



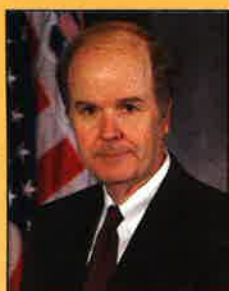
U.S. CUSTOMS TODAY

TRADITION

SERVICE

HONOR

COMMISSIONER'S MESSAGE



Robert C. Bonner,
Commissioner

I could never have imagined that my first visit to the field as Commissioner of Customs would be to the burned out remains of one of our agency's most cherished buildings — the U.S. Customhouse at the World Trade Center in New York City. But on September 11 our world changed forever, and with it the future of the agency whose leadership I was about to assume.

I will never forget that trip, nor the indomitable spirit of our employees there. Nothing demonstrated to me more clearly the character of Customs than the commitment of our people in New York to carry on the mission of this agency despite the horrors they had been through.

And carry on we will. Though the business of Customs continues, the scars from that day — both physical and emotional — will take time to heal, especially for those who experienced the tragedy directly. For that reason, we have stationed teams of Employee Assistance Program counselors in New York to assist our people in need. We will continue to do all that we can to help our employees restore a sense of peace and security to their lives.

Beyond its immediate effects, the terrorist attacks will no doubt have a great impact on the work of Customs and its mission for many years to come. As America's frontline, Customs has a vital responsibility to protect our nation and to do its part in the preservation of our homeland security. For the foreseeable future, our top priority is and must be counter-terrorism in all its forms, from investigations, to inspections at the border, to passenger operations and intelligence sharing with our fellow law enforcement agencies.

I will be devoting all of my energies over the next days, weeks, months, and possibly years to addressing the difficult new challenges facing the Customs Service. I am committed to doing everything within my power to see that Customs has the resources it needs to protect the security of our country. I ask for your continued support in all that lies ahead.

I want to thank all of our employees, everywhere, for your hard work and sacrifices at this critical time for our nation. Through your efforts, you truly exemplify the proud spirit of Customs and its history of tradition, service, and honor. ★

And then Tuesday happened...

September 11, 2001. A date that will be forever etched in our memory.

The jumbo jets that crashed into the World Trade Center's twin towers, into the Pentagon, and into a field in Somerset, Pa., shattered, at least for one long moment, our nation's most deeply held convictions about our own impenetrability. The human and material losses, and the sheer chaos that followed the act of war by foreign terrorists, the most devastating ever on American soil, will not be fully comprehended for years.

At this writing, 344 people are known to have died at the World Trade Center; the number missing is at least 5,756, a sum that includes victims from more than 60 nations. One hundred and eighty-nine people died at the Pentagon. Two hundred and sixty-five people died aboard the four commercial planes.

But the esprit de corps, generosity, heroism, personal sacrifice, and political unity spawned by that single act have been immediate. Even as the meltdown of three of the nation's best-known icons — symbols of military might, economic preeminence, of America's very way of life — was in progress, the recovery effort had begun.

New York City lost more than 300 emergency personnel, primarily firefighters, who rushed into buildings to rescue others — immediately, on auto pilot, with no apparent concerns for their own safety. It took more than 24 hours to put out the fires at the Pentagon, and very few fire hoses, if any, extend 110 stories. In addition to the twin towers, the terrorist attack leveled a 22-story World Trade Center hotel and Trade Center Building 7.

Building 6, only 40 feet from tower 1, housed the Customs Service. Building 6 suffered a complete internal collapse; it's now a burned-out shell. But — the 760 Customs employees, and the 40 or so employees who had been attending a seminar there, all got out safely.

And like a phoenix rising from its own ashes, many were back at work within hours.

The entire Customs Service is currently at a Level One alert, the



New York Customhouse smoldering in wake of terrorist attack on the World Trade Center Towers.

highest state of security alert, which calls for the maximum level of passenger, cargo, and conveyance examination. Along with the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Border Patrol, we are providing sustained, intensive anti-terrorism operations at land borders and airports. The Office of Field Operations has reassigned 380 inspectors to 19 international airports around the country to strengthen the already heightened security measures being implemented by the U.S. Marshals Service and the Federal Aviation Administration. On top of that, 98 inspectors have been reassigned to land ports along the northern border to enhance Level One alert levels there.

Continued on pages 4-5

Discovery leads to largest U.S. maritime seizure

Smugglers are finding new maritime routes to move their contraband from South America to the United States. In recent years, the Eastern Pacific region has become a more common smuggling route (vs. the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico) because of its vast, open area. The reason: smugglers want to evade law enforcement. But with the Joint Interagency Task Force West (JIATF-West) — a program that coordinates air and marine interdiction activity in the Eastern Pacific and Western Atlantic Ocean regions — U.S. Customs Service and other federal agencies are working together to stop the drug smugglers on the high seas.

One recent interdiction — in which Customs played a key role — turned out to be the largest drug seizure in U.S. maritime history. On May 3, twelve metric tons of cocaine was seized aboard a Belize fishing vessel a few days after a U.S. Customs P-3 AEW spotted the vessel off Mexico's Pacific coast.

On April 26, 2001, the U.S. Customs P-3 AEW crew was asked by the JIATF-West to search for the 154-foot "Svesda Maru" fishing vessel that was last known to be in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, south of Mexico in the vicinity of the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador. The vessel was suspect because it

had no working equipment, had few fish on board, and was outside the normal fishing area. "All we knew was that the vessel departed from South America and was en route to a undetermined location," says Pilot James Litz. That day the P-3 crew flew two missions but was unable to locate the vessel.

Two days later, after five hours into the flight, the aircrew spotted a vessel outside the normal shipping lanes. "We used binoculars to identify this vessel, and we determined that it fit the description of the suspect vessel," explains Pilot Todd Carlson. "We then contacted the Coast Guard C-130 aircraft to come out and verify the identification of the suspect, which they did," adds Pilot William Durham.

The Customs P-3 aircrew then guided a U.S. Navy vessel that had a Coast Guard Team aboard it. When the Coast Guard obtained radar and visual contact of the suspect vessel, the Customs P-3 aircrew returned to their deployment base — mission accomplished.

When the Coast Guard boarded and inspected the vessel, they found anomalies in the vessel structure and escorted it to the

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Largest U.S. maritime seizure

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The Coast Guard found 12 metric tons of cocaine (pictured above) hidden aboard the Svesda Maru.

San Diego Harbor. After searching the vessel for five days, a crew from the Coast Guard cutter found over 26,397 pounds of cocaine in a secret compartment beneath the fish holds of the boat.

The ten-man crew of the Svesda Maru — eight from Ukraine and two from Russia — was arrested by the Coast Guard, and currently face conspiracy charges.

"The Customs aircrews spend many hours searching for suspect aircraft and vessels, and based on their experience over the years, the aircrews are successful in sorting suspects such as in this case," says Aviation Group Supervisor Kenneth Knight, P-3 Surveillance Support Branch (West), Air and Marine Interdiction Division. If it weren't for the keen skills of the Customs P-3 aircrew, more than 26,000 pounds of cocaine would have entered the United States to be distributed and sold on our streets.★

The Customs P-3 aircrew were:

- Pilots James Litz, William Durham, and Todd Carlson
- Senior Flight Engineer Randall Harper
- Flight Engineer David Kana
- Detection Systems Specialists (Airborne) John Fowler, Lawrence Clement, and Andres Gonzales

STRATEGIC TRADE

RATLing the business-government status quo

There are baby rattles, snakes with rattles, and if you play in a band's rhythm section, symphonic rattles. You can rattle pots and pans, rattle a tea cup in a saucer, rattle off a list of stuff you've memorized, and if you live in almost any major city, you will most likely rattle your car's axles as you drive along its pock-marked streets.

But until the year 2000, there had never been a human rattle. Now the Office of Strategic Trade (OST) has changed all that. Their rattles — or more accurately, "RATLs" — are changing the rhythm of communication between the importing industry and the Customs Service — for the better.

Their name says it all: RATL stands for Regulatory Audit Trade Liaison, and it's that word, "liaison," that tells the story. A new position within OST, RATLs are intermediaries between the worlds of the regulator and the regulated, the importer and the Customs Service. While "regulator and regulated" often suggests a certain antagonistic relationship, the RATL's goal is to assure that dealings between the two sides are anything but.

For example, the Regulatory Audit program is working very hard to adapt to changes in the business world and to present a more customer-friendly environment. But it hasn't done the most effective job of communicating its success to the trade. Enter a RATL, whose job it is, in part, to market Customs to the trade and tout those successes.

You could think of the RATL program as Regulatory Audit's version of an ombudsman: a cadre of professionals who keep Customs abreast of the ideas, concerns, and trends taking hold in the importing industry. And since Regulatory Audit is at the forefront of Customs emphasis on risk management, RATLs are also responsible for creating and promulgating consistent messages, internally and externally, about risk and about the Customs Service's compliance programs.

Currently there are six RATLs nationwide: Peter Daniels in New York City, Cheryl Harbison in Dallas, Albert Queen at Headquarters, Mark Ferguson in Miami, Carolyn McDaniel in Seattle, and Gina Wong in Long Beach. They were chosen, as future RATLs will be, for their technical expertise in auditing as well as for their superior communication skills. A significant part of their job is to use the latest marketing and public-relations techniques in order to educate the trade about Customs programs and requirements.

A good ombudsman does his or her job in such a way that both sides feel they've come away a winner. Responses from the importing community about the RATL program have been very enthusiastic. Importers now have an accessible contact for getting answers to technical questions about auditing and for getting clarification on policy matters.

So far, it's a win-win. Rattle, rattle.★

TOP COPS creates new category to honor Blue Orchid case

Every year since 1994 the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) selects from hundreds of nominations one officer from each state. From those, ten are chosen as TOP COPS and the other officers receive honorable mention awards.

But this year's ceremony will be different because NAPO will begin a new tradition by honoring 11 winners. NAPO was so impressed and moved by the U.S. Customs Blue Orchid case that it created a new international award category in order to honor three Customs employees for their courageous efforts.

At its award ceremony on October 25 in Washington, D.C., NAPO will pay tribute to Senior Special Agent Eric Andreucci of Customs CyberSmuggling Center (Fairfax, Va.), U.S. Customs Attaché Michael Woodworth (Moscow), and former U.S. Customs Assistant Attaché Marshall Heeger (Moscow), who is now assigned to the Computer Forensics Division of Internal Affairs in Washington, D.C.



The winning case involved identifying the owners and customers of a Russian-based Web site that sold child pornography. In the end, U.S. Customs Service and the Moscow City Police worked together to dismantle the site and to arrest the site's owners in Russia and many of its customers located in various countries around the world. (Read all about the Blue Orchid case in the April 2001 issue of *U.S. Customs Today*.)★

Spradlin receives TOP COPS Award

At this year's TOP COPS award ceremony, NAPO will also honor Customs Special Agent Ryan Spradlin, Resident Agent, Jackson, Miss. Spradlin was the TOP COPS winner for the State of Mississippi and he will receive an honorable mention award for his outstanding work on the *Paul Johnson, et al.* money laundering case.

EEO

Hispanic special emphasis programs promote diversity

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

September 15 – October 15, 2001, has been designated "National Hispanic Heritage Month," and this year's theme is "Paving the Way for Future Generations." While federal agencies are required by Executive Order to establish Hispanic special emphasis programs, for many Customs employees showcasing their Hispanic culture is a labor of love. Let's look at some of their accomplishments.

Alma Reyther, a Supervisory Customs Inspector at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, is an active Hispanic program manager who devotes much of her effort to the special emphasis program managers annual picnic for Customs employees, their families, and children. A Mexican-American, Reyther believes family events are a critical part of her life. The picnic is even more special because employees have a chance to get together and meet the families of coworkers. Children's games draw the young participants, and everyone gets into the regional and ethnic cooking — a highlight of the event. This year's Hispanic Heritage Month plans are already underway. Reyther is currently recruiting speakers and is planning a dinner dance for Customs employees. What better opportunity to both celebrate and educate employees on the accomplishments and culture of the Hispanic community?

Inspector Homero Vela was the Detroit Hispanic Special Emphasis Program Manager for three years. Carol Crotte, EEO Manager for the West Great Lakes CMC, praised Inspector Vela for his outstanding efforts in organizing volunteers to tutor children in schools with high dropout rates. He was instrumental in presenting the wide diversity of Customs career opportunities to children in grades 1 through 7. Vela felt his collateral responsibilities were beneficial to both the Customs Service and himself because he helped promote the Customs mission and law enforcement opportunities to young people, and, at the same time, enhanced his own communication skills.

Originally from Santiago, Chile, Luis E. Astete is a Senior Inspector with the Outbound Team in Portland, Oregon. Inspector Astete has been a special emphasis program manager for three years, and he works with an energetic EEO Committee. Inspector Astete says "...by his being of Hispanic heritage, he is very aware of family values and is deeply touched by stories of abused children and mothers in the community." His strong concern led Inspector Astete to encourage the EEO Committee to support Monika's House, a shelter for abused children and mothers. The committee has made an ongoing commitment to continue their generous support. Inspector Astete says he performs a "favor for himself" every time he sees the sparkle in children's eyes when they receive an item of clothing or a toy. His ultimate goal is an ambitious one — to bring together all types of different ethnic groups to work together harmoniously.

These are just a few examples of Customs employees who participate on a collateral basis in Hispanic special emphasis activities. We would also like to take this opportunity to recognize some individuals for their commitment and dedication to promoting Hispanic diversity at the Customs Service.

Muchas Gracias to: Carlos Torres from Illinois; Brenda Tellez, Chris Leon, and Elias Villarreal from Arizona; Brenda Nevano from Massachusetts; Robert Estrado from North Carolina; Phyllis Robey from Indiana; Roberto C. Garcia, Luis Canales, Esther Drummond, Raymundo Davila, and Noemi Overholt from Texas; Joe Perez, Carlos Ramirez, and Jorge Cortez from Florida; Samuel Vega, Carrie Hernandez, and John Villasenor from California; and Jayne Harnisch, Linda Source, Diane Brockway, Yolanda Monserrate, and John Padilla from New York.

Congratulations on a job well done!★

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Secretary of the Treasury
Paul Henry O'Neill

Commissioner of the U.S. Customs Service
Robert C. Bonner

Editor
Joseph B. Adamoli
Managing Editor
Laurel Smith

Associate Editors
Elysa Cross, Catherine Jackson,
Paula D. Keicer, Denise A. Mahalek,
Kathleen Millar, Leslie Woolf

Photo Editor
James Tourtellotte

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OTD

Customs Leadership Institute alumni "on the move"

In January 2000, the Service began the Customs Leadership Institute (CLI), a year-long program designed to prepare senior managers to take on increasing responsibility and move into executive positions. The program is presented in partnership with the Columbia University School of Business, which was recently voted the number one executive education provider for the second year in a row by the *Financial Times*. CLI participants attend eight one-week workshops and work on application assignments and projects throughout the year.

What happens to graduates of the CLI once they complete the program?

The CLI Program is not intended to end upon graduation. Participants are expected to continue their own development toward executive positions and to "give something back" to the organization. To help make this happen, Deputy Commissioner Charles W. Winwood approved a proposal for the creation of a CLI Alumni group. The first meeting of the alumni occurred in early May.

During the organizing meeting, the CLI Alumni began to identify the types of activities they would undertake. Examples include:

- Teach in the Customs leadership courses (Customs Supervisory Seminar, Customs Managers Leadership Course, and other leadership courses being developed).
- Undertake assignments to study organizational issues (both current and future), present ideas, and solve problems.
- Be available to act in vacant management and executive positions.
- Mentor new CLI groups and employees interested in competing for the CLI program.
- Participate on career panels.
- Utilize their office operations as pilot sites for new initiatives; e.g., Succession Management.
- Monitor and support continued leadership development.
- Foster networking opportunities for CLI graduates to share on-the-job experiences.

Where are they now?

There were 16 participants in the inaugural 2000 CLI program. Since being selected for the program, eight participants were promoted (three to the Senior Executive Service) and four made lateral moves to positions of more responsibility. Members of that class have also taken acting positions for various lengths of time to include Acting Assistant Commissioner, OFO; Acting Deputy Assistant Commissioner, OTD; Acting Director, Field Operations, Mid America CMC; and Acting Port Director, Los Angeles.

Within the current (2001) CLI program there have already been several promotions. Of the 18 participants, five have been promoted (one to the Senior Executive Service) and two were selected to positions of greater responsibility. Executive acting assignments have also been completed.

The alumni and participants of the Customs Leadership Institute are definitely "on the move"!★

The 2002 Program

The 2002 CLI Program, scheduled to begin in the second quarter of FY 2002, will be announced soon. The program will be closely tied to the implementation of the new Customs Succession Management System. To ensure a ready pool of applicants for top Customs positions, selection criteria for entry into the program will be linked to the executive competencies needed for success in top level jobs. In addition, participants will develop and institute leadership development plans to ensure that they maximize their learning both during and after the CLI program. All senior managers aspiring to executive positions should be working with their managers to explore the value of this program in their ongoing development.

Non-intrusive inspection technology — a layered defense

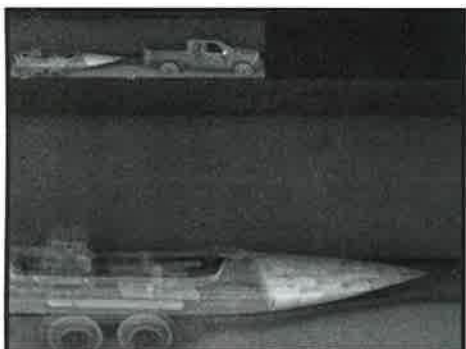
By Robert Michaud

Program Manager, Anti-Smuggling Division, Office of Field Operations

As global trade has expanded, so has the opportunity for narcotics traffickers to transport and conceal their contraband within commercial cargo and conveyances. The commercial workload that Customs faces continues to escalate dramatically. The volume of commercial land border traffic alone has increased by over 140 percent during the last 10 years.

In an attempt to meet the demands of this increased traffic, Customs developed a five-year Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) Technology Plan. The plan was developed to address the narcotics smuggling threat of increasingly sophisticated techniques of deep concealment in commercial cargo and conveyances.

NII systems, in many cases, give Customs inspectors the capability to perform thorough examinations of cargo without having to resort to the costly, time consuming process of unloading cargo for manual searches, or intrusive examinations of conveyances by methods such as drilling and dismantling.



Example of how NII technology works — an x-ray image of contraband concealed within the bow of a boat.

In FY 1999, the five-year Technology Plan received tremendous support from Congress through \$134 million in appropriated and emergency supplemental funds. These funds enabled

To date, 103 NII systems have been funded from FY 1999 appropriated funding. Fifty-eight of the 103 systems have been deployed, including 6 prototypes. The systems deployed include:

- 23 Vehicle & Cargo Inspection Systems (VACIS);
- 11 Mobile VACIS Systems;
- 12 Mobile Truck X-ray Systems;
- 9 Truck X-ray Systems;
- 1 Rail VACIS System;
- 1 Heavy Pallet Examination System; and
- 1 Sea Container X-ray System.

Full deployment of all funded NII equipment is scheduled for October 2003. In FY 2000, NII technology was involved in 157 narcotics seizures totaling 103,203 pounds, or approximately 10 percent of the total weight seized.

Customs to accelerate the design, development, testing, and deployment of NII equipment.

Because of the high risk of narcotics smuggling on the southern tier of the United States, Customs effort in the deployment of NII technology focused initially on the Southwest Border, Southern Florida, and Puerto Rico. However, Customs has been able to expand the plan to include select seaports on both coasts and a few ports of entry along the Northern Border.

James Engleman, Director, Anti-Smuggling Division, Office of Field Operations, believes NII technology is here to stay: "Customs continues to aggressively pursue a mix of technologies designed to complement one another and present a layered defense to smuggling attempts."

Approximately \$80 million is required for Customs to complete the deployment of NII systems outlined in the five-year NII Technology Plan.★

America's Most Wanted: Captured with Customs help

By the time he turned 23, Keshan Mitchell was wreaking havoc throughout northern California: He had murdered a 17-year-old boy and a bystander in Marysville. He had tried to kill his girlfriend while her small children looked on. He was wanted on federal narcotics and weapons-trafficking charges, and authorities had already seized several assault rifles from him.

Mitchell was such an artful dodger that by the time his story was shown on *America's Most Wanted* — he had so effectively eluded police that they felt it necessary to cast a wider net and take his story to the American viewing public — he was also the target of a four-agency task force. Realizing that his days of outrunning the law in northern California were limited, he headed south to Riverside, Calif., with the U.S. Marshals Service, the California Justice Department, the Moreno Valley Police Department, and the Riverside County Sheriff's Office in pursuit. That's when Customs air units were called in.

The Customs Service's aviation unit in Riverside is frequently called upon to provide aerial surveillance for other law enforcement agencies, a request they readily honor.

The topography of the Pacific region that includes the counties of Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino, with its hills, mountains, and densely packed residential and commercial construction, makes successful ground detection almost an "anyone's guess" proposition. For this reason, a key mission of the Customs Riverside Air Unit is to provide aviation support to state and local law enforcement agencies.



PHOTO BY TINA DURELL

Pilots Chris Thornton and T.J. Pederson and AEO Mack Weidhase.

On April 24, 2001, the four-agency task force turned to the air unit for help. Pilots T.J. Pederson and Chris Thornton took out an A-Star 350 helicopter during the day to track some of Mitchell's suspected accomplices in the Los Angeles area. They returned to base at dusk to switch to a Forward-Looking Infra Red (FLIR) detector-equipped Black Hawk, an aircraft much better suited for nighttime surveillance. They also picked up Aviation Enforcement Officer (AEO) Mark Weidhase to aid in the search.

Tailing Mitchell's accomplices paid off big-time. They were able to follow Mitchell to a home in a residential section of Riverside County. Just before midnight, the Riverside County Sheriff's negotiator talked him and an accomplice into surrendering.

Without Customs help, it would be anyone's guess as to whether they'd have found Mitchell at all, never mind finding him so quickly. The skill of the aircrew, along with the high-tech equipment on board the helicopter, allowed them to provide critical information to the SWAT team that surrounded the house — information that allowed the SWAT team to arrest the suspect safely and without incident.★



And then Tuesday happened...



"I worried that I was in the middle of a full-scale attack. I just wanted to get away from Manhattan, but there was no escape from the island. The bridges and tunnels were closed, and I suspected that the ferry was not running. So I turned back uptown and walked and walked..."

"Thank you for being so concerned about me. I feel so lucky."

— JOAN MAZZOLA,
NATIONAL IMPORT SPECIALIST

"Fellow citizens, we will meet violence with patient justice, assured of the rightness of our cause and confident of the victories to come. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution."

— PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH



September 11, 2001. Eyewitness testimonials from Customs employees in New York:

"The first explosion sounded and felt like a bomb. We looked up and saw giant holes in 1 WTC, which is the building right next to mine. Some people were saying there had been a plane crash... It never crossed my mind that the whole building could collapse... I looked back and saw the explosion of 2 WTC. I didn't see the plane, just the explosion. It was more horrible than words could ever describe. The building was made of silver metal, and the explosion sent shards of silver debris cascading down like fireworks around the building."

"It was not I who 'ordered' the evacuation of 6 World Trade Center on the morning of September 11, 2001. I didn't have to do that, the employees 'ordered' their own evacuation and they accomplished that task in record time. I did not have time to 'order' an evacuation and, if I had, there would have been no one left to follow that order. We had many drills and tests over the years in regard to emergency situations and our people, thankfully, were well schooled."

— JOHN MARTUGE, DIRECTOR,
FIELD OPERATIONS



Relocation Information

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

The addresses and contact number of the two existing facilities are as follows:

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 to the New York Strategic Trade Center: NY Customs Management Center (Director, Field Operations Mission Support Staff Operations Staff); National Commodity Specialist Division; Associate Chief Counsel; NY Strategic Trade Center; Field Intelligence Unit/Northeast; National



Homeland Security

On September 26, 2001, Commissioner Bonner addressed Customs employees at Headquarters (and others via satellite broadcast), saying, "As the monstrous terrorist acts of September 11 showed, the basic freedoms we had come to take for granted as Americans are under siege.

"On that dark and infamous day, our citizens, our nation came under attack...our economy came under attack...our democratic way of life

came under attack from the enemies of a civilized world.

"As the guardian of our nation's borders, the Customs Service has a major part to play in this great struggle. We are a vital link in the chain of Homeland Security. For this is a campaign that will take place not just overseas, but all across America. Our people have mobilized across the country and, despite adversity, carried on their work in the very best tradition of this agency...

"It is in the name of those victims that our New York employees, some of whom lost friends and family in the attacks, are valiantly carrying on the mission of Customs and renewing the purpose of their work. I was deeply impressed by their spirit and determination. Indeed, the example they have set should serve as inspiration to us all when, at times, the tasks ahead seem overwhelming.

"Now more than ever, we must come together as an organization to advance the urgent cause at hand." ★

PHOTOS BY JAMES TOURTELLOTT

(clockwise, from top)

Special Agent Andrew Danchuk surveys damage to the New York Customhouse at 6 World Trade Center.

Southwest corner of Customhouse.

Vigilant Customs Inspector Scott Robinson doing his part to ensure passenger safety at Washington/Dulles Airport.

Customs Blackhawk from Tucson Air Branch at Dover A.F.B. to provide air security.

Aftermath of World Trade Center Towers collapse. NY Customhouse is pictured left center with hole in middle.

Analysis Specialist Division; Ferdinand Gallozzi Library; Customs Information Exchange; Public Affairs Office; EEO Office; Labor and Employee Relations Staff; and National Safety & Occupational Specialist.

Strategic Trade Center
1 Penn Plaza, 11th Floor
New York, New York 10119
Additional information may be obtained at 201.443.0110

The address and phone number for the New York Laboratory office is as follows:

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

More information and updates related to the events of September 11 have been posted to our Web site at www.customs.gov and will be printed in the October 2001 issue of U.S. Customs Today.





HRM

Breaking new ground — Customs achieves “first in Federal Government” by eliminating SF-50s

You may not have noticed, but you’ve been part of a unique “pilot” project related to your personnel records and notices of personnel actions. “The fact that most Customs employees haven’t missed receiving an SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action, when they received their pay adjustments or were reassigned or promoted speaks well for our ground breaking approach,” says Robert Smith, Assistant Commissioner, Human Resources Management (HRM).

Customs processes personnel actions using Office of Personnel Management (OPM) rules and regulations, which require agencies to use the SF-50 to notify employees about personnel actions and as key documentation in employees’ Official Personnel Folders (OPFs). Now, those rules have been changed for Customs.

“OPM has approved Customs as the first federal agency authorized to completely eliminate use of the decades old SF-50 process,” says Smith. “Our creative combination of personnel actions’ e-mail notifications and employee transcripts does the job better, faster, and more economically.”

Before the pilot began in 1997, January’s pay adjustment required HRM to distribute about 19,000 paper SF-50s to employees and administrative field offices. The pilot’s goal was to explore the potential of eliminating the printing, filing, and distribution of more than 60,000 SF-50s annually.

With OPM’s approval, Customs implemented the e-mail notifications and employee transcript pilot process in October 1997 at two Customs Management Centers and Headquarters. The



Barbara Zakrisson, Director, Personnel Systems Group and Veronica Gilmore, Director, Employee Services Division, with just two pay periods worth of SF-50s.

test was expanded in August 1998 to include all Customs employees and has continued with OPM’s recent approval.

Says Smith, “The test went exceptionally well. Survey results indicated that the overwhelming majority of Customs employees were satisfied with the new process. Now, OPM has put its stamp of approval on our new process.”★

• The “Subject” line of the e-mail is Notice Of Personnel Action and includes such information as the nature of the personnel action processed (e.g., 894 Pay Adj, 893 Within Grade Inc, 702 Promotion) and the effective date of the action. Total salary, pay plan information, and duty station may be included on certain personnel actions.

• The e-mail also reminds you that additional information can be found on your next Earnings and Leave Statement and that you may request a transcript dating back to September 28, 1997, by replying to the e-mail.

All about employee transcripts

• An annual transcript is mailed to your home each February and includes a chronological listing and summary of your personnel actions processed in the prior calendar year up to the most recent action. Award information will only appear on your annual transcript.

• To request a transcript at other times during the year, send an e-mail to Actions, HRM Personnel, or contact the Employee Services Division at 202.927.3900. It will include all of your personnel actions dating back to an effective date of September 28, 1997.

• Other agencies will accept a copy of your last transcript instead of an SF-50 when you apply for their positions. More recent transcripts are available upon request.

• The official record of all your personnel actions is stored electronically; when you separate from Customs, a transcript will be filed in your OPE.

All about e-mail notifications

• An automated e-mail notification of most of your processed personnel actions is sent to you within 2 days after the pay cycle ends. In a few situations such as when an employee enters on duty or separates from Customs or uses extended leave without pay, we mail an Employee Transcript to your home address rather than sending an e-mail notification.

FEHB Open Season

This year’s annual Federal Employees Health Benefits Open Season will take place **November 12 through December 10, 2001**, during which you may make changes to your health benefits coverage. FEHB Open Season information, which includes a list of available health plans, will be mailed to employees’ home addresses in early November 2001. Copies of all individual plan brochures will be available through Employee Express and, beginning November 12, you may request up to 15 plan brochures at a time without the use of your PIN.

Most Customs employees enrolled in FEHB began using pre-tax dollars late last year to pay their health insurance premiums. Enrollment in the “Premium Conversion Program” was automatic unless you waived participation. During this year’s open season, in addition to the option to change your health plan, you may decide to waive premium conversion or enroll in it if previously waived. To change your status, you should contact your local administrative staff for additional information and a Premium Conversion Waiver/Election Form.

What is Employee Express?

Employee Express is an automated system that puts you in control of processing your own health benefits, along with other discretionary personnel and payroll actions. Use of Employee Express is **mandatory** to make changes during the FEHB Open Season.

Each new employee receives a PIN by mail from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). You can access Employee Express by calling 800.827.6290, 478.757.3085, or TDD 478.757.3117; or by visiting OPM’s Employee

Express Web site at www.employeeexpress.gov. If you need a replacement PIN, call the OPM Help Desk at 478.757.3030. You’ll receive your new PIN in about 1 week.

What information will I need before calling Employee Express to make FEHB changes?

In preparation for making a change, you will need your:

- Employee Express PIN;
- Social Security Number (SSN); and
- Name of health plan and enrollment code.

For family coverage, you will need to provide the following information for each family member:

- Full names, complete permanent home address, date of birth, gender;
- Relationship codes; (1) spouse; (2) unmarried dependent child under 22 (including an adopted child); (3) step child, foster child, or child born out of wedlock; (4) unmarried disabled child over age 22;
- SSNs (if not available, leave blank; coverage will not be withheld); and
- Name(s) of other health plans that cover you and your family.

When will the FEHB Open Season changes become effective?

All Open Season FEHB changes will become effective on January 13, 2002.

Where can I get additional information about the FEHB Open Season?

Visit Customs Intranet Web site at <http://customsnet/hrm>; or OPM’s Web site at www.opm.gov/insure; or contact the HRM Employee Services Division at 202.927.3900.★



Cyberstalking . . . A mental health and safety issue

Cyberstalking is the act of stalking using the Internet, e-mail, or other electronic communication devices. Cyberstalking, at a minimum, disrupts lives or can spiral out of control if it gets to a point where the victims fear for their safety, or even their lives. It is a form of abuse and, as with other forms of abuse, victims and perpetrators can be either men or women. The perpetrator is typically someone known to the victim. A victim of cyberstalking at home may even find the trauma following him or her to the workplace.

Why do people stalk?

In many cases it is an infatuation or obsession with a person of the opposite sex and the need to control that person. It may be harassment by another employee harboring animosity toward the victim. It may be harassment by an ex-spouse, ex-boyfriend, or ex-girlfriend over a marriage or romance that has gone sour. It may be meant to frighten the victim or seek revenge for a perceived injustice. It may be what was intended to be innocent flirtation that got out of hand. Cyberstalkers feel they are anonymous and can get away with anything. A potential stalker unwilling or unable to confront a victim in person or on the telephone may not hesitate to send harassing or threatening electronic communications.

What can you do if you feel you are a victim of cyberstalking at work?

Reply civilly to the electronic communication

stating clearly once, and only once, that you do not wish to receive any further communications. If you continue to receive unwanted messages, do not reply as this may only encourage the stalker. Save all communications. Print out the messages making sure that copies of electronic mail contain full headers.

Who should you notify if you believe you are a victim of cyberstalking?

Immediately bring the incident to the attention of your supervisor and network administrator. Your supervisor will determine the next appropriate action, such as calling the Customs Technical Support Center, which is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days per week at 703.921.6000 or toll-free at 800.927.8729. Supervisors may also enlist the services of the Customs Computer Security Incident Response Center at 703.921.6507. The Office of Internal Affairs investigates threatening electronic messages believed to originate from within the agency, while communications from an outside source may be looked into by the Office of Investigations.

Dealing with harassment or threats of any kind can be highly stressful. Employees who feel they require further assistance are encouraged to contact the Customs Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 202.927.5550 or 800.755.7002, for confidential assistance and support.★



INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

International training efforts pay off in cocaine seizures

By Dixie Faries
Program Coordinator, Law Enforcement Training Branch,
Training and Assistance Division, Office of International Affairs

If you work in the Office of International Affairs, you can end up anywhere in the world, involved in programs and projects that touch people and governments far beyond our borders. One division in the Office of International Affairs handles policy and programs, another is responsible for foreign operations, and a third division tackles administrative program support.

Some of the busiest employees work in the Law Enforcement Training Branch within the Training and Assistance Division. The Law Enforcement Training Branch has the task of coordinating and presenting narcotics interdiction training in countries where the need is greatest. U.S. Customs inspectors in Ecuador have just finished an interdiction training course for law enforcement officials there, and already, the effort is paying off in important ways.

For some time, Colombia's neighbors have been suffering from the overflow of guerrillas, weapons, and illicit drug movements — a natural response on the part of traffickers to aggressive eradication programs in Colombia and other strategies designed to squeeze and eliminate drug production in that country. For countries that border Colombia, Ecuador in particular, the results have been serious — in some

cases, officials are struggling to maintain sovereign control of their borders, and everywhere, small villages and people living near the Colombian border have come under the influence and power of guerrilla groups.

Fighting back

The National Police Anti-Narcotics Division, with material assistance from the United States Embassy Narcotics Affairs Section in Quito, Ecuador, was determined to develop a new, highly mobile strike force to fight back. Snipers were making it impossible for the Anti-Narcotics Division to work the border effectively, and it was time for new ideas. A strike force, consisting of several different mobile teams, seemed to be an answer. A strike force could quickly move in, establish a checkpoint, operate for a short while, and just as quickly move back out.

In February 2001, the plan became a reality. Seventy-three National Police cadets attended four weeks of classroom training to learn the laws, policies, and procedures governing the Anti-Narcotics Division. After graduating from the basic police academy in Quito, they began their advanced training for this new mobile project. The cadets were transferred to a remote checkpoint station on one of the two highways leading out of Colombia. At Baeza checkpoint,

the students began six weeks of further study combined with frequent practical applications on-site. The final two weeks provided an opportunity for U.S. Customs to provide drug interdiction training — focusing largely on targeting, risk assessment, officer safety, and concealment techniques.

The training team, all land border inspectors with many years of experience, included Dixie Faries, team leader and program coordinator from the Office of International Affairs; Richard Walker, Chief Inspector, El Paso; Hector Mancha, Senior Enforcement Coordinator, Laredo; Alejandro Otero, Supervisory Customs Inspector, El Paso; Eduardo Tijerina, Supervisory Customs Inspector, Laredo; and Nestor Garza, Supervisory Customs Inspector, Hidalgo.

Ocelots and cocaine

An exercise at a border checkpoint during the final week of training gave the students an opportunity to make three seizures of prohibited live animals from the jungle: a baby ocelot and two parrots. It was a nice seizure, but ocelots and parrots were not what the team had set out to find. Success came the following day — the day prior to graduation. Again, three separate seizures, but this time they were all cocaine base, a total of 38 kg.

In one seizure, traffickers had wrapped the rocks of cocaine base in elongated shapes to resemble the feel of the yucca hearts with which they were commingled. The second seizure revealed two heavily taped square packages thrown into a bag of seed corn. The third seizure was a kidney-shaped package also concealed within a bag of produce. The team had hit the jackpot, and it was impossible to tell who was more excited — the instructors or their students.

Graduation day

Graduation on April 12, 2001, was a memorable occasion. Ecuadorian news reporters were on hand to cover the event. Speakers included the General of the National Police and the Deputy Chief of Mission from the United States Embassy in Quito, and instructors and students were finally able to enjoy the recognition and praise they had worked so hard to achieve.

But the story does not end there. On their first day back at work following graduation, the first mobile strike team to make an incursion into the dangerous frontier area returned to base with another significant seizure — 320 kg of cocaine.

The successes of these new anti-narcotics forces are clearly paying dividends, and are helping to complement the police force in Ecuador.★

In memory of Customs employees and retirees

IN MEMORIAM

Employees

John H. Gralton
Special Agent
Seattle, Wash., 7/27/01

Samuel W. Bullock
Detection Systems Specialist
New Orleans, La., 8/8/01

Dolores Payan
Paralegal Specialist
El Paso, Tex., 8/25/01

Ronald A. Rhodes
Customs Inspector
Miami, Fla., 9/4/01

Retirees

Frank Stewart
Customs Inspector
Charleston, S.C., 6/4/01

Timothy M. Sullivan
Supervisory Import Specialist
Boston, Mass., 7/9/01

James Thomas
Customs Inspector
Cleveland, Ohio, 7/14/01

Joseph W. Butler
Pilot
Jacksonville, Fla., 7/19/01

William Rizzo
Customs Inspector
Los Angeles, Calif., 7/30/01

Hyman Golub
Customs Appraiser
New York, N.Y., 8/26/01

Finbarr J. Murphy
Special Agent-in-Charge
Baltimore, Md., 9/2/01

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.★

Commissioner's Annual Awards Ceremony 2001

The outstanding accomplishments of U.S. Customs employees will be recognized at the Commissioner's Annual Awards Ceremony, beginning at 11 a.m. on November 30, 2001, in the Ronald Reagan Building Amphitheater. The theme of this year's event is "Everyday Heroes — A Customs Tradition."

This year's award recipients for valor, integrity, leadership, innovation, professionalism and enforcement action, among others, will be hon-

ored. Recipients of a new award, the Top Strategic Problem Solving of the Year Award, will also be recognized.

Award recipients and a guest will join Commissioner Bonner at a welcome reception at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington, D.C., from 4:00-6:00 p.m. on November 29. The awards event will be telecast via live satellite and videotapes distributed to field offices.★

Bent out of shape . . . illegal aliens caught in desperate attempts to cross U.S. border

Every year, federal officers from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and U.S. Customs Service discover increasing cases of "human contraband" secreted in unusual places and wrapped in innovative disguises. The man in the photo below was actually hidden inside an automobile seat



PHOTOS COURTESY OF INS



occupied by another "legal" occupant. The woman peering out from the automobile dashboard of another vehicle (above) tried a similar "spaced-out" ploy — she was also discovered before the car could get across the U.S.-Mexico border, cramped, but none the worse for wear.★



Project Colt targets fraudulent telemarketers

By Kevin Bell
Public Affairs Specialist, Office of Public Affairs

Telephone scams promising big payoffs from bogus Canadian lottery games generate an estimated \$70 million a year in proceeds for fraudulent telemarketers. Most of this illegal activity emanates from Canada and is directed primarily at elderly American citizens.

Cross-border telemarketing fraud is a growing problem for law enforcement. Bogus lottery and loan scams, once only a problem in the United States, have spread to other countries, particularly Canada. In Canada, laws against illegal telemarketing are lax and sentences for

those who are convicted are short and generally require no restitution. This has tied the hands of Canadian law enforcement.

To address this growing problem, U.S. and Canadian authorities are sharing information and tracking illegal telemarketing activity, as part of Project Colt, based in Montreal, Canada. The joint international task force formed in 1998 is focused on preventing fraudulent telemarketing originating in Canada and is comprised of officers from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, U.S. Customs Service, FBI, U.S. Postal Inspection

Service, Montreal City Police, and the Quebec Provincial Police.

How did the U.S. Customs Service get involved in investigating telemarketing fraud? In 1998, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police alerted Customs to a group of fraudulent telemarketers who were perpetrating a new scheme: impersonating U.S. Customs officers.

The scam

Many of the victims of telemarketing fraud are elderly Americans living on fixed incomes — relying on social security, pensions, or life savings. Con artists almost always target seniors, believing that they are more susceptible to scams because of their age. Typically, fraudulent telemarketers — masters at manipulation — will call seniors many times, developing a “friendship” with them in order to gain their trust.

A caller from Canada, usually operating out of a “boiler room,” places a call to the United States telling the victim that he has won several hundred thousand dollars in the Canadian lottery. The caller claims to be from the U.S. Customs Service, IRS, or the Treasury Department. In order to release the winnings, the caller informs the victim that he must first pay a tax or duty, often several thousand dollars. The caller gives the victim phony contact information indicating where to send the money. If the victim questions the caller’s identity, the telemarketer makes up a name, badge number, and supervisor name to lend more credibility to the fraud. The victim calls the supervisor (usually another caller in the boiler room), who confirms the story and in turn reassures the victim. The victim sends the money to the address, and then waits by the mailbox for a check that will never arrive.

And more scams

In addition to the Customs officer scam, Project Colt identified several other popular scams perpetrated by fraudulent telemarketers. Among them are recovery operations, advanced loan fees, and credit card protection (see above right).

In the recovery scam, callers target people who have previously been victimized by telemarketers. The caller claims to be a lawyer, judge, police officer, or income tax official. Callers tell the victim that they are aware of

Project Colt identifies top 10 telemarketing scams

1. Lottery or sweepstakes scams
2. Recovery operations
3. Advanced loan fees
4. Counterfeit checks
5. Fraudulent charitable donations
6. Fraudulent magazine subscription sales
7. Advance fee sweepstakes fraud
8. “Reloading” of fraud victims
9. Precious metals and gems
10. Investment scams

her past experience with telemarketers. They claim that there has been a recent settlement from a court case against telemarketers and that the victim is entitled to part of the award. But before the victim can collect her share, she must first send in a fee to cover duties or taxes. To lend credibility to the fraud, the con artist will supply details about the person’s past experience, such as the amounts of money sent and the companies involved. Recently, con artists have been telling victims that there is a “gag order” on the settlement, and that victims should not discuss the case with government officials, family members, or anyone else.

In the advanced loan fee scam, con artists advertise (usually in newspapers or financial publications) that they have money to loan to people who have had difficulty obtaining credit. The con artist gives the caller approval over the phone, but tells the victim that he must first pay a fee in order to “qualify” for the loan. Once the check is in the mail, the caller is never heard from again until the next victim.

The credit card protection scam is the latest type of fraud identified by Project Colt. Con artists call victims offering to protect their credit cards from illegal telemarketers. They ask for a fee of between \$300-\$400. The victim gives the caller her credit card number to pay the fee. The caller now has the victim’s credit card number, and proceeds to run up thousands of dollars in “fees and charges.”

Thanks to the efforts of U.S. Customs and other law enforcement officers, Project Colt has seized and returned more than \$12 million to victims of telemarketing fraud. ★

New Declaration takes flight at Sky Harbor

As part of Customs continuing Know Before You Go public information campaign, and in a unique Public-Private partnership, a new Customs Declaration form is being “piloted” for 60 days at Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport in Arizona.

The new Declaration, which has been under design for the past several months, includes a welcome statement, information on Customs mission and search authority, key definitions, and instructions for completing the form.

In March, Joe Adamoli, Director, Public Information, Office of Public Affairs, and Wes Windle, Supervisory Customs Inspector and Team Lead, Air/Sea Passenger Programs, Office of Field Operations, met with Scotty Sang, Port Director, Phoenix, and representatives from British Airways, U.S. Department of Commerce, and Arizona Office of Tourism, to explain the new Declaration form, pitch its

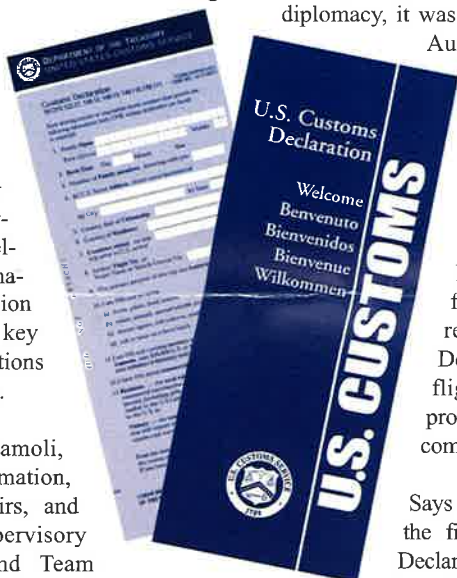
benefits, and finalize plans for getting the form into the hands of air passengers.

Following a successful meeting and steady diplomacy, it was thumbs up for takeoff on August 2 when the new

Declaration form was given to passengers on board the British Airways daily nonstop flight from London to Phoenix. Passengers indicated that the new Declaration was “easier to fill out,” and “easier to read” over the current Declaration. British Airways flight crew reported “no problems” from passengers in completing the new form.

Says Adamoli, “This represents the first major revision of the Declaration in 20 years. During the pilot period, we’ll maintain

close contact with Customs inspectors and British Airways representatives to monitor acceptance and compliance. At the end of September, we’ll determine what changes are needed, and decide on next steps.” ★



Caring is Sharing: The Combined Federal Campaign

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

Sir Winston Churchill spoke those words and the employees of the U.S. Customs Service live them every day. Customs employees are very generous to charitable organizations, donating both their time and financial resources. Many federal employees that contribute financially do so through the Combined Federal Campaign, the CFC.

A gift from the heart

The CFC is the annual fundraising drive conducted by federal employees. Each year federal employees and military personnel raise millions of dollars through the CFC that benefits thousands of nonprofit charities.

Donations can be designated to any of over 3,000 charitable agencies that provide meals for hungry children, relief for families in need of counseling, further work on cures for diseases, comfort for the dying, access to water in the Third World, environmental protection, and better lives and renewed hope for millions of

CFC vision statement

A government that encourages and enables active employee participation in community and that fosters collaboration with business and the nonprofit sector to achieve this goal.

people in our global community. The CFC offers federal employees a way to easily and conveniently make a contribution to the good of society as a whole based on their own values.

Relief efforts for victims of terrorist actions

According to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), a number of special relief

funds have been created or will be created to deal with the relief efforts in the New York City and National Capital areas. In addition, a number of existing CFC participating charities is involved in the relief effort. All federal employees have the opportunity to contribute to national and local relief efforts through their participation in the CFC. Employees may designate their payroll deduction or make a cash/check contribution to the organization of their choice. Contributions through these sources will ensure your donation goes to the relief effort and not to fraudulent telemarketers.

80,000 gifts of love

Did you know that it was an U.S. Customs employee who had an idea that started the largest wish-granting organization in the world? It began in 1977 when Customs Officer Tommy Austin met Christopher James Greicius and his mother Linda Bergendahl-Pauling. Chris dreamed of becoming a police officer.

He was battling leukemia and when Chris’ condition worsened, Austin contacted Officer Ron Cox at the Arizona Department of Public Safety

(DPS) about making Chris’ wish come true. Officer Cox was more than eager to oblige, and he recruited other DPS members to create a magical experience for Chris. Austin asked Chris if he wanted to ride in a real police helicopter and on April 29, 1980, Chris got his wish. That simple start became the Make-A-Wish Foundation, which has granted over 80,000 wishes during the past 20 years.

The power of one

You may ask what difference can one person make? Remember what Helen Keller once said: “I am only one; but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something; I will not refuse to do the something I can do.”

Further information on the CFC and the special relief effort can be found on the OPM Web site at www.opm.gov/cfc. ★