

FRONTLINE



U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

VOL 8 • ISSUE 3

HOMECOMING

After 15 years, CBP returns to the World Trade Center



U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

A U.S. Border Patrol agent and CBP canine conduct vehicle inspections in Jamul, California. Photo by Donna Burton

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HOMECOMING

After 15 years, CBP returns to the World Trade Center

By Marcy Mason



As far back as Colleen Piccone can remember, the World Trade Center was always a part of her life. Growing up on Staten Island in the early 1970s, she watched from across the New York Harbor as the Twin Towers were being built. After graduating from Brooklyn Law School, she started working at 6 World Trade Center for the U.S. Customs Service, one of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's legacy agencies. "It was my first legal job," said Piccone, who is now CBP's acting associate chief counsel in New York.

It also was the only place at U.S. Customs that Piccone had ever worked until September 11. But on that day, she wasn't in the building. She was headed to San Diego for training when her flight was grounded in Las Vegas after the Twin Towers were attacked.

Others such as Nina Rohan, a national import specialist associate who had worked 21 years at 6 World Trade Center for the U.S. Customs Service, were there that day. "We had a seminar for all of our

wearing apparel folks. They came in from all over the country," said Rohan. But just as the meeting was getting underway, there was a loud "KABOOM" and the room started shaking. The seminar host made a joke, recalled Rohan. "'You didn't know we had earthquakes in New York,' he said. Everybody was laughing, and then all of a sudden we heard a voice yell, 'Get out! Get out now!'"

Denise Faingar would have been at the building that day, but she was out sick. Faingar, a supervisory import specialist at the time, was at her mother's home on Long Island while her mother, who also worked for U.S. Customs, was at 6 World Trade Center at the seminar. "I worried terribly for her and all of my colleagues," said Faingar, now one of CBP's national commodity specialist branch chiefs.

Faingar's mother called. She and her coworkers had gotten out of the building safely, but that's all Faingar knew. "I tried to contact her after the second building



The Manhattan skyline at night with a gleaming One World Trade Center towering above other skyscrapers. At 1,776 feet, One World Trade Center is the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere and the fourth tallest building in the world. Photo by Stephen Zuk



Collaborating on a project, Yin-Yee Chan, international trade specialist, left, and Denise Faingar, national commodity specialist branch chief, are two of the CBP employees who returned to the World Trade Center after 15 years. Photo by Colleen Piccone

was hit and couldn't reach her. Just the waiting and not knowing what happened was agonizing," said Faingar.

Immediately following the attacks on 9/11, the U.S. Customs Service was displaced. Some employees moved to Newark, others to JFK International Airport, and within weeks the New York Field Office was relocated to midtown Manhattan at One Penn Plaza. Miraculously, every employee of the Customs Service had survived. However, it was the first time in the agency's 212-year history that the customhouse, the government building for collecting duties and clearing vessels, was not headquartered in lower Manhattan. Even the original customhouse, built by the British before America's independence, was located on the southern tip of Manhattan.

"There was a strong feeling among many that the government needed to reconstitute a presence in lower Manhattan," said Robert Perez, CBP's director of field operations in New York. But it wasn't until 2014 that a final decision was made for CBP to move back to the newly reopened World Trade Center.

Earlier this year, after a 15-year hiatus, CBP's New York Field Office returned to its roots, moving to the 50th and 51st floors of the soaring, 104-story One World Trade Center. With its spire, it is the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere. Moreover, the

building, a gleaming monolith, rises from the ashes of 6 World Trade Center. "The building sits on the very footprint of our former customhouse," said Perez. "It sends a great message of resiliency and instills a sense of pride. It's so much more than just a building or just an office; it's really a celebration of everything that CBP stands for and why it was created."

But then there are the challenges of getting people to work in a building that was a target. "A lot of people have a legitimate fear," said Piccone, "but I think it was really important for us to come back, especially being part of the Department of Homeland Security. If we're not coming back, who is? But then it dawned on me that there are a lot of mixed feelings about coming back," said Piccone. "I'm very proud that in the end, about 75 percent of the employees at One Penn Plaza did come back. Everybody was given an option. Nobody was forced to come back. It was done very, very sensitively."

At first, Todd Smith had some concerns about returning. "I definitely was a little apprehensive," said Smith, CBP's deputy associate chief counsel in New York, who was at 6 World Trade Center on September



Todd Smith, CBP's deputy associate chief counsel in New York, settles into his new office, which faces 7 World Trade Center. Photo by Marcy Mason

11. “Initially, the word was that we were going to be on a lower floor, but then it turned out that we were up higher. It really took going through the move and settling in here to realize that it’s a great place to work. It’s a very comfortable atmosphere. Coming in and working here day-to-day, I really don’t think about it very much anymore.”

Leon Hayward had no reservations about working in the building. “Looking at how this place was being built, I knew that it was going to be very safe,” said Hayward, the assistant director of field operations for trade and cargo security at the New York Field Office. The building uses a layered approach to security. For example, street traffic isn’t allowed near the building; there’s no underground parking; a vehicle receiving area will be located two blocks away; and delivery vehicles coming to the building will be screened. “They’ll go through the same kind of screening that

we apply to vehicles that cross the border into the U.S.,” said Hayward.

Inside the building, security is also rigorous. One elevator bank is dedicated solely to government-leased floors, but CBP took it a step further and programmed the elevators. “We made sure that only our employees had access to our floors. That was a requirement that we put in,” said Perez.

One of the best perks of the building is its views. “We literally have million-dollar views,” said Hayward. “From my office I can see every other skyscraper in Manhattan as well as the Hudson River as it flows into the New York Harbor. Sometimes it’s a little hard to remember to turn around and go back to work once I’ve looked out the window and seen what’s in front of me.”



CBP employees discuss agency operations on the 64th floor sky lobby of One World Trade Center. From left to right, Agriculture Operations Manager Bruce Cheong, Supervisory CBP Officer Francesco Racanati, CBP Officer Donald Josey, National Import Specialist Associate Nina Rohan, National Import Specialist Rosemarie Hayward, and CBP Officer Michael Vernon. Photo by Marcy Mason

Hayward's wife, Rosemarie, a national import specialist, wasn't sure she wanted to come back. She had worked at the World Trade Center when she started her career in the mid-1990s. "I just kept thinking I can't expect my husband to go there and not go myself," she said. But then she had second thoughts. "When the anniversary of 9/11 came rolling around, I felt anxious. I thought about asking if I could be placed somewhere else, but then I realized if I lived in fear, I wouldn't do any of the things I should do in life," said Rosemarie. "I'm not going to let fear run my life. So a lot of days, I don't think about where I am. I just go in, do my job, go home, and not think that I'm on the 51st floor of Building One. I'm going to just live my life and try to enjoy each day."

Nina Rohan yearned to go back. "For the longest time, I wanted to go home to the World Trade Center, but then when I got there, I had mixed feelings. I didn't expect to feel the way I felt," said Rohan. "It's like they say, 'You can't go home again.' Well, you can go home again. It's just going to be different, and it doesn't feel the same."

Little by little, though, Rohan is getting back into a routine. "Now I stop at the old deli I used to go to and get a cup of coffee. I've been finding places again," she said.

And there are other pluses. CBP's new offices are sleek, high-tech and modern. "There's a lot of window space and a lot of light coming in. Our old place was dark. Everything here is new and light and airy," said Faingar. "In a word, it's energizing."

The neighborhood, although still in a construction mode, is vibrant too. "It's a nicer part of the city. Everything here is brand new," said Smith. "There are a lot of good shops and restaurants. The downside is it's costing me \$12 to get a sandwich for lunch. Everything is ridiculously expensive," said Smith. "But it's just a much nicer experience to go out at lunchtime and in five minutes, I can be out by the Hudson River."

The 9/11 Memorial, a large, public plaza directly south of One World Trade Center, is a solemn reminder of the tragedy that took place on the site 15



CBP's New York legal team meet in one of the agency's One World Trade Center conference rooms. From left to right, Frank Sharp, Philip Lamb, Brian McClintock, Colleen Piccone, Todd Smith, Bena Varughese, Kim Stephenson, Suzanne Almetica, and Jeanmarie Ressa. Photo by Marcy Mason

years ago. Two square-shaped, recessed pools with waterfalls cascading down the sides are designed in the footprints of the towers that went down. Engraved along the rim of the pools are the names of every person who died in the 1993 and 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and United Airlines Flight 93. “Sometimes there is a flag by a name or a flower. I try to make it a point every day to see the name that somebody has put a marker by that day,” said Piccone. “Because with our rapid

news cycle, everything becomes old news very quickly. But I think for our mission, for the people who work here, it is a constant reminder of how important what we do is.”

Beyond that, the site has personal significance for everyone. “For me, my life has come full circle,” said Piccone. “The World Trade Center has always been a part of my life, and it’s just like coming home.” **F**



Standing near the 9/11 Memorial, CBP attorney, Todd Smith takes a moment to reflect on returning to the World Trade Center. Photo by Marcy Mason

The background of the entire page is a high-angle, aerial photograph of a rugged, mountainous landscape. The terrain is rocky and brownish, with some sparse green vegetation. Two black and yellow helicopters are flying in the middle ground, one slightly ahead and to the left of the other. The lighting suggests a bright, sunny day, casting shadows on the mountain ridges.

A NEW WAY FORWARD

CBP-led task force focuses multi-agency assets and intelligence on illegal smuggling organizations

By Jason McCammack

How our country is protected from international criminals trying to smuggle drugs and humans illegally across the U.S.-Mexico border is under sweeping change as threats against the U.S. constantly evolve.

On Nov. 20, 2014, DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson directed the creation of the Southern Border and Approaches Campaign, a unified approach to improve how the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) protects the homeland across our borders. The campaign more effectively coordinates the assets and personnel of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the U.S. Coast Guard and other DHS resources. The intent of this campaign is effective enforcement and interdiction across land, sea and air; to degrade transnational criminal organizations; and to do these things while still facilitating the flow of lawful trade and travel across our border.

“Before the creation of DHS many of our components and agencies were siloed in their missions and efforts,” said DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson in an official statement on the creation of the new campaign. “Many worked at cross-odds or redundantly in their homeland security function. Their move under one homeland security umbrella fixed that. Now, they are together. We are taking this even further. Through our Southern Border and Approaches Campaign, our components and agencies will work hand-in-hand so that we are more effective, more efficient and even stronger.”

The new campaign currently integrates seven federal law enforcement agencies’ efforts into one singular, coordinated strategy, Joint Task

Force-West, that shares intelligence and pursues interdictions and investigations. The arrangement represents a new era of border security.

DHS established three Joint Task Forces as part of the comprehensive Southern Border and Approaches Campaign Plan. Also part of the plan are JTF-I for investigations and JTF-East for maritime operations. East is responsible for security along the Southeast seaboard and is directed by U.S. Coast Guard Vice Admiral Karl L. Schultz. Investigations supports the work of the other two groups and manages investigations throughout the nation and with foreign law enforcement. It’s led by US. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special Agent-in-Charge Janice Ayala.

Until about 10 years ago, it was realistic that an individual could reasonably expect to be able to illegally cross the border from Mexico without the assistance of an illegal trafficking organization, said CBP Deputy Commissioner Kevin McAleenan. “You could take a bus to the border, independently get the lay of the land and illegally cross. That model is gone. The transnational criminal organizations, which are really drug cartels diversified into alien smuggling and other illicit activities, now control illegal border crossings from the Mexican side. You cannot independently cross.”

Right now, CBP is dealing with a great influx of illegal immigration to the United States, particularly unaccompanied children and families, stemming from the northern triangle in Central America – along with a reduced but significant flow of Mexican nationals, said McAleenan. The illegal border crossing activity is networked and coordinated by well-resourced, sophisticated organizations that are trying to outsmart our



Members of Joint Task Force-West come together at the headquarters “unity table” at headquarters in San Antonio. Photo by Glenn Fawcett

increasing security efforts. In the past, CBP has influenced only the border security efforts directly along the border. The Joint Task Force approach gives CBP the ability to work with partners to influence and affect the criminal activity along as much of the continuum as possible – beginning in the source country or zone, along the transit zones, south of the U.S. border, at the immediate border and in the interior of the U.S. where the smuggling organizations reside.

“[Smugglers operate] in the U.S.,” said McAleenan. “They don’t just push them across the river and hope they make it. They are pushing people and product to their destination in the U.S. Previously, CBP only had a narrow focus between the ports along the border. Now, with JTF-W influence, CBP can affect the entire smuggling continuum.”

Building a great team

Bringing together determined professionals throughout the law enforcement community who understand they’re battling the same threats will greatly increase

security along the border, explained Joint Task Force-West Director Robert L. Harris, who directs the multi-agency task force covering California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas.

“You must have people who can look beyond the color of their uniform,” Harris said. “They need to have an open mind about doing what’s best for law enforcement and border security versus doing what’s best for your own individual agency.”

Even after agencies were brought together under the DHS umbrella, many still functioned independently, creating redundancy and missions that overlapped.

“In my 31-year career, I can tell you this has never before been accomplished or even attempted,” said Harris.

The new campaign requires DHS components to work together to increase efficiency and capability. It also positions JTF-West as a key player in relations with Mexico by contributing to discussions between the two governments to improve security on both sides of the border. Topics have included the secure transit of people and cargo and how to bring border

communities into the campaign. The strategy “extends our zone of security outward, ensuring that our physical border is not the first or last line of defense, but one of many,” said Harris.

JTF-West elevates border security from a single CBP effort to a unified DHS partnership that targets organizations that pose the greatest threat.

“Our two main objectives are stopping the flow of illegal immigration into the U.S. and integrated counter-network operations,” said Harris.

Harris estimates the lawless groups involve hundreds of people inside and outside of the U.S. “We’ve identified what we think are the top transnational criminal organizations across the U.S.-Mexico border who are responsible for most of the alien and narcotics smuggling and southbound bulk cash and weapons smuggling.”

Northbound drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal immigration and its associated violence are the primary threats along the border, according to Harris. The reach and influence of Mexican cartels in cities throughout the U.S. are also concerns, Harris told the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Those threats have greatly expanded into Mexico and some of Central America, making the joint force more important than ever. “This is an integrated, counter-network operation targeting the [criminal] networks from the origination point to the final destination,” Harris said.

“In South Texas today, 75 percent of the people we detain are from Central America and a lot of them are women and children,” said Harris. “You can’t immediately remove them. So our traditional model does not apply to what is going on today. We have to work with the source countries to make sure they don’t get here in the first place.”

“JTF-West allows us to prioritize the networks that are exploiting the border,” said CBP Deputy Commissioner Kevin McAleenan. “That is critical. It has never been done and is the signal achievement in the first year-and-a-half of JTF-West.”

In 2014, a surge of people, mostly women and children from Central America, arrived at the U.S. border. By the summer of that year, the influx reached its peak in South Texas, where hundreds arrived each day, overwhelming the resources of the Border Patrol, DHS, Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Intelligence is king

Harris indicated that “the Joint Task Force-West effort primarily involves merging intelligence, interdiction and investigations to identify, prioritize, and target the top criminal organizations impacting national security, border security and public safety.”

Intelligence is everything to the campaign’s success. “We started to realize that when we brought everyone together,” said Manny Martinez, the U.S. Border Patrol acting division chief of law enforcement programs, Laredo Sector. “We’re bringing all of our intelligence to the same table and shining a light on this one organization.”

In this case, it’s a real table at JTF-West’s headquarters. The unity table, as it’s called, is where everyone – CBP, ICE, the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service – come together to share information, learn more about



Members of Border Patrol's Laredo Horse Patrol in the Texas desert.
Photo by Glenn Fawcett

smuggling operations and set priorities. The meetings are known for rigorous debates, but they also produce progress.

Much of the intelligence is provided by the U.S. Border Patrol and ICE, which gathers information from smugglers and others they arrest attempting to cross the border. "That gets funneled to the JTF-W table, and we start building cases," said Martinez.

"Fugitive Operation Teams throughout the U.S. regularly coordinate with other DHS components," says Scott Mechkowski, ICE assistant field office director, Field Office New York. "Intelligence interviews that we conduct in the interior consistently reveal information related to smuggling routes and staging locations that that we feed back to the agencies focusing on the Southwest border. We try to provide both strategic and tactical intelligence to our partners."

Circulating such data throughout the task force drives the weekly multi-agency briefings. Progress in reducing the flow of narcotics, weapons and currency as well as alien arrests is regularly shared with ICE, Coast Guard, Drug Enforcement Agency, FBI and the U.S. Northern Command.

Officials from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, U.S. attorneys' offices, Naval Investigative Command and state and local law enforcement also attend.

CBP also conducts monthly briefings to inform state and local law enforcement about emerging trends and other threats along the border.

"For years, intelligence was a black hole," noted Miguel Contreras, South Texas Laredo area team lead, U.S. Border Patrol. "Everyone knew it was there, but nobody was collecting it and drawing a bigger picture."

That's changed. It's also changed the scope of law enforcement on the Southwest border.

Now, law enforcement teams assigned to sectors within JTF-West's jurisdiction focus on crime specific to their area and share intelligence. The teams are made up of DHS components and managed by a commander and/or a co-lead.

"Every Border Patrol agent is an intel agent," said Contreras. Border Patrol agents now receive training in gathering intelligence. Agents look for signs in everything from telephone numbers to trash and they're seeing results. These bits of information, actionable intelligence as they're called, are pieces of a puzzle that move investigations forward and lead to apprehensions, he said.

Evidence derived from the intelligence is sent to agents in the area to assist them in collecting even more intelligence. DHS law enforcement across the different agencies is focused on spotting and collecting these clues. Substantive and timely information sharing is critical in targeting and arresting smugglers moving drugs and illegal merchandise through the U.S. and Mexico.

Still, "this has been a big paradigm shift," said Contreras.

When the Laredo Sector shared its intelligence experience with Homeland Security Investigations, DEA, FBI and other force partners a big picture of

the "biggest, baddest threats impacting us" emerged. The information allowed the agencies to place a priority on who to pursue, Contreras said.

Martinez agrees.

"When you're labeled as one of our top five priorities, it's really going to be difficult for you," he predicts. "We're going to be taking down your drivers, taking down your stash house operators and taking down everyone in your network. Eventually, the guy at the top is going to slip because the guys he's been working with for years are in jail and they're going to flip on him."

Consequences

What the JTF-West team is doing, in applying counter-network principle, is disrupting the smuggling organization's ability to act, said McAleenan. "By seizing their stash house or vehicle that is involved in the scheme or taking away their ability to enter the United States as non-U.S. citizen," said the Deputy Commissioner. "If you don't have enough information to prosecute or put someone in jail, but you can take away their permission to enter the U.S. – that's a sanction, a consequence that's disruptive to that organization. They won't



Members of the Laredo Horse Patrol search the Texas brush for any sign of smuggling activity. Photos by Glenn Fawcett



A CBP officer busts open a tortilla maker to search for smuggled drugs.
Photos by Glenn Fawcett

be able to take money southbound to the criminal organizations and come back and get more.”

The new campaign is making headway. A recent investigation that would normally take up to three years resulted in 19 indictments in six months, he said.

“That’s unheard of. It just didn’t happen before. Now we’re working together and showing each other our cards,” Martinez explained.

And it isn’t just happening in South Texas. These efforts are ongoing across the entire Southwest

border on a daily basis. That shift in culture, more than just the new procedures, is really what makes JTF-West so successful. Having the right people who believe in the campaign and are committed to stopping criminals through a united front is key.

“I’ve asked leadership to bring me your best people,” said Harris. “If you have great people they will evolve and improve on the work that we’re doing today and it will look totally different a few months from now.” **F**



NOW HIRING

cbp.gov/careers/apply-now

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is the premier law enforcement agency charged with keeping terrorists and their weapons out of the U.S., while facilitating lawful travel and trade. As the world's first full-service border entity, CBP combines customs, trade, immigration, agriculture and counter-terrorism into one activity.

KEY HIRING REQUIREMENTS

- > Candidates must be referred for selection prior to their 40th birthday (waiver for qualified veterans)
- > Be a U.S. citizen and a resident for the past 3 years
- > Have a valid state driver's license
- > Pass a written exam, medical exam, physical fitness tests, video-based test and drug test - more than 600 testing locations offered nationwide
- > Pass a thorough background investigation and polygraph examination

KEY BENEFITS

- > Competitive salary
- > Federal benefits
- > Paid training
- > Veterans Preference



U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

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U.S. Customs and Border Protection is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

AROUND THE AGENCY

Mark A. Morgan Sworn in as Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol

Before nearly 100 U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel, Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske swore in Mark A. Morgan as the Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol last week. Chief Morgan brings more than 30 years of law enforcement and military experience to the job.

After his service in the United States Marine Corps, Chief Morgan joined the Los Angeles Police Department as a police officer and served as a deputy sheriff in Platte County, Missouri.

In 1996, Chief Morgan joined the FBI as a special agent, launching a 20-year career that included high profile positions in the U.S. and around the world.

Chief Morgan served as the FBI's deputy assistant director of the inspection division, assistant director of the training division and deputy on-scene commander in Baghdad, Iraq.

In 2014, Chief Morgan was appointed as CBP's acting assistant commissioner for internal affairs. Following his service with CBP, Chief Morgan was

appointed assistant director in charge of the FBI's academy in Quantico, Virginia, before taking the helm of the U.S. Border Patrol in July.

In an enthusiastic and passionate portrayal of the men and women who patrol the border, Chief Morgan said it was during his assignment at CBP that he more fully grasped how critical Border Patrol agents are to national security. "As impressed as I was with the Border Patrol's mission, I was more impressed with the men and women behind the mission," commending them for their dedication as well as commitment to the country and the organization. "They earned my respect, gratitude and admiration," said Chief Morgan.

During the ceremony, Commissioner Kerlikowske described Chief Morgan as a remarkable public servant "marked by the kinds of accomplishments that make him more than qualified to assume the post of Chief of the United States Border Patrol."

He called Chief Morgan a hands-on leader who believes in engaging with agents and mission support personnel, noting his background as both a warrior and lawyer is "really an unbeatable combination." **F**



Before nearly 100 U.S. Customs and Border Protection personnel, Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske swore in Mark A. Morgan as the Chief of the U.S. Border Patrol. Chief Morgan brings more than 30 years of law enforcement and military experience to the job. Photo by Glenn Fawcett



Newly appointed U.S. Border Patrol Chief Mark A. Morgan assumes command of the U.S. Border Patrol during a swearing-in ceremony at the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, D.C. Photo by Edgar Ramos

CBP inaugurates new aircraft facilities in Puerto Rico

CBP Air and Marine Operations recently unveiled its new aircraft hangar and support facilities at the Rafael Hernandez International Airport in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico.

The new 30,000-square-foot facility is part of the Caribbean Air and Marine Branch, the only federal law enforcement organization in the Caribbean Basin with integrated air and marine interdiction capabilities.

“CBP responds to an evolving array of threats and challenges in the border environment,” said CBP Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske. “It is the vigilance and dedication of our frontline workforce that ensures our ability to execute our critical border security responsibilities.

“Our success in reducing illicit activity in the Caribbean is possible through collaborative operations and partnerships with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies,” Commissioner Kerlikowske said. “This new facility provides additional support to our ongoing mission.”

The Caribbean branch is charged with detection and interdiction of airborne and maritime smuggling throughout the archipelago of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as the West Indies, using radar facilities to detect and intercept air smuggling attempts and airborne radar tracking aircraft to detect maritime smugglers.

“These new facilities enhance AMO’s operational capacity to serve the areas of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands,” said Randolph D. “Tex” Alles, executive assistant commissioner for AMO. “[They] are at the forefront of the transnational threat, consisting primarily of illegal alien and narcotics smuggling via marine vessels.”

Mayor Carlos Mendez of Aguadilla was among the honored guests to cut the ribbon for the \$10 million facility.

The building hangar has offices for air interdiction agents and a training room and other amenities.

“CBP is proud of the countless ways that AMO contributes to the safety and security of the Caribbean region,” said Commissioner Kerlikowske. **F**



CBP Air and Marine Operations recently unveiled its new aircraft hangar and support facilities at the Rafael Hernandez International Airport in Aguadilla, Puerto Rico. CBP photo



Participating in the ribbon cutting ceremony were, from left: Johnny Morales, director of Air Operations in the Caribbean; Randolph Alles, executive assistant commissioner of Air and Marine Operations; Carlos Mendez, mayor of Aguadilla, Puerto Rico, and R. Gil Kerlikowske, CBP Commissioner. CBP photo

Mobile Passport control app expands to Washington Dulles

Eligible travelers entering the U.S. have a mobile option for Customs declaration

U.S. Customs and Border Protection and Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority announced the expansion of Mobile Passport Control, or MPC, to Washington Dulles International Airport. Dulles International becomes the 14th airport to offer MPC admissions processing.

MPC is the first authorized app to expedite a traveler's arrival into the United States. Eligible travelers submit their passport information and customs declaration form to CBP via a smartphone or tablet app prior to arrival. Android and iPhone users can download the Mobile Passport app for free from the Google Play Store and Apple App Store.

"This is an exciting time for Customs and Border Protection and Washington Dulles International Airport. We have worked closely with Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority to offer the Mobile Passport Control app to travelers

arriving at our airport from abroad," said Wayne Biondi, CBP port director for the Area Port of Washington Dulles. "CBP remains committed to using technological advances and resources to make international arrivals as traveler-friendly as possible."

"At Dulles International, we never stop looking for ways to make the journey easier and more enjoyable for our travelers," said Chris Browne, vice president and airport manager. "Together with our partners at Customs and Border Protection, we are proud to introduce the Mobile Passport app as the latest innovation to make international arrivals an even smoother process."

MPC currently offers U.S. citizens and Canadian visitors a more secure and efficient in-person inspection between the CBP officer and the traveler upon arrival in the United States. Much like Automated Passport Control, the app does not require pre-approval, is free to use and does not collect any new information from travelers. Travelers opting to use the app will no longer have to complete a paper Customs Declaration form. As a result, travelers will experience shorter wait times, less congestion and faster processing.



There are five easy steps to MPC:

- **Download the Mobile Passport Control App from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store prior to arriving**
- **Create a profile with your passport information**
- **Complete the “New Trip” section upon arrival in the United States**
- **Submit your CBP declaration form through the app to receive an electronic receipt with an Encrypted Quick Response code**
- **Bring your passport and smartphone or tablet with your digital bar-coded receipt to a CBP officer.**



The MPC pilot launched in August 2014 for eligible travelers arriving at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, and has since expanded to 14 airports.

In addition to Atlanta and Dulles, MPC is available to passengers at Chicago O’Hare International Airport; Dallas/Ft. Worth International Airport; Denver International Airport; Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport; John F. Kennedy Airport; Miami International Airport; Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport; Newark International Airport; Orlando International Airport; San Francisco International Airport; San Jose International

Airport; and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

MPC is expected to expand to more airports in 2016 and CBP has committed to expand the program to the 20 airports with the highest volumes of international travelers by the end of the calendar year.

This first-of-its-kind app was developed in partnership with CBP by Airports Council International- North America and its technical partners. Information about Mobile Passport Control, including how to download user eligibility and other frequently asked questions, is available on CBP.gov. 

airs →

EXIT



EXPLORING LAW ENFORCEMENT

2016 National Law Enforcement Exploring
Conference hosts 1,800 in Arizona

By Paul Koscak, photos by John H. Lander Jr.

Imagine spending a week being tested in first aid and crisis negotiation, responding to threats and burglaries, investigating accidents, shooting pistols and attending academic seminars led by some top federal, state and local law enforcers.

It was all part of the 2016 National Law Enforcement Exploring Conference that took place at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, from July 11-15. The biennial event filled with contests, demonstrations, exhibits, classroom learning and competitions – as well as fun drew more than 1,800 Explorers from Honolulu to Puerto Rico.

More than 200 U.S. Customs and Border Protection Explorers took part. The agency hosts the country's largest Law enforcement Explorer group, sponsoring some 70 posts and more than 1,300 Explorers. Posts are located at ports of entry, at Border Patrol sectors and stations and within Air and Marine Operations. In July, the National Targeting Center established a National Capital Region post.

Classroom instruction gave participants an opportunity to gain law enforcement knowledge and discuss current police and legal issues. Topics included combating terrorism, gang recognition, psychological profiling, hate crimes, surveillance technology, use of force and protecting the border.

A featured seminar on community policing was led by Sean Duggan, Chandler, Arizona, police chief and officials from the Department of Justice and the International Association of Chiefs of Police. CBP also ran three seminars covering vehicle searches, use of force and border security.

Some instruction even took place in the field.

CBP Explorers from Cincinnati's Post 2545 visited facilities at San Ysidro, Long Beach Seaport, Los Angeles Airport, the San Diego Air and Marine Unit at North Island and a Border Patrol check point in Yuma, Arizona to learn more about the agency's mission.



Explorers got a chance to display their marksmanship.

Competitions, that even included taking a sample police written exam, required both physical fitness and intellect and left lasting impressions.

"With the written exam, I learned that I should probably start studying more because that test was not as easy as I expected," said Zamira Rivera, a 16-year-old Explorer from Chicago. "With the physical fitness test, I had to push myself and give 110 percent. The next day I was sore, but it was worth it. I won second place in the 14 to 16 age division."

"The conference was a blast for me and I'm going to do it again," said Explorer Khush Misty, also from Chicago. "I advise every Explorer to experience its greatness."

For young people ages 14-21, Exploring can be a stepping stone to a law enforcement career. Independently affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America, the program offers training in the skills required for criminal justice and police work with an emphasis on building character, leadership, good citizenship and physical fitness.

The program is a vital recruiting tool for CBP and local, state and federal law enforcement agencies sponsoring posts.



Staying sharp and marching in formation was a common sight at the conference.

CBP headlined this year's conference when Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske, who currently chairs the National Law Enforcement Exploring Committee, welcomed the Explorers. He told them several CBP senior leaders started as Explorers and worked their way to become port directors and chiefs. "I can tell you this career path offers the opportunity to really make a difference in the world around you. What you learn as an Explorer will benefit you in any role or career," he said.

Jose Venegas is a prime example. Venegas first learned about law enforcement as an Explorer in 1995. He's now a supervisory CBP officer at the Chicago Field Office and currently advises two Explorer posts. An instructor at this year's conference, Venegas has been an adviser for 19 years.

"It turns dreams into reality," said Venegas. He's seen how the program has transformed lives, particularly for Chicago's inner-city youth. For many, it's the first time that structure and discipline become a lifestyle, he said. Venegas, who also grew up in inner-city Chicago, credits the program for the guidance that turned his enforcement career goal into a reality. "I knew what I wanted, but not how to do it."

At the 2016 conference, structure and discipline were qualities easy to spot. Explorers were prominent throughout the campus—sharply groomed, well-mannered and respectful, they paced in small groups from one event to another. Many marched in smart

formations in flawless uniforms that matched their sponsoring agency. Taking pride in the expectations and requirements of the program sets them apart from their peers, said Venegas. "They stand out," he added.

Three Explorers particularly stood out and were recognized—sadly, one posthumously—for their courage.

David Kim, 20, from Scottsdale, Arizona, saved a motorcyclist bleeding severely from a partially severed foot by fashioning a tourniquet from an apron on Jan. 25. A firefighter responding to the accident said, "If not for the tourniquet, the motorcyclist would have bled out."

Jacob Ursin, 16, from Vero Beach, Florida, swam in frigid 57-degree water and rescued a 2-year-old child from a car that plunged into a pond Jan. 23. Arriving sheriff's deputies pulled two adults from the vehicle, but the driver died the following day.

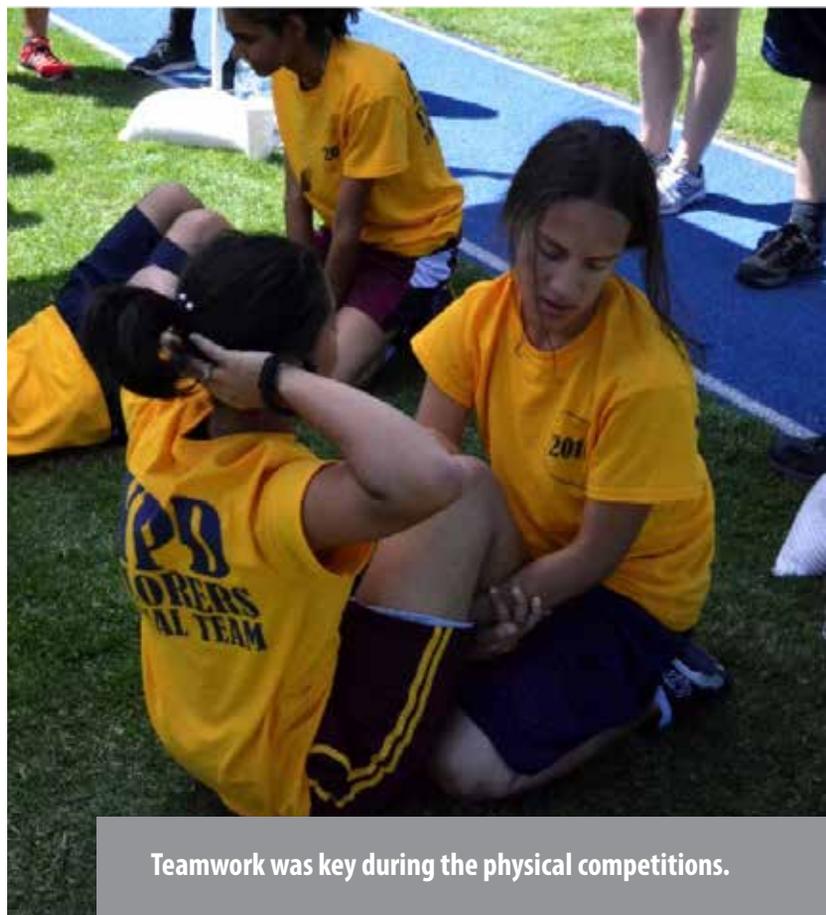
For their feats, Ursin and Kim earned the Law Enforcement Exploring Lifesaving Award.

Michael Lawson, 17, was swimming with friends in a fast-moving river in Wilmington, New York, swollen by a recent rainfall June 26, 2014. When he noticed one of his companions struggling against the swift current, Lawson quickly dove into the raging river to save his friend. Tragically, both lost their lives in the overpowering water.

Lawson, an Explorer from the post sponsored by the Plattsburgh, New York Air and Marine Operations branch and the Champlain Office of Field Operations, was posthumously awarded the Law Enforcement Exploring Bravery Award.

Explorers had time to break from the demanding program to meet others and simply have fun. A water balloon fight, a social and a rock concert added some levity to their stay. Anye Whyte, a member of the National Law Enforcement Exploring Committee, said the conference is a great way to network and make connections for future employment. Many Explorers collected business cards, he added.

“This conference is by far one of the greatest experiences a law enforcement Explorer can undergo,” said Whyte. “It is one that will never be forgotten. Although hundreds of agencies were represented, the pride shown by the CBP Explorer family is one we feel no other can come close to.” **F**



Teamwork was key during the physical competitions.

CBP excelled in several conference scenarios and competitions. Here are the results:

INDIVIDUAL

Bike Policing Competition

Adonys Campillo - 1st Place
(Male 14 - 16)
Miami Field Office-Post 99

Marc Alvarado - 3rd place
(Male 14 - 16)
San Juan Field Office-Post 818

NLEEC Pistol Championship

Kenneth D. Santiago Vega
2nd place - Pistol
San Juan Field Office-Post 818

Physical Fitness Test

Emily Hatting - 2nd place
(Female 17 and above)
Chicago Field Office-Post 2545

Zamira Rivera - 2nd Place
(Female 14 to 16)
Chicago Field Office-Post 9706

TEAMS

Burglary in Progress

CBP OFO Orlando - 2nd place
Tampa Field Office-Post 1808

1. David Guzman
2. Christopher Sheocharan
3. Nathaly Castro
4. Ricardo Ruiz

Bomb Threat Response

CBP Border Patrol El Paso - 1st place
El Paso Sector-Post 2910

1. Brandon Flores
2. Sophia Rios
3. David Hernandez
4. Frank Pino

Domestic Crisis

CBP Border Patrol El Paso - 5th place
El Paso Sector-Post 2910

1. Brandon Flores
2. Sophia Rios
3. David Hernandez
4. Frank Pino

Traffic Accident Investigation

CBP Border Patrol El Paso - 3rd place
El Paso Sector-Post 2910

1. James Rocha
2. Alfonso Ramirez
3. Saul Barraza
4. Jason Acosta

The Express Lane is Open for Business

Cargo preinspection lanes slash screening and inspection time by half

By Paul Koscak



A shipment approaches CBP's Mesa de Otay cargo preinspection station. The booths are just part of a huge facility Mexico's Tax Administration Service converted from a warehouse. Photo by Glenn Fawcett

If time is really money, U.S. Customs and Border Protection's cargo preinspection program is saving both. CBP and Mexico's Tax Administration Service forged a plan to rapidly move cargo across the border. The pilot project places CBP officers in Mexico and Mexican customs officers in the U.S.

CBP runs two cargo preinspection facilities — at Mesa de Otay in Tijuana, Mexico, and at Laredo International Airport, Texas. CBP officers at the Mesa de Otay facility handle trucks hauling certain produce into the U.S. The Laredo facility is staffed by Mexican officers who check air cargo — auto parts, electronics and aerospace components — destined for Mexico. At both locations, Mexican and CBP officers work together.

Mesa de Otay is in Mexico and Otay Mesa is CBP's port in the U.S. The communities straddle the border and both facilities connect.

Officials are planning a third location at San Jeronimo, Mexico, just across the border from Santa Teresa, New Mexico. That facility will handle electronic products produced by a huge manufacturer in Mexico.

For either nation, screening cargo before leaving the exporting country is the core of the program. It eliminates a duplicate inspection when crossing the border. That's how the time and money is saved.

How much?

U.S.-destined carriers spend about 2.5 hours for inspections in Mexico. After crossing the border and arriving at the Otay Mesa port of entry, they spend about a half hour in another line of trucks inching toward the area where CBP officers conduct another inspection lasting about an hour.

"That's an estimated four hours to bring a shipment into the U.S.," explained Manuel Garza, program director for CBP cargo preclearance. Under that time burden, it would be tough for drivers to manage more than one delivery a day, he said.

In reality, waiting to enter the U.S. can be greater, as trucks are usually backed up for miles into Mexico.

Cargo preinspection slashes that time in half. Shipments can cross the border within an hour, making the program attractive for Mexican drivers, exporters and U.S. importers. "Now, single drivers can make three to four trips per day, potentially doubling their income," said Garza.

Take Driscoll's Strawberry Associates. Well-known in supermarkets, Driscoll's strawberries, blackberries and blueberries have limited shelf life. "We need to move as fast as possible," noted Arazeli Penilla, who oversees customs compliance and security for the company. Before joining the program, border crossings took up to four hours. "Gate-to-gate is now 30- to 45-minutes," she said. "It's saving us 10 percent of the value of each shipment." With deliveries worth from \$50,000 to \$100,000 according to Penilla, that's a lot of money.

Cargo preinspection is mutually managed. Applicants are vetted jointly. Rejected shipments are decided jointly. Secondary inspections are considered jointly. If one agency objects, it's considered a refusal by both countries.

Cargo preinspection is mutually managed. Applicants are vetted jointly. Rejected shipments are decided jointly. Secondary inspections are considered jointly. If one agency objects, it's considered a refusal by both countries.

To join, drivers and shippers are vetted by both CBP and Mexican customs officials. The agencies look for driving and narcotics violations and experience delivering produce approved by a U.S. Department of Agriculture program called NARP, or the National Agriculture Release Program. NARP produce is less likely to harbor pests and diseases and, for now, the only products allowed in the program. Qualifying applicants and companies are entered into a data bank.

Driving on through

Once enrolled in the program, it's a quick and easy transit. Drivers carrying produce from Mexico take a special lane through the Mesa de Otay cargo preinspection area. They first stop at the security gate, then on to the Mexican processing booth and finally to the U.S. booth. The booths resemble and operate like bank drive-throughs, where shipping documents and driver credentials are matched against records in the data bank and information the shipper forwards describing the cargo. If everything checks out, drivers continue along the secured lane that whisks them into the U.S. to continue on their way.

While both sides collaborate, Mexican and U.S. officers "are looking for different things," noted CBP officer Jennifer Krismer, who processes the Mexican drivers. Mexican officers

verify compliance with customs and tax regulations and check for contraband. CBP officers look for narcotics, unauthorized produce and program approval. Either nation can turn back shipments.

The program evolved from a 2010 White House directive based on talks between the U.S. and Mexico on how to better manage the border. Part of the directive calls for reducing congestion and delays in cross-border traffic and advancing "economic competitiveness...through the secure, efficient, rapid, and lawful movement of goods and people," exactly what cargo preinspection is designed for.

Mexico's Tax Administration Service or SAT (Servicio de Administracion Tributaria) received an identical directive known as Los Pinos from the Mexican president's office.

Up to 20 drivers hauling produce from Mexico pass through the CBP cargo preinspection depot at Mesa de Otay each day for a swift transit across the border. Photo by Glenn Fawcett



Cargo preinspection was designed by a joint SAT-CBP working group guided by both directives and supported by a committee of American and Mexican officials representing agencies involved with the border. The committee was formed through the 21st Century Border Management Initiative, the plan that carries out both the White House and Los Pinos mandates.

Dual effort all the way

Perhaps the most difficult obstacle required a political solution. Mexican law needed to be changed so CBP officers in Mexico could carry firearms.

That required the support of the Mexican Congress in a nation where restrictive gun laws make it difficult for Mexicans to possess firearms. Foreigners have a greater challenge, said Jose Garcia, who represents the Ministry of Finance Revenue and Customs Affairs at the Mexican Embassy in Washington, D.C. However, the backing of Mexico's highest officials made the task less daunting.

"The bill was presented to both chambers of the Congress," he said, eventually passing in May 2015. "The Ministry of Finance approached senators and representatives and explained the benefits—how much money carriers would save, how growers would prosper, how the economy would grow." The legislation was also supported at the time by Mexico's President Enrique Peña Nieto.

Still, the program needed to move from concept to completion. The necessary guidance and day-to-day procedures to ensure cargo preclearance facilities operate smoothly needed crafting.

That task rested with a group representing key CBP offices, led by the Office of International Affairs (INA). Collaborating with Mexican officials, the group reached international agreements on management, vetting, acceptable products and how

to obtain visas, carnets and permits. The group also set working hours and rules for each location, said Hugh Austin, a former INA program manager who worked on the project.

"From start to finish, the cargo preinspection program was a full bilateral commitment where we worked closely with our Mexican partners," he said. "We addressed details large and small."

Mexico's pursuit of cargo preinspection goes back nearly a decade. Mexico submitted its first proposal in 2007 to an association of Mexican fresh produce exporters in Nogales, Mexico. "We proposed this type of cargo processing because our economies and industries are integrated and strong," Garcia said.

According to Garcia, for every dollar spent on Mexican imports, 40 cents returns to the U.S. That's also true when the U.S. re-exports goods jointly manufactured with Mexico. By comparison, trade with China returns just two cents, 20 times less. He also pointed out that having CBP and Mexican officers working together increases compliance and further encourages trade by reducing transaction costs.

Nogales, Mexico, was originally considered for the program. Eighty percent of the trucks carrying fresh produce to the U.S. through that port account for nearly 40 percent of the produce the U.S. imports, according to a report by the Nogales International newspaper. But in Nogales "the facilities were not right," Garcia said. "It lacked the infrastructure."

Garcia said only land locations, including airports, were considered for the program. "Forget seaports at this time. They're minimal compared to our trade on rail and roads."

Instead, Mexico proposed Mesa de Olay, where traffic volume is huge. The port processes 1.4 million trucks through the border each year, according to the Federal Highway Administration.



Working inside the Mesa de Otay cargo preinspection booth, CBP Officer Jennifer Krismer verifies a driver's credentials. A typical inspection involves comparing shipment manifests and information forwarded by the carrier against a data base. Suspicious cargo is subject to a secondary inspection. Photo by Glenn Fawcett

Mexico's money and commitment

During construction at Mesa de Otay, Mexico's support for the program was evident, recalled Carlos Robles, CBP branch chief for trade operations at Otay Mesa. Mexico converted an entire warehouse into a cargo preinspection facility. The gleaming structure, renovated to CBP requirements, contains offices, inspection docks, a refrigerated bay for unloading perishable goods and the inspection booths, all paid for by Mexico.

"There was lots of dedication on their side," Robles said. "They haven't said no to anything we asked for – bullet proof glass, higher fence."

When it opened in June 2014, activity was slow, but business quickly picked up as Mexico promoted the program. Currently, five shippers with their combined 125 trucks are in the program. Up to 20 trucks are processed daily through the facility from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Participants gave the cargo preinspection program a positive rating in a recent CBP survey.

Beyond saving time and money, the program builds a strong international bond between Mexican and U.S. border officers.

CBP Agricultural Specialist Amanda Stransky, who works at the cargo preinspection facility, agrees. "They're fabulous," she said of her Mexican counterparts. Despite the limited English and Spanish between the two, Sutton said the Mexican customs officers assist with taking samples or off-loading a shipment suspected of carrying nonapproved produce. Sutton had only one contraband incident between January and September 2016. "These guys are clean. They don't want to be dropped from the program," she said.

Ongoing information sharing and communication is key to maintaining that bond and ensuring the program's success, according to Rosa Hernandez, port director at Otay Mesa, where Mexican and U.S. customs officers meet monthly. "You've got to

have that dialogue,” she said. “We have a very good relationship with Mexico. The confidence is there.”

Requests for a joint task are a typical example. They begin on the ground, then channel up to Hernandez, who contacts her Mexican counterpart, Administrator Jorge Boy, to reach a decision. Sometimes it may take a while because Mexico’s government is centrally structured, requiring Boy to get approval from officials in Mexico City, Hernandez said.

Up in the air

While cargo preinspection at Mesa de Otay benefits mainly Mexican commerce, at Laredo International Airport the program benefits mostly American shippers. The airport was selected by Mexico because of its volume and support from the city, serving as a hub for eight destination airports in Mexico located near assembly plants. Covering three shifts, Mexican and CBP officers together inspect arriving shipments in a controlled area before they continue on to Mexico. Mexican officers can’t seize suspicious cargo, but they can ask CBP officers to seize a shipment, the same protocol followed by CBP officers in Mesa de Otay.

And just like at Mesa de Otay, in most cases shippers avoid a second inspection upon arriving in Mexico. After landing, cargo goes straight to its destination. That means shippers know when to schedule trucks

to transfer the cargo to the manufacturers, again saving time and money. Drivers outside the program may spend hours waiting, not knowing when their cargo will clear an inspection, Director Garza, noted.

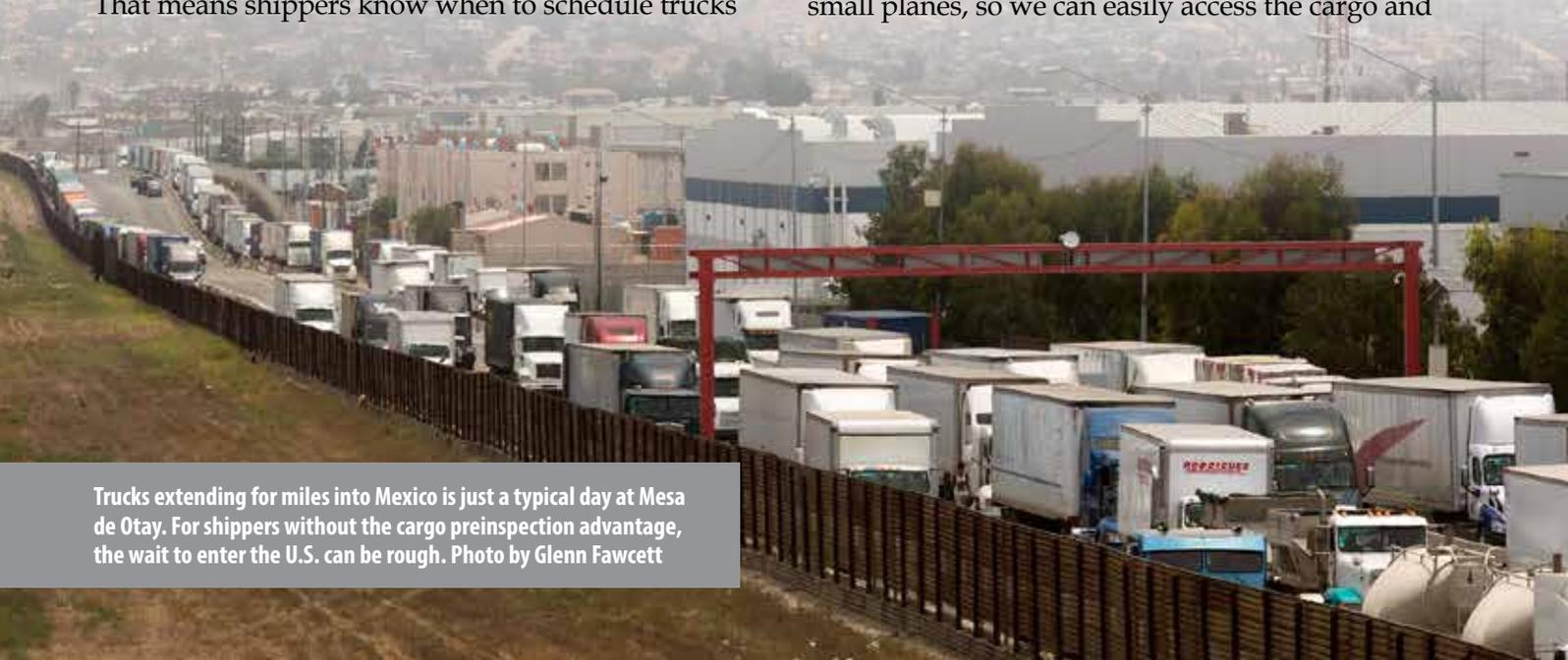
“Time is money, otherwise these parts wouldn’t go by air,” he said.

Look at Chrysler. The international automotive manufacturer informed Mexican officials that cargo preinspection has cut the company’s importing costs by half and reduced the time to process those shipments by 60 percent, said Mexico’s Garcia.

Currently, 14 American air cargo carriers have joined the program. To qualify, they must pass a background check and hold a Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, or C-TPAT, certification. Companies with that credential are considered low-risk, having built into their international supply routes protections to prevent infiltration by terrorists. Carriers must also receive a similar security screening in Mexico equivalent to C-TPAT, said Alberto Flores, Laredo’s assistant port director for trade operations.

During preinspection, Mexican customs officers check for these certifications, review shipping documents to confirm the cargo complies with the program and proof the carrier has cargo preinspection approval.

Contraband, weapons and currency are unlikely, said Flores. “These are trusted shippers who charter small planes, so we can easily access the cargo and



Trucks extending for miles into Mexico is just a typical day at Mesa de Otay. For shippers without the cargo preinspection advantage, the wait to enter the U.S. can be rough. Photo by Glenn Fawcett



CBP officers working with their Mexican counterparts at Laredo International Airport inspect a shipment before the flight continues on to Mexico. Photo by Barry Bahler

see all the commodities.” No violations have been encountered by CBP or Mexican officers since the program began at Laredo.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson and Secretary Luis Videgaray, of Mexico’s Ministry of Finance and Public Credit, promoted the Laredo facility at its October 2015 opening. Mexico, along with the City of Laredo, continue to pitch the program to potential exporters to attract more industry and trade to the region. Like Mexico, Laredo is a big cargo preinspection supporter and paid for constructing Mexico’s inspection terminal. “The city invested \$2 million to build the facility,” said Airport Manager Jose Flores.

From September 2013 to October 2015, 8,920 cargo flights arrived at the airport, according to Guillermo Villalobos, Laredo’s airport operations manager. About three of every 10 arrivals are part of the program.

Looking ahead

CBP’s third cargo preinspection facility in San Jeronimo, Mexico, expected to open by spring 2017, will be different. It’s slated to be located at Foxconn, a huge, Taiwan-based manufacturer of personal computers and computer components, explained

Ray Provencio, Santa Teresa port director. “For flow of traffic, we’re unique,” he said, because trucks will work in both directions.

Foxconn, located on the border, manages an extensive industrial park in San Jeronimo, where Dell and Hewlett Packard plan to set up manufacturing operations. Working at Foxconn will allow CBP to better manage the considerable export stream that’s expected, he said.

A dedicated lane with fencing, lighting and Foxconn security cameras still needs to be constructed.

Foxconn’s expansion means more than 30,000 computers will be exported to the U.S. each day through the cargo preinspection program, predicts Mexico’s Jose Garcia. He also hopes the program can expand to other industries and to other locations in Mexico and the U.S. beyond the border.

Cargo preinspection’s future, however, rests with evaluations by both countries. The U.S and Mexico agreed to assess and share each site’s performance after 180 days. Those reports will determine if the program continues.

“A lot will depend on participation and traffic,” said Larry Fanning, Otay Mesa’s assistant port director for trade. **E**



In the coming months, CBP will launch EVUS (Electronic Visa Update System), which will allow Chinese nationals visiting the U.S. with a 10-year B1/B2, B1 or B2 visa to update their information electronically every two years.

www.cbp.gov/EVUS



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