relationship between Customs and accounts in the trade. We want to design a system that integrates all of the different trade compliance processes and data that goes along with them so that we can retrieve and analyze data easily and manage our workload more effectively.

(*Allison Suliveras*) I am working on the International Trade Data System (ITDS). ITDS is an initiative to implement a secure, integrated, government-wide system for the electronic collection, use, and dissemination of international trade and transportation data required by the federal agencies. ITDS is intended to meet the data needs of all users, reduce the reporting burden on the public through the elimination of duplicative and obsolete data requirements, and enable data providers and users to transmit and obtain all data electronically. An importer, for example, needs to provide certain data elements for various government agencies in order to import goods into the United States. ITDS will provide a single portal for importers to provide information to satisfy government requirements (FDA, Customs, etc.) for any particular product they are importing.

(*Bruce Raine*) I'm working on the enforcement and analysis processes. I am providing the contractor [e-Customs Partnership] with background information concerning how these processes currently work under Automated Commercial System (ACS) and with recommendations for improvements. Historically, Customs looked at enforcement primarily on a shipment-by-shipment basis. Now, Customs wants to look at the entire scope of the problem from a multi-discipline viewpoint. In the end, ACE will provide a basis for tracking and researching enforcement actions Customs-wide.

How do you see ACE benefiting the Customs employee?

(*Sherri Hurt-Braxton*) ACE will increase revenue recovery through the reduction of under collection, create a more efficient quota management system, and stabilize the operating environment by reducing downtime and system outages.

(*Elizabeth Sullivan*) ACE will ease the burden and improve the quality of work life of our inspectors, import specialists, and entry specialists. ACE will allow these employees to focus on enforcement efforts and risk management.

(*Laroy Eskelson*) Import specialists will be able to develop a history of a company's import habits, analyze those and other trends, manage these accounts, and identify areas of non-compliance.

(*Don Yando*) Lack of flexibility will not be an issue for ACE. For example, the current ACS system counts 10 business days from the date of release in order to calculate a "due date" for the entry summary. ACS fails to take into account holidays, "snow" days, and other events that should not be counted. Even though ACS may show an entry summary as being late, the Fines, Penalties and Forfeitures Branch (FP&F) must do a manual count to confirm the 10-day filing period. If a manual count is not done, then FP&F would issue late file liquidated damage cases for entry summaries that weren't really late. This won't happen under the new ACE system.

Most of you are detailed to the CMO for a limited time. What is your goal while at the CMO?

(*Marie Cosme-Rittenberg*) My goal is to work on developing a user-friendly system that will balance the needs of Customs inspectors, import specialists, and entry specialists in terms of enforcement issues and ease of use, as

well as the needs of the trade community and participating government agencies.

(*Don Yando*) I hope to share my knowledge from the perspective of someone who has worked in the field and who has experienced first-hand the frustration of dealing with an antiquated system. I've realized through my experience that all of the data that we have been plugging into ACS since its implementation is not as obtainable as it should be. We put the data in, but we have a hard time getting it out! I want to change that.

(*Sherri Hurt-Braxton*) To be part of a team that develops common-sense programs that eliminates paper and eases the field's workload burden.

Name and title of SMEs interviewed

Marie Cosme-Rittenberg, Customs Inspector
Laurie Dempsey, Import Specialist
Laroy Eskelson, Import Specialist
Sherri Hurt-Braxton, Import Specialist Team Lead
Bruce Raine, Import Specialist
Allison Suliveras, Supervisory Customs Inspector
Roland Suliveras, Field Analysis Specialist
Elizabeth Sullivan, Program Manager
Don Yando, Entry Specialist

Currently, there are several vacancy announcements for SME positions within the Customs Modernization Office. Most of them close March 2002. These vacancies are posted on the Customs Web site at <http://www.customs.gov> under Careers/Vacancies, and on Customs Intranet site at <http://customsnet> under Human Resources/Careers/Vacancies. You can also obtain vacancy information by calling Pathfinder at 800.944.7725.★



**Customs Modernization:
New World, New Tools**



HRM

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) open season

The TSP Open Season will be from **November 15, 2001, through January 31, 2002.** During this open season, the contribution limit for Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) employees will increase from 11 to 12 percent of basic pay, and the limit for Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) employees will increase from 6 to 7 percent. Use of Employee Express is mandatory to enroll and increase or decrease your contribution.

What is Employee Express?

Employee Express is an automated system that puts you in control of processing your TSP elections, along with other discretionary personnel and payroll actions.

Each new employee receives an Employee Express PIN by mail from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). You use your PIN along with your SSN to access Employee Express by calling 478.757.3085, toll-free at 800.827.6290, or TDD 478.757.3117; or by visiting the OPM Employee Express Web site at www.employeeexpress.gov. If you need a replacement PIN, call the OPM Help Desk at

478.757.3030. You will receive it in about 1 week.

Is a separate TSP PIN needed to conduct other important TSP business?

Yes! TSP provides a separate "TSP" PIN that allows you to access the TSP Thriftline and Web site. With your TSP PIN and SSN, you can do some things that can't be done through Employee Express. For instance, at any time, you can change the allocation among the five funds; make interfund transfers; check withdrawal status, loan and account balances and return rates; and change your TSP PIN. To obtain a TSP PIN, access the TSP Web site at www.tsp.gov, or call the TSP ThriftLine at 504.255.8777. You will receive the PIN in about 1 week.

Where can I get additional information about the TSP?

For more information, visit the Customs Intranet Web site at <http://customsnet/hrm>, the TSP site at www.tsp.gov, or the TSP ThriftLine at 504.255.8777. You may also contact HRM, Employee Services Division, at 202.927.3900.★



Breast Cancer

Early diagnosis is key to surviving breast cancer. Of the nearly 184,000 women in the United States who will be diagnosed with breast cancer this year, approximately 41,000 will die from the disease.

Symptoms

- A lump or mass in the breast
- Breast swelling or distortion
- Breast irritation or dimpling
- Nipple pain or retraction, redness or scaliness of the nipple or breast skin
- Unusual discharge

Risk Factors

All women are at risk for breast cancer, particularly those who:

- Are over 50
- Have a family history of breast cancer
- Have a family or personal history of non-cancerous breast disease
- Experienced early onset of menstrual periods or late menopause
- Use oral contraceptives or post menopausal estrogens
- Haven't had children or had a first child after age 30

- Had chest radiation therapy as a child or young adult
- Consume two or more alcoholic drinks a day
- Have become obese, especially after menopause

Prevention

Breast cancer cannot be prevented. However, the following are ways to lower your risk:

- A mammogram may provide early diagnosis of a cancerous lesion
- Regular physical activity, good nutrition, and certain drugs may lower your risk of getting breast cancer
- It has NOT been proven that a low-fat diet will prevent breast cancer, but it IS known that a low-fat diet decreases the risk of other diseases and cancers
- Abstain or reduce your alcohol intake to one drink a day

For more information on breast cancer, contact the American Cancer Society at 1.800.ACS.2345 or at www.cancer.org; National Cancer Institute at 1.800.4.CANCER or at www.nci.nih.gov.★

Being prepared for a disaster: Some common sense steps to take at home

There are some things that can be done to help prepare for a possible disaster, either natural or manmade. Learn how to protect yourself and cope with disaster by planning ahead. This checklist will help you get started.

☐ Ask your workplace about emergency plans.

☐ Learn about emergency plans for your children's school or day care center.

☐ Turn on a radio. If possible, keep a battery-powered radio and ensure that the batteries are in it.

☐ Create an Emergency Plan

- Meet with household members to discuss the dangers of possible disasters and how to respond.
- Discuss what to do about power outages and injuries.
- Create a floor plan of your home with escape routes.
- Learn how to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at main switches.
- Post emergency telephone numbers near telephones.
- Teach children *how and when* to call 911, and how to make long distance calls.
- Instruct family to turn on the radio for emergency information.
- Pick one out-of-state and one local friend or relative for family members to call if separated by disaster.
- Pick two meeting places:
 1. A place near your home in case of a fire.
 2. A place outside your neighborhood in case you cannot return home after a disaster.

☐ Take a basic first aid and CPR class.

☐ Keep family records in a water-and fire-proof container.

☐ Keep a backup disk for the family computer in a location away from the home, particularly if important documents or files are kept only on the computer.

☐ Keep a whistle in each bedroom.

☐ Prepare a disaster supplies kit that can be stored in an easy-to-carry container stored next to an exit door. Consider preparing a separate kit that can be stored in your automobile. Include:

- A supply of water (one gallon per person per day to be stored in sealed, unbreakable containers; identify the storage date and replace every six months);
- A supply of non-perishable packaged or canned food and a non-electric can opener;
- A change of clothing, rain gear, and sturdy shoes;
- Blankets or sleeping bags;
- A first aid kit and prescription medications, plus important family medical information;
- An extra pair of glasses;
- A battery-powered radio, flashlight, and plenty of extra batteries;
- Credit cards and cash;
- An extra set of car keys;
- A list of family physicians; and
- Special items for infants, elderly, or disabled family members.

☐ Escape plan

In a fire or other emergency, you may need to evacuate your house, apartment, or mobile home on a moment's notice. You should be ready to get out fast. Develop an escape plan by drawing a floor plan of your residence. Practice emergency evacuation drills with all household members at least two times each year.

☐ Home hazard hunt

In a disaster, ordinary items in the home can cause injury and damage. Anything that can move, fall, break, or cause a fire is a potential hazard.

- Fasten shelves securely, and place large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Hang pictures and mirrors away from beds.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Repair loose wires and cables.
- Secure water heater by strapping it to wall studs.
- Repair cracks in ceilings or foundations.
- Store chemicals and flammable products away from heat sources.
- Place oily polishing rags or waste in covered metal cans.
- Clean and repair chimneys, flue pipes, vent connectors, and gas vents.

☐ If you need to evacuate ...

- Listen to a battery-powered radio for the location of emergency shelters.
- Follow instructions of local officials.
- Wear protective clothing and sturdy shoes.
- Take your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Lock your home.
- Use travel routes specified by local officials.

☐ If you are sure you have time ...

- Shut off water, gas, and electricity, if instructed to do so.
- Let others know when you left and where you are going.
- Make arrangements for pets. Animals are not allowed in public shelters.

☐ Fire safety

- Plan two escape routes out of each room.
- Teach family members to stay low to the ground when escaping from a fire.
- Teach family members never to open doors that are hot. In a fire, feel the bottom of the door with the palm of your hand. If it is hot, do not open the door. Find another way out.
- Install and regularly test smoke detectors. Change batteries at least once a year.
- Keep a whistle in each bedroom to awaken household members in case of fire.
- Check electrical outlets. Do not overload outlets.
- Purchase a fire extinguisher (5 lb., A-B-C type).
- Have a collapsible ladder on each upper floor of your house.
- Consider installing home sprinklers.

Contact your local emergency management office or American Red Cross for additional information. Be sure to ask about special assistance for elderly or disabled persons. (Adapted from material published jointly by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross.)★

Reporting requirement for the Situation Room

Timely, accurate, complete, and proper notification of incidents and events is critical during the heightened security alert status.

It is impractical to provide an "all-inclusive" list of incidents to be reported to the Situation Room (SITROOM); however, the following must be reported:

- Shooting incidents;
- Death or major injury to a Customs employee (on or off duty);

- Death or injury of an individual which was caused by the actions of Customs personnel (on or off duty);
- Assault of a Customs employee occurring due to employment or official duties;
- Detention or incarceration of a Customs employee;
- Unscheduled port/office closing;
- Unscheduled disruption of services to trade due to system outages which exceed two hours;

- Any declared airborne/marine emergency or incident resulting in property damage;
- Terrorist incidents and potential terrorist related incidents;
- Any event or incident that may result in significant and or negative media attention;
- Seizure of a foreign or domestic commercial vessel or aircraft;
- Any event or incident which may be politically sensitive;
- Seizures (in the amount as determined in

- Customs Directive No. 3340-025);
- Cybercrime;
- Any other event that my warrant review by senior management.

Reporting of all Customs events of a sensitive or timely nature will be made by calling the Situation Room as soon as possible, followed by a written notification within 24 hours.

The telephone number for the Situation Room is 1.877.SITROOM (1.877.748.7666).★



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Customs role in international nonproliferation security

By David Harrell

Chief of International Advisory Programs, Office of International Affairs

The U.S. Customs Service is one of the lead government agencies to investigate and interdict illegal transactions of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. This includes components, delivery systems, and dual-use technology, collectively known as weapons of mass destruction or WMD.

Since the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and breakup of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Customs has been at the forefront of U.S. government technical assistance programs designed to counter this WMD threat. Our involvement began with legislation sponsored by Senators Nunn and Lugar in 1992 to control nuclear materials in Russia, Belarus, the Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. We continued with the Non-Proliferation Disarmament Fund, Project Amber initiatives in 1995, and the Department of Defense/U.S. Customs Counterproliferation Program in 1998. These early efforts concentrated on equipment delivery as well as short-term training and assistance in WMD source and transit countries.

More recently, the Department of State has sponsored an expanded interagency program known as the Export Control and Related Border Security Program, or EXBS. This development has given Customs the opportunity to ensure long-term sustainability of improved border control procedures and infrastructure.

In late 2000, Customs was selected as the executive agency for delivery of the multi-year, multi-million dollar EXBS program. Customs provides on-site, long-term EXBS advisors in 10 locations who have program responsibility for a total of 25 countries, with new countries being added every few months. This includes virtually all of the countries in Eastern Europe — from the Baltics in the north to Turkey, Cyprus, and Malta in the south. Former Soviet Republics in the Caucasus and the “Stans” of Central Asia are included as well. The program will soon be expanded to include additional countries in Asia, including India and Malaysia.

The EXBS program provides funds for a variety of inspection, detection, and communication equipment as well as other border infrastructure improvement.

Promoting regional cooperation

U.S. overseas advisors are responsible for the success of the EXBS program in their assigned countries. They coordinate, implement, and oversee the completion of practical objectives established for each of their assigned countries. This includes delivering equipment and furnishing training by U.S. Customs and our interagency partners: the Departments of State, Energy, Commerce, and Defense. Long-term advisors promote modern law enforcement methods, 21st Century procedures, and infrastructure building in the host countries. They also emphasize the critical need for interagency cooperation in order to achieve results in stopping the spread of WMD. Networks of neighboring EXBS advisors further promote the benefits of cross-border and regional cooperation. This helps to ensure that the aims of our commitment continue in the enhanced professionalism and efficiency of a variety of foreign border control agencies.

The Office of International Affairs manages the EXBS program along with a number of other international assistance projects. The program could not meet its goals without the critical support of other Customs offices. Retired officers presently occupy all of the EXBS advisor positions, for the most part on one-year contracts that may be renewed.

Long-term positions and short-term mission opportunities are available. Recent retirees who are interested in such assignments are encouraged to contact the Personal Services Contract Coordinator in the Office of Procurement at 202.927.3709, or the Training Assistance Division, Office of International Affairs, at 202.927.1490 for program information.★



Photo by James Tourtellotte

This debris field in the center of the New York Customhouse was caused by pieces that fell from the North Tower. Steel beams formed several crosses in the midst of the debris field. The cross picture here was preserved by construction workers and blessed by clergy in a solemn ceremony held outside the building on October 4, 2001.

Protecting children from harm

Since 1987, 380 children have been recovered as part of the missing children recovery program at the port of Blaine, Wash.

The majority of the recoveries are runaways; others are from familial abductions, a parent or a grandparent who has applied for custody and did not get it, or from abductions by an agent for that family member.

Senior Inspector Susan deLucia became interested in the missing children recovery program and in outreach programs while attending Western Washington University, where she majored in Sociology/Criminology. One of her professors was conducting a study on missing and abducted children and Susan volunteered to join her group. She did case studies for the Federal Bureau of Investigation on runaways, throwaways, and abductions: what to look for, why it happens, when it happens, and who does it.

Senior Inspector deLucia has been the missing children recovery program coordinator since 1993. She is active in school outreach programs to educate children on U.S. Customs activities. “If we do an outreach program and five children remember what we told them about Customs and personal safety, that’s five we hope will be protected from harm,” says deLucia.

Sr. Inspector deLucia and three other inspectors, Sr. Inspector James deLucia, Sr. Inspector Scott Sorenson, and Supervisory Inspector Lawrence Frank, were recently honored by Assistant Commissioner Bonni Tischler, Office of Field Operations, for their work in recovering a child on January 17, 2001. Two adult U.S. citizens and a minor arrived at the Pacific Highway crossing after they had been refused admission into Canada. Various database inquiries made by the inspectors revealed that the 2-year-old girl was listed as a missing/abducted child in North Carolina. Her mother was wanted for kidnapping and felony child abduction. The child’s grandfather, who was with them, was wanted on the same charges. He was also listed as an armed and dangerous sexual offender. Because of the work and diligence of the inspectors, this child was rescued from a dangerous situation and provided with an opportunity for a better future.

Other inspectors have found children rolled up in carpets after being traded for cocaine by their mother. They have found children hidden in trunks of cars and wrapped in plastic and blankets.

The Offices of Field Operations and Investigations are working with the National Taskforce for Missing and Exploited Children to develop a directive for the U.S. Customs missing children’s program. Each CMC has been asked to provide a point of contact and ultimately each port of entry will have a plan in place to help in the recovery of missing children.★

In memory of Customs employees and retirees

In the line of duty

Thomas Murray
Customs Inspector
Gramercy, La., 10/30/01

Employees

Louis G. Lipman
Customs Liquidator
New York, N.Y., 9/27/01

Fredresa Hawkins
Secretary, Office of
Information and Technology
Newington, Va., 10/2/01

IN MEMORIAM

Retirees

Milagros Murray
Import Specialist
San Juan, P.R., 8/23/01

Lawrence Duffy
Senior Customs Inspector
Minot, N.Dak., 9/11/01

Janice R. Ridges
Customs Inspector
Anacortes, Wash., 9/20/01

Daniel E. Phillips
Special Agent
Deming, N.Mex., 9/25/01

Charlie McWeeney
Supervisory Customs
Patrol Officer
Fort Myers, Fla., 9/30/01

Robert “Doc” Lombardo
Customs Patrol Officer
Newark, N.J., 10/8/01

Ira Jennings
Import Specialist
New York, N.Y., 10/9/01

Irving Schor
Deputy Chief Inspector
Brooklyn, N.Y., 10/10/01

Victor J. Rodriguez
Supervisory Entry Specialist
San Juan, P.R., 10/12/01

U.S. Customs Today publishes employee and retiree death announcements as soon as the information is verified. Employees who wish to provide this information may contact Karen Ramey at 202.927.0910.★



Seizures augment reef ecosystem

The U.S. Customs Service is making a difference off the coast of Florida – environmentally speaking.

“U.S. Customs Reef,” as it is named, was created four miles east of Key Biscayne, Fla., in 130 feet of water. This man-made artificial reef was formed when four cargo ships were sunk; three initially on July 13, 2001, and then one on October 18. The Miami River Enforcement Team seized the ships, M/V Brandywine, M/V Miguana, M/V Etoile de Mer, and the M/V Tacoma after being used to smuggle drugs into South Florida via the Miami River.

“Turning something bad – ships loaded with cocaine – into something good, an artificial reef for the whole community, is a win, win for everyone,” says Deputy Commissioner Charles Winwood. “This living monument honors those who protect America’s borders and coastlines – past, present, and future.”

Covering less than 1 percent of the planet’s surface, coral reefs are valuable assets providing food, jobs, protection from storms, and billions of dollars in revenues each year to local communities and national economies.

Although reefs are common in tropical climates, they do not exist in the waters of the continental United States above the southern tip of Florida. Off the southeastern coastal states, from North Carolina to Florida, “hard-bottom” or “live-bottom” habitats exist. These reefs occur in specific locations on the ocean bottom where nature has provided a suitable hard substrate, which serves as a post of attachment and colonization for sponges, corals, and a wide assortment of other invertebrates. To enhance the production of hard-bottom habitats, man-made materials, such as the ships seized by Customs, can be placed in areas that were previously barren of any natural reef structures. Large steel objects have been found to be most effective in creating artificial reefs. In the near future living organisms will colonize and inhabit almost every square inch of these ships enhancing the marine ecosystem.

This reef project was created through cooperation between Customs and the South Florida community. The ships were turned over to Miami-Dade County’s Department of Environmental Resource Management (DERM) for the sole purpose of creating artificial reefs.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MIAMI HERALD

The sinking of M/V Brandywine and three other seized ships created the “U.S. Customs Reef” in South Florida.

The Miami-Dade County Artificial Reef Program was established in 1981 with the primary goal of increasing the habitat available to marine organisms for the enhancement of local fishery resources. The construction of artificial reefs was also initiated to provide areas of great recreational opportunity for fisherman and diver alike. Miami-Dade County is known as the “Wreck Diving Capital of the World.”

Deep six drug ships

The total amount of cocaine seized from the ships sunk by explosives to create the “U.S. Customs Reef” was 925 pounds, worth \$7.7 million wholesale.

On January 18, the M/V Etoile de Mer, was seized after Customs inspectors found 186 pounds of cocaine, worth \$1.5 million wholesale. The cocaine was discovered on the main deck of the ship in two duffel bags and hidden in a false wall between the cargo hold and the engine room. The M/V Etoile de Mer is an 80-foot steel hulled fishing vessel converted to carry dry cargo.

On February 12, the M/V Brandywine was seized after Customs inspectors discovered a false compartment under a waste oil tank in the forward cargo hold. The compartment was created with a false floor in the waste oil tank and accessed through a 4-inch by 12-inch steel plate that was put in place with Bondo-type material.

On February 27, the M/V Miguana was seized as part of OPERATION RIVER-WALK after Customs inspectors and Florida Highway Patrol officers found 125 pounds of cocaine, worth \$1.1 million wholesale. The cocaine was initially discovered when “Bandit,” a U.S. Customs drug detection dog, and “SPEC,” a Florida Highway Patrol drug detection dog, alerted to the presence of cocaine near two propane tanks at the stern of the ship. While examining the tanks, inspectors discovered they were not properly connected to the galley stove, which contained no propane gas and was unusually heavy. An examination of the bottom of those tanks revealed that the bottoms had been cut and patched with Bondo-type material in an apparent effort to hide the illegal cargo. The M/V Miguana is a 101-foot former garbage scow converted to carry dry cargo.

On October 18, the M/V Tacoma was the final ship sunk to create “U.S. Customs Reef.” On January 19, the M/V Tacoma was seized after Customs inspectors found 614 pounds of cocaine, worth \$5.1 million wholesale. The cocaine was discovered after six empty, new nylon duffel bags were found near the entrance to the cargo hold. Bandit, the same detector dog aboard the M/V Miguana, alerted to the presence of cocaine on the nylon bags and closer examination revealed a false compartment beneath the fuel tank adjacent to the cargo hold.★

“J” litter: The newest members of the Customs canine team

The 10th litter of the U.S. Customs canine breeding program made its debut on August 6, 2001. The puppies, 3 females and 2 males, are all black



PHOTO BY PAUL PAULSON

Labrador Retrievers. This is Xele’s second litter; she was also the mother of the “G” litter born on July 21, 2000. The father, Toro, is part of the Toledo, Ohio, Sheriff’s Department Canine Unit. He and partner Deputy Michael Corbett received their training at the U.S. Customs Canine Training Center in Front Royal, Va.

A naming campaign was held and Assistant Commissioner Bonni Tischler selected the winning names for the puppies. The three females are Jackpot, Jett, and Justice. The 2 males are Jake and Jester.★

X: The dark side

“In most of the serious cases reported, users had collapsed unconscious or started to convulse while dancing. By the time they were noticed and taken to emergency departments, their body temperatures had soared as high as 110 degrees, their pulses were racing, and their blood pressures were plummeting. These patients with severe toxicity usually developed [scattered intravenous clotting]... and acute renal failure. Despite treatment, death sometimes ensued from 2 to 60 hours after admission, usually due to severe hyperthermia accompanied by ... [intravenous clotting].” (Teri Randall for the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.)

That was published in 1992, but apparently the word on Ecstasy (“X”) didn’t get out right away. And that article doesn’t describe the so-called luckier ones, those who don’t overdose but who experience cycles of anger and depression after the drug wears off — “a depression I couldn’t stand,” as one teen-aged user, now in treatment, described it.

Then again, you might consider this, reported in the Associated Press barely two months ago: A teenager who lived in a suburb of New York



PHOTO BY GERALD L. NINO

Ecstasy tablets seized by U.S. Customs officials at a mail facility.

City became hooked on Ecstasy after taking it for the first time, and in short order was stealing TVs and VCRs to support his \$300-a-week

habit. And that for a drug that virtually all users defend as not being addictive.

Ecstasy seizures by Customs increased from 400,000 tablets in 1997 to more than 9 million in the year 2000. That’s 22.5 times the amount seized in 1997 or an increase of 2,250 percent in only three years.

Donald Vereen of the White House Office of Drug Policy called Ecstasy “a public health problem that is behaving like an epidemic.” Emergency-room admissions seem to support his view: from 250 in 1994 to more than 4,500 in 2000. And those numbers only include those who actually made it to the emergency room.

The dark side of ecstasy:

- March 2001: Twenty-one-year-old Dan Petrole shot to death in the driveway of the suburban Virginia townhouse he shared with his parents. A major player in the northern Virginia drug scene, police said the amount of Ecstasy found in his home was the largest seizure ever in Prince William County, Va.
- December 2000: Sammy “the Bull” Gravano, having spent only five years in prison for 19 mob murders and being placed in a witness protection program upon release, turned to drug dealing. He was indicted on federal drug trafficking charges for Ecstasy distribution.
- November 2000: In Queens, N.Y., Jeffrey Walter sold Mark Petronio \$90,000 worth of Ecstasy. Claiming Walter had short-changed him on the number of pills, Petronio beat Walter to death, stuffed his body in a garbage bag, and buried him in Suffolk County, N.Y.
- November 2000: In what was reputed to be the first Cook County (Ill.) Ecstasy-related homicide, two Asian gang members murdered a 16-year-old Vietnamese immigrant who they thought was involved in the theft of \$10,000 worth of Ecstasy.★