

FRONTLINE

U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION

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CLEARED FOR LANDING

CBP preclears travelers
abroad to ease U.S. entry



U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

A CBP pilot begins his shift.
Photo by James Tourtellotte

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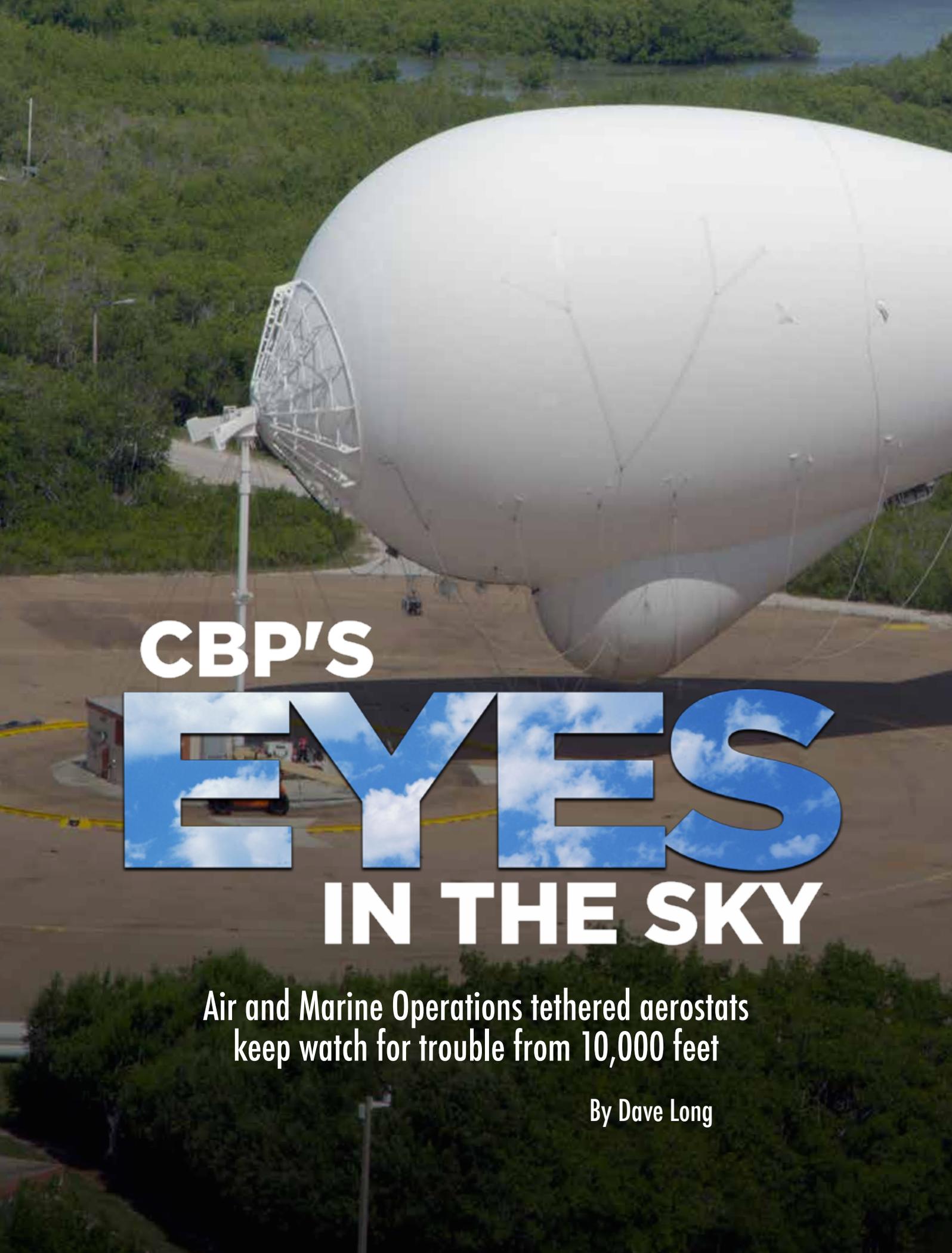
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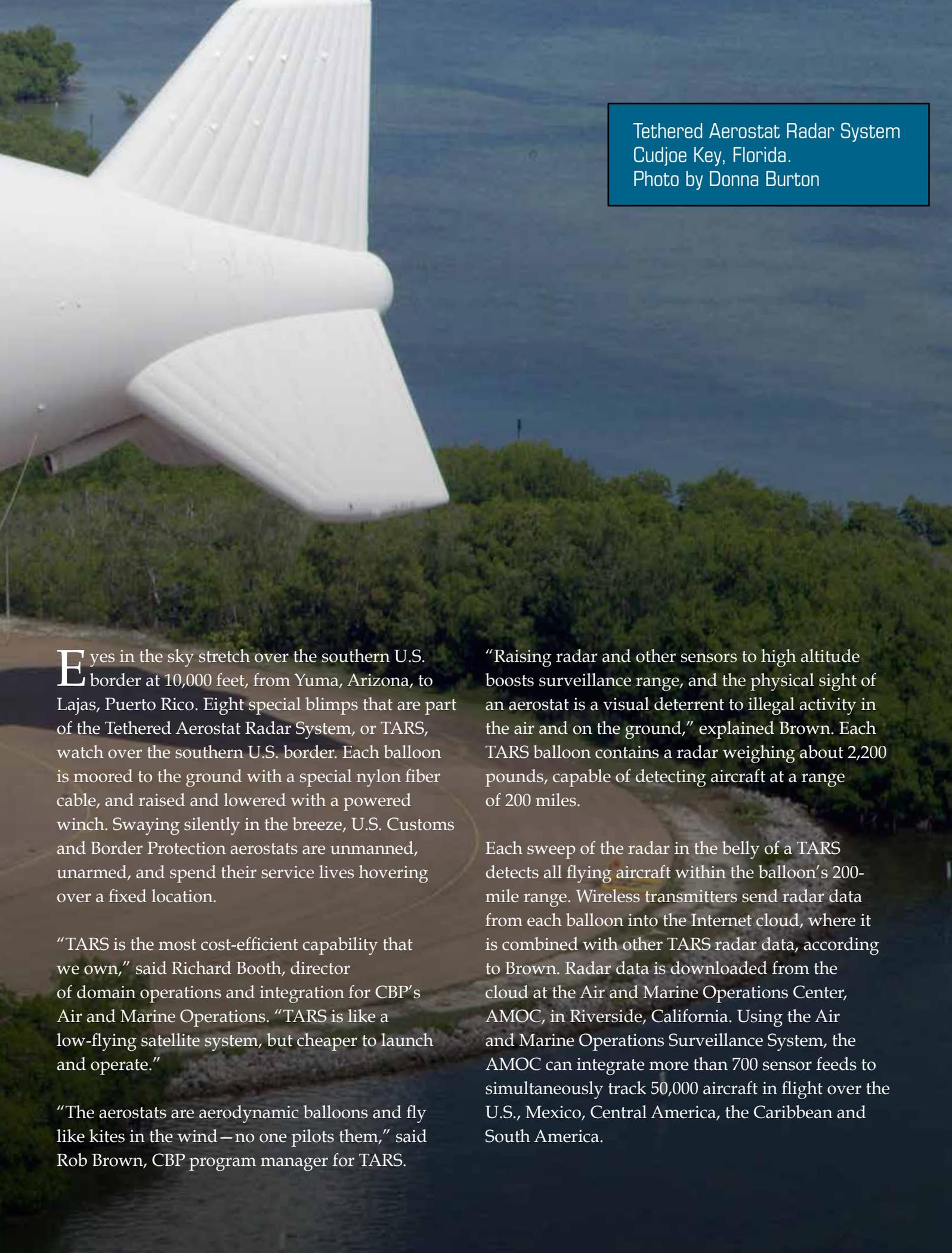
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CBP'S
EYES
IN THE SKY

Air and Marine Operations tethered aerostats
keep watch for trouble from 10,000 feet

By Dave Long



Tethered Aerostat Radar System
Cudjoe Key, Florida.
Photo by Donna Burton

Eyes in the sky stretch over the southern U.S. border at 10,000 feet, from Yuma, Arizona, to Lajas, Puerto Rico. Eight special blimps that are part of the Tethered Aerostat Radar System, or TARS, watch over the southern U.S. border. Each balloon is moored to the ground with a special nylon fiber cable, and raised and lowered with a powered winch. Swaying silently in the breeze, U.S. Customs and Border Protection aerostats are unmanned, unarmed, and spend their service lives hovering over a fixed location.

“TARS is the most cost-efficient capability that we own,” said Richard Booth, director of domain operations and integration for CBP’s Air and Marine Operations. “TARS is like a low-flying satellite system, but cheaper to launch and operate.”

“The aerostats are aerodynamic balloons and fly like kites in the wind – no one pilots them,” said Rob Brown, CBP program manager for TARS.

“Raising radar and other sensors to high altitude boosts surveillance range, and the physical sight of an aerostat is a visual deterrent to illegal activity in the air and on the ground,” explained Brown. Each TARS balloon contains a radar weighing about 2,200 pounds, capable of detecting aircraft at a range of 200 miles.

Each sweep of the radar in the belly of a TARS detects all flying aircraft within the balloon’s 200-mile range. Wireless transmitters send radar data from each balloon into the Internet cloud, where it is combined with other TARS radar data, according to Brown. Radar data is downloaded from the cloud at the Air and Marine Operations Center, AMOC, in Riverside, California. Using the Air and Marine Operations Surveillance System, the AMOC can integrate more than 700 sensor feeds to simultaneously track 50,000 aircraft in flight over the U.S., Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean and South America.



CBP located TARS on the Southwest border to overlap coverage and detect flights from Mexico, Central and South America.

The CBP aerostat program began more than 30 years ago when the U.S. Customs Service started using tethered aerostats to counter the rising number of low-flying small aircraft operated by drug smugglers. For years, traffickers moved contraband into the U.S. by air because it was cheap and efficient. Customs authorities estimated that by the early 1980s, as many as 8,500 illegal flights per year were transporting narcotics directly from the Caribbean, Central and South America into the U.S. “The shortest route from the narcotics production areas to U.S. markets is by air,” said Booth.

To circumvent ground-based radar, drug smugglers in low-flying aircraft can hide behind terrain features, such as mountains and valleys. Radar installed in an aerostat, however, detects all aircraft within range, including small planes flying low and slow over the border.

In 1978 the U.S. Air Force set up the first TARS site in Cudjoe Key, Florida. A second TARS went into service in 1983 at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. From 1988 to 1991, the U.S. Customs Service established more TARS sites at Yuma, Arizona, and three sites in Texas, including Marfa, Eagle Pass and Rio Grande City. By the end of 1994, additional TARS balloons were floating in Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico and even the Bahamas. The U.S. Air Force managed the TARS program until July 2013, when the program was transferred to CBP.

As each new aerostat went into service, smugglers would relocate flight routes to other areas still undefended by aerostats. However, the impact of the first aerostats was clear, yielding a bonanza of interdictions, arrests and aircraft seizures. Due to the efficiency of TARS and AMO enforcement, the number of unidentified aircraft flying over the border has dwindled from 8,500 to less than 10 per year.

Knowing the high likelihood of apprehension if flying across the U.S. border, smugglers now stop short of the border and try to move contraband over land into the U.S. “TARS has enabled CBP to control the air threat, but not eliminate it,” explained Booth. “The rising number of landings short of the border indicates that smugglers view air as a viable means of transport and are positioned to take advantage if given a chance. We call them ‘shortlanders.’”

In June 2014, TARS detected an unknown aircraft flying without a transponder signal near Hermosillo, Mexico. The AMOC used TARS located along the Southwest border to follow the plane, heading northwest towards the U.S. border. With the assistance of Mexican liaison officers assigned to the AMOC, CBP notified Mexican officials, who launched two Mexican air force patrol planes to investigate the unidentified aircraft. AMOC controllers tracked the mystery plane to a location east of Ensenada, Mexico, where it faded from TARS radar.



Photo of an aerostat preparing for a helium recharge at Cudjoe Key, Florida. Photo by Donna Burton

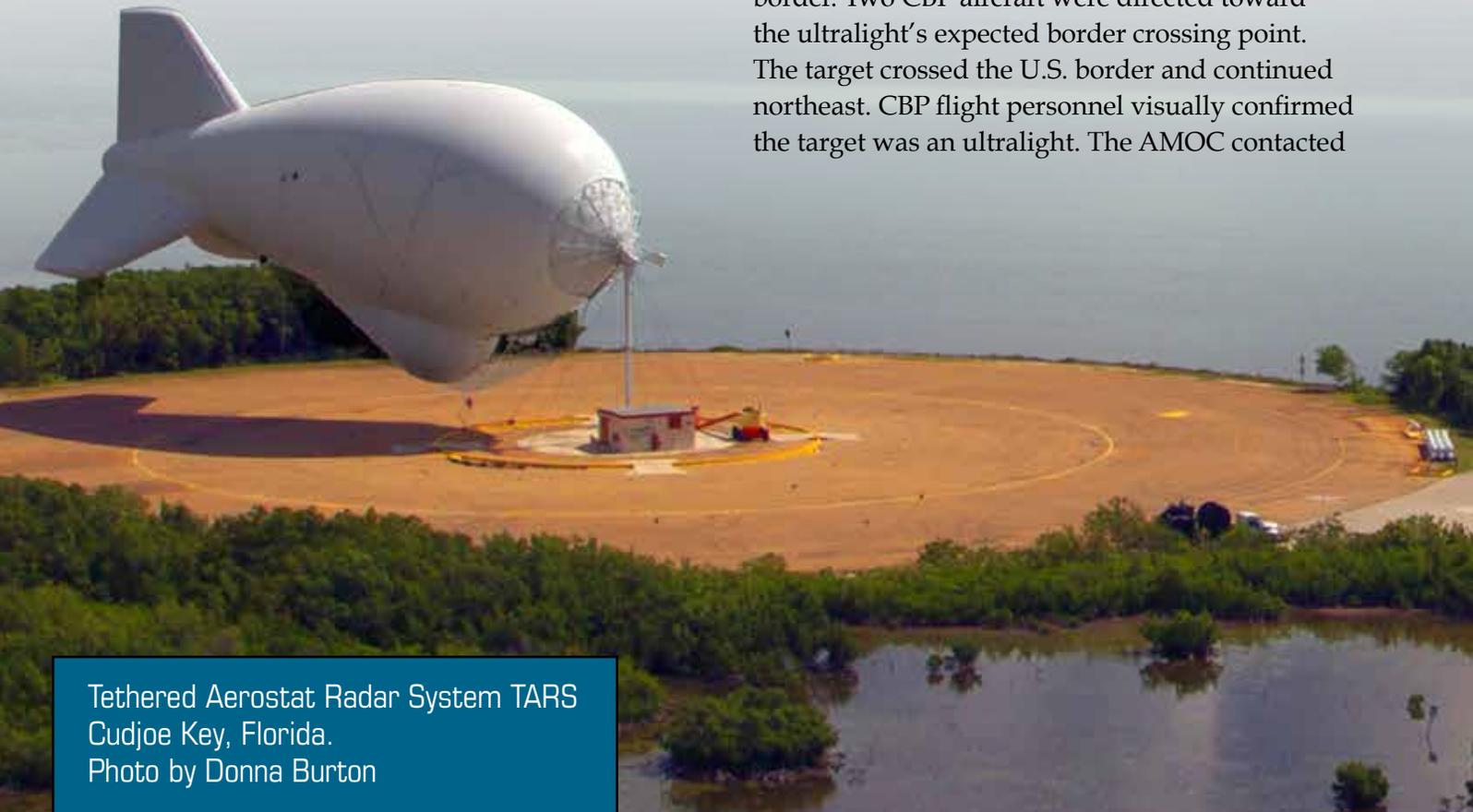
AMOC reacquired the aircraft with no transponder signal rising into the air from where it had faded from radar. Mexican air force planes tracked three trucks departing the area where the mystery plane had landed and a Mexican military helicopter was launched to investigate. Three abandoned trucks were later found, resulting in the seizure of the vehicles and 200 packages of marijuana weighing 2,043.9 kilograms. “Because of TARS, most air smugglers now land well short of the border and run their loads into the U.S. from the ground,” explained Brown.

TARS is the only persistent wide-area air, maritime and land surveillance system specifically designed for CBP’s border security mission. Despite their effectiveness, unmanned aircraft systems, or UAS, are not designed for the same mission. “We cannot have enough UAS’s carrying enough radar to duplicate the persistent ability of TARS to detect low-flying aircraft for 200 miles,” said Brown.

In 2013, TARS was responsible for detecting 586 suspicious flights, representing 42 percent of all the suspect flights along the Southwest border tracked by AMOC that year. Traffickers continue to innovate, however, currently increasing the use of ultralight aircraft to fly drugs over the border.

Early in 2014, the AMOC detected an aircraft flying south of Nogales in Sonora, Mexico, heading north toward the U.S. border. The plane crossed into the U.S. over Nogales, Arizona, still heading north at low level. The U.S. Border Patrol confirmed the target as an ultralight that went on to make an airdrop north of Nogales. Again through TARS radar, AMOC picked up the plane flying south and tracked it until it disappeared from radar in Mexico. Border Patrol agents seized seven bundles of marijuana weighing 159.75 pounds and an abandoned all-terrain vehicle.

Later in 2014, the AMOC used TARS to spot another ultralight circling north of Caborca, Mexico. The AMOC tracked the target as it flew toward the U.S. border. Two CBP aircraft were directed toward the ultralight’s expected border crossing point. The target crossed the U.S. border and continued northeast. CBP flight personnel visually confirmed the target was an ultralight. The AMOC contacted



Tethered Aerostat Radar System TARS
Cudjoe Key, Florida.
Photo by Donna Burton

Border Patrol agents at Casa Grande, Arizona, to respond. The AMOC tracked the plane to a point nearby Eloy, Arizona, where an airdrop was observed. Border Patrol agents on the ground arrested three people and seized 10 packages of marijuana weighing 230 pounds.

Controllers at AMOC used TARS to watch the ultralight disappear back over the Mexican border. The TARS have been located to overlap slightly from one area of coverage to another, like merging circles on a Venn diagram, to ensure unbroken coverage on the southern border.

TARS contributes directly to CBP's international border security partnership with Mexico. All air routes, clandestine air fields and support infrastructure identified by TARS and the AMOC are provided to Mexico for investigation, increasing U.S. intelligence and ability to disrupt transnational criminals on the border.

TARS also enables major international data sharing and joint law enforcement operations because of its extended southern radar range. Most air threats originate south of the U.S. border – TARS enables

CBP to coordinate joint law enforcement efforts with the government of Mexico.

Though TARS is economical to operate, the balloons have a limited service life. "Every five to six years we are replacing the balloons due to wear and tear, being exposed to ultraviolet radiation, constant sunlight, getting beat up in the wind with sand blowing into them. They are carrying a 1-ton radar, so you can expect a fair amount of wear and tear," Brown said. Each fully outfitted TARS aerostat costs the U.S. government \$8.9 million.

Aerostats are held in the air by helium. As aerostats gain altitude, the helium expands until it fills most of the aerostat. As aerostats are lowered, blowers pump air into the balloon to help maintain its shape and aerodynamics. The air pressure inside an aerostat is low, allowing it to survive small holes or tears in the fabric. Aerostats are raised and lowered by high-strength cables – the nylon cables used to moor a TARS aerostat can handle 35,000 pounds of tension. TARS sites are classified as restricted flying areas by the Federal Aviation Administration. Like other aircraft, all aerostats are equipped with anti-collision lights.





Border Patrol agents prepare tactical aerostats for launch in Rio Grande Valley, Texas.
Photo by John Milne

TARS radar is powered by a diesel generator that also powers the equipment that keeps the aerostat level in the air. The system contains enough fuel for four days of operation. Altogether, the total of the radar, generator, navigation equipment, electronics and fuel amounts to nearly 5,000 pounds.

CBP is also testing the potential of a family of smaller, tactical aerostats for other roles in border security. Tactical aerostats have been transferred to CBP from the Department of Defense following use by U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The aerostats include three models: the Persistent Threat Detection system, the Persistent Ground Surveillance system, and the smallest, the Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment system. The smaller aerostats operate at altitudes from 500 to 5,000 feet and monitor ground activity with radars, infrared and electro-optical cameras.

The tactical aerostats are similar in design to TARS, but differ in several aspects. Each model can be relocated with portable mooring platforms and towers. All of the smaller balloons are equipped

with a radio repeater to retransmit signals from high altitude. This has the effect of instantly boosting the communications range for agents on the ground patrolling in flat, poor-reception areas. In addition to radar surveillance equipment, the smaller balloons host infrared and high-resolution cameras that deliver immediate real-time imagery to Border Patrol agents on the ground.

“Tactical aerostats are proving very effective in southwest Texas,” said Brown. “Recently a Border Patrol agent was using a tactical aerostat camera to watch a pickup truck driving up and down a road several times. On its fifth pass, it stopped in the middle of the road and six people with bales ran out of the bushes, stuffed them in the back of the truck, and ran back into the bushes. The Border Patrol agent was watching all of this. The vehicle sped off with Border Patrol in pursuit. The tactical aerostat extends the Border Patrol’s eyes and ears with these sensor and surveillance systems operating at altitude.”

STOP AND THINK!



Visit www.CBP.gov for agricultural requirements before your trip!

For more information you may also visit the APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine website at www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq.

WE UNDERSTAND WHY YOU MAY WANT TO BRING A BIT OF BEAUTIFUL MEXICO TO THE UNITED STATES, BUT BE AWARE THAT THERE ARE CERTAIN ITEMS YOU CANNOT BRING ACROSS THE BORDER. SO BEFORE YOU TRAVEL, VISIT THE U.S. CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION'S WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AGRICULTURAL REQUIREMENTS.

CAUTION:

**YOU MUST DECLARE
ALL MEATS, FRUITS,
VEGETABLES, PLANTS,
SOIL OR ANIMAL OR
PLANT MATERIAL
PRODUCTS.**



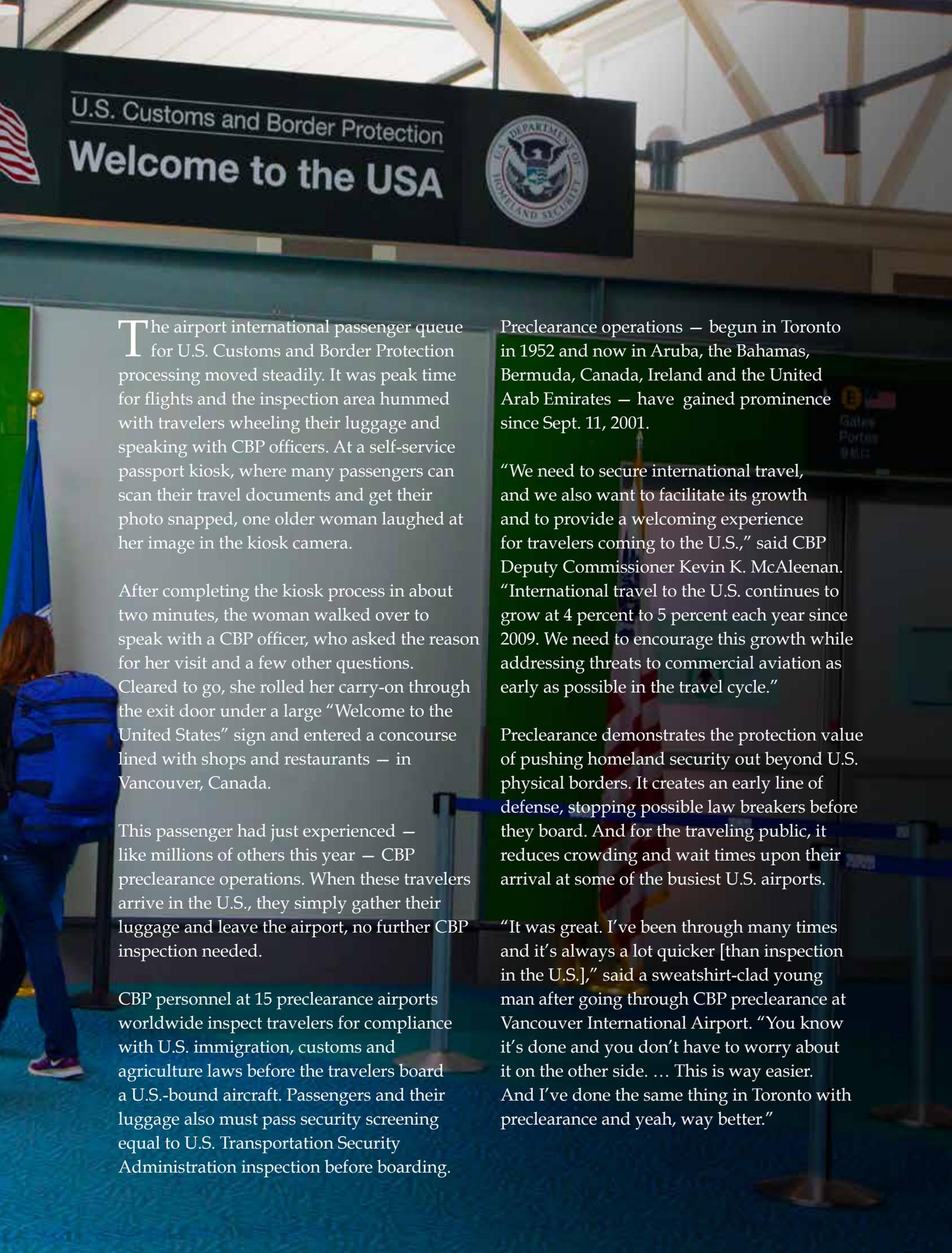
CBP

CLEARED FOR LANDING

**CBP preclears travelers
abroad to ease U.S. entry**

By Susan Holliday, photos by Donna Burton





U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Welcome to the USA



The airport international passenger queue for U.S. Customs and Border Protection processing moved steadily. It was peak time for flights and the inspection area hummed with travelers wheeling their luggage and speaking with CBP officers. At a self-service passport kiosk, where many passengers can scan their travel documents and get their photo snapped, one older woman laughed at her image in the kiosk camera.

After completing the kiosk process in about two minutes, the woman walked over to speak with a CBP officer, who asked the reason for her visit and a few other questions. Cleared to go, she rolled her carry-on through the exit door under a large “Welcome to the United States” sign and entered a concourse lined with shops and restaurants — in Vancouver, Canada.

This passenger had just experienced — like millions of others this year — CBP preclearance operations. When these travelers arrive in the U.S., they simply gather their luggage and leave the airport, no further CBP inspection needed.

CBP personnel at 15 preclearance airports worldwide inspect travelers for compliance with U.S. immigration, customs and agriculture laws before the travelers board a U.S.-bound aircraft. Passengers and their luggage also must pass security screening equal to U.S. Transportation Security Administration inspection before boarding.

Preclearance operations — begun in Toronto in 1952 and now in Aruba, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Canada, Ireland and the United Arab Emirates — have gained prominence since Sept. 11, 2001.

“We need to secure international travel, and we also want to facilitate its growth and to provide a welcoming experience for travelers coming to the U.S.,” said CBP Deputy Commissioner Kevin K. McAleenan. “International travel to the U.S. continues to grow at 4 percent to 5 percent each year since 2009. We need to encourage this growth while addressing threats to commercial aviation as early as possible in the travel cycle.”

Preclearance demonstrates the protection value of pushing homeland security out beyond U.S. physical borders. It creates an early line of defense, stopping possible law breakers before they board. And for the traveling public, it reduces crowding and wait times upon their arrival at some of the busiest U.S. airports.

“It was great. I’ve been through many times and it’s always a lot quicker [than inspection in the U.S.],” said a sweatshirt-clad young man after going through CBP preclearance at Vancouver International Airport. “You know it’s done and you don’t have to worry about it on the other side. ... This is way easier. And I’ve done the same thing in Toronto with preclearance and yeah, way better.”



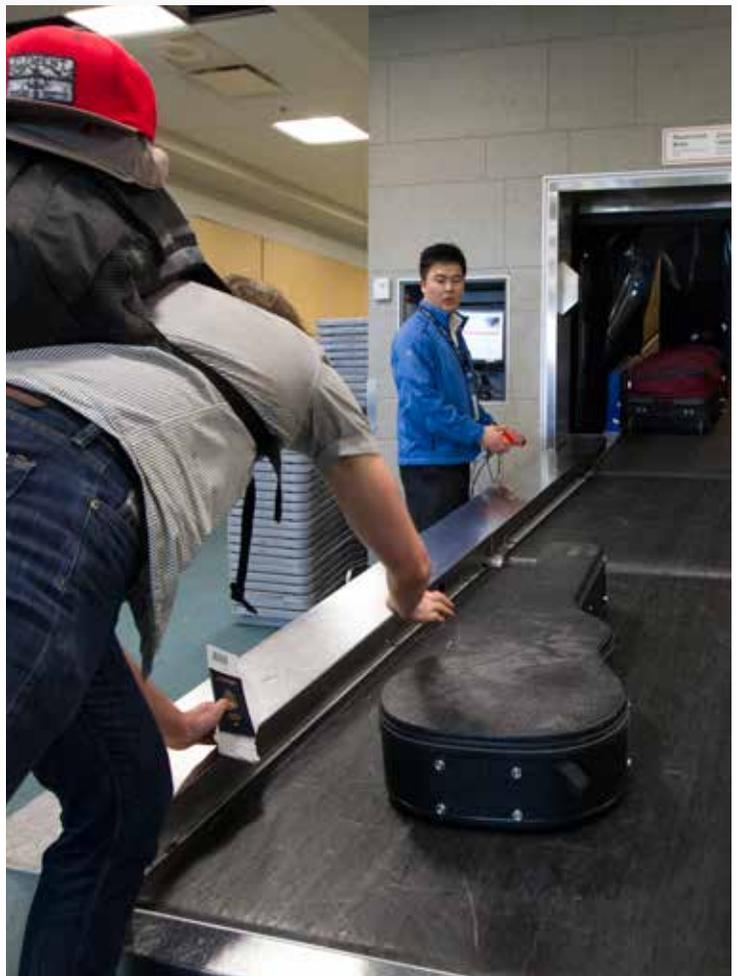
Airport personnel scan barcoded tags on each bag, which is then photographed as it passes into the secure system.

Moving quickly, securely

With newer preclearance baggage systems like the Vancouver airport process, travelers drop off their labeled and checked luggage, which is then barcode scanned, photographed, X-rayed and weighed by airport personnel. The bags then leave the passengers' custody and enter a separate, secure processing system.

This system benefits travelers arriving at preclearance from other flights. "The connecting customer has the ability to move directly through the CBP process without having to stop to pick up their bag," said Steve Hankinson, vice president of operations and information technology for the Vancouver Airport Authority. "The airline will take their bag and drop it off and it will go through the system. So the bag will go from tail to tail, from airplane to airplane, and the customer then moves through the CBP process."

When passengers using the new baggage system meet with a CBP preclearance officer for inspection, the officer pulls up all the baggage information on a screen. After questioning the traveler, the officer can designate one or all of the bags to be retrieved for closer physical examination. The passenger at any time can also be directed to a secondary CBP inspection location, just as at a U.S. port of entry.



Preclearance travelers drop their checked luggage for secure baggage handling at Vancouver International Airport.



A CBP Vancouver preclearance officer handles bags identified for secondary examination.

The baggage data in this modern system gives officers the background intelligence they need to ask the traveler the right questions. “For example, if they tell the officer that they’re going to the U.S. for a week, the officer can ask, ‘Why are you not traveling with enough clothes to stay for a week?’” explained Lee DeLoatch, area port director for CBP Vancouver Preclearance. “Or the officer can come back and ask, ‘Why are you bringing so much luggage? How long do you plan on staying?’ The passenger says that he’s traveling for pleasure, but his intent may be to live in the United States.”

Preclearance enables CBP to sustain tight traveler and baggage security while speeding the process overall for the traveling public and for the agency’s private sector partners.

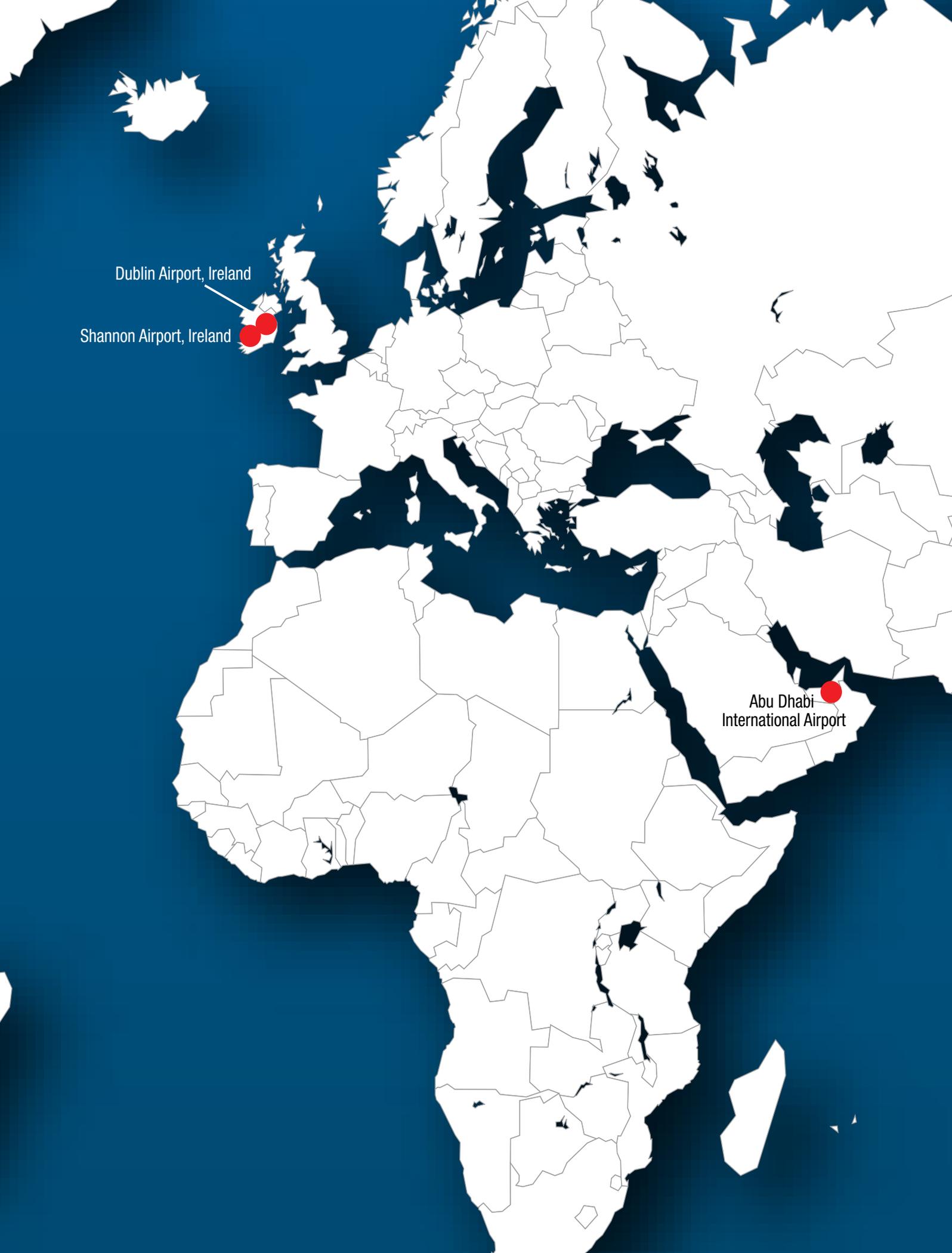
“The customer really wants to move through an airport process as quickly as possible and as easily as possible,” said the Vancouver Airport Authority’s Steve Hankinson. “And as part of that preclearance process, they can get all of the check-in, drop the bags, move through security, and move through CBP quickly. All of that accelerates the whole speed at which a customer moves through the process.”



CBP X-rays luggage pulled for secondary inspection.



Current CBP Preclearance Sites



Dublin Airport, Ireland

Shannon Airport, Ireland

Abu Dhabi
International Airport

What's in it for passengers, airports and airlines?

More than a quarter million international air travelers on average arrive daily at U.S. airports, according to CBP, and the number is expected to grow. More travelers could mean more waiting to clear CBP, but CBP innovations like preclearance cut the queues.

Precleared passengers landing in the U.S. already have passed CBP processing, so they land, grab their bags and depart at U.S. international airports just like domestic travelers. This means fewer people stand in CBP queues upon arrival, shortening the lines for everyone.

Also, without the need for CBP processing, precleared flights can arrive at domestic gates in the U.S., which equals less running between gates, faster connections and ultimately fewer missed flights.

Preclearance avoids peak congestion periods by staggering inspections as passengers trickle in prior to their departure. Travelers check-in in small groups, often from connecting flights. CBP preclearance facilities remain open to continuously process them as they arrive, with no inspection closures between flight arrivals, as at U.S.-based CBP facilities.

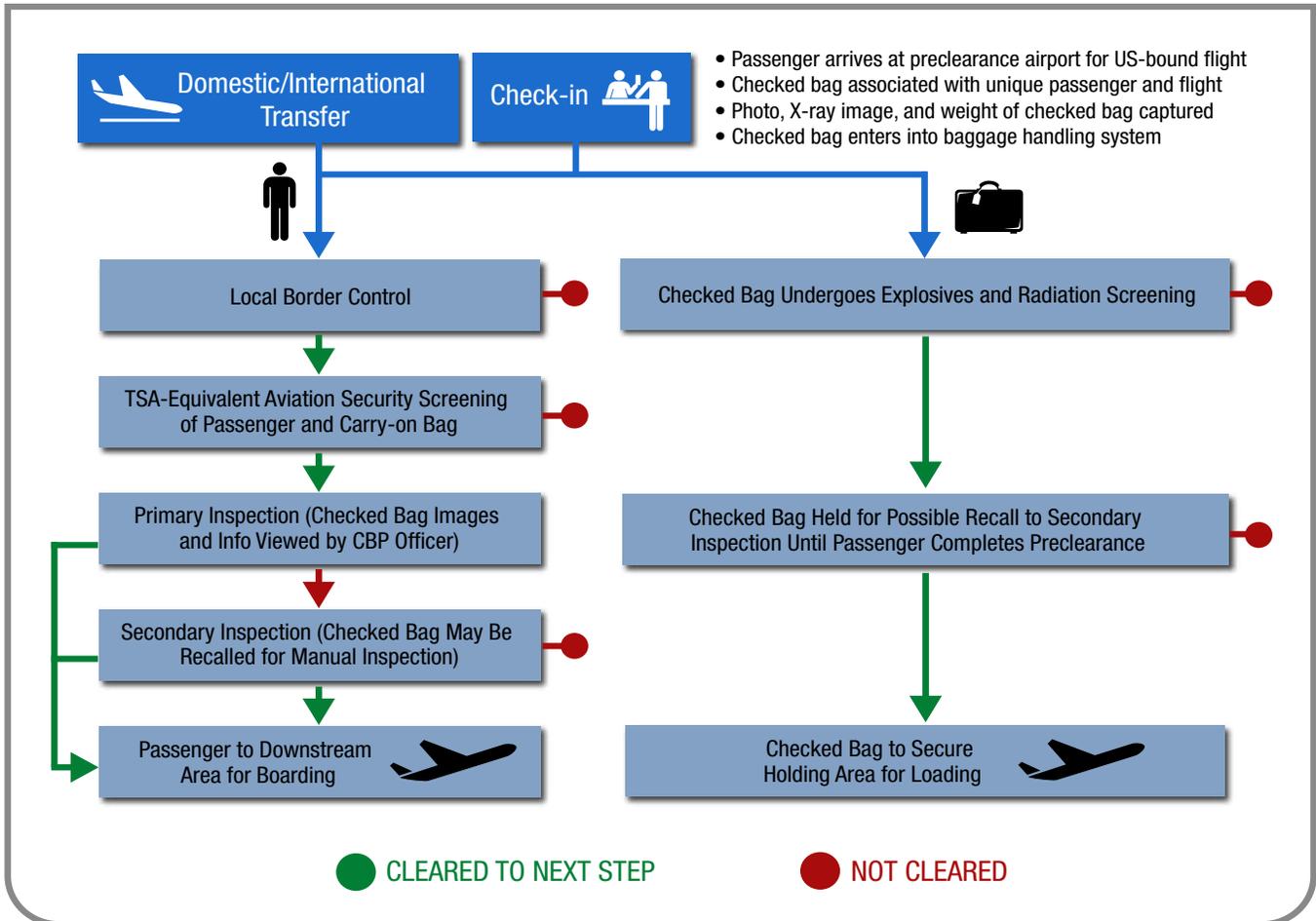
Easing and expediting passengers through airports via preclearance allows airports and air carriers to increase business in sometimes surprising ways.

With preclearance, airports and airlines can expand the number of flights and routes and reduce international airport congestion. For example, some precleared international flights now land at New York's LaGuardia Airport, shrinking bottlenecks at JFK International Airport and creating new direct airline routes.



A Vancouver preclearance traveler uses an airport Automated Passport Control kiosk, which streamlines the administrative function of the border inspection for quicker traveler processing.

Preclearance Process Flow



“Air carriers can fly on a hub-to-hub basis,” said Dylan DeFrancisci, assistant director of border security for the CBP Preclearance Field Office. This speeds time for flight connection and saves airlines money on gate fees, which are significantly higher at international terminals. In fact, when a plane must land at an international terminal and its next flight is domestic, the airline often must pay for the aircraft to be towed to the domestic terminal.

“One air carrier departing from Dublin Airport used to fly into terminal four at JFK Airport every day and tow the aircraft to terminal five every day,” said DeFrancisci. “It was about \$800,000 per year

in towing costs and took about two hours. They eventually requested preclearance, and once it was enacted they not only saved money, but also got the passengers to their destination faster and the plane up in the air quicker by landing at a domestic terminal.”

When CBP at a U.S. airport denies a traveler entry into the country, the airline foots the bill to fly the passenger back to the country of origin. When CBP preclearance prevents a passenger from boarding, the airline immediately saves the cost it otherwise would have incurred had the passenger flown to the U.S.

The Vancouver airport's secured area downstream of CBP preclearance processing offers retail, restaurant and entertainment options to waiting travelers.



Golden airport business opportunities

The popularity of preclearance boosts the number of passengers, flights and routes to the U.S., giving preclearance airports a competitive edge. U.S. preclearance departures rose 34 percent in 2014 over the previous year at Dublin Airport, a preclearance site, according to a Dublin Airport Authority report. This ranked the airport as the seventh busiest European hub for trans-Atlantic flights in 2014, the airport reported.

Preclearance also translates to bigger business on the ground for airports. "The growth in connecting traffic has resulted in additional demand for food and beverage and for retail services," said Steve Hankinson of the Vancouver Airport Authority. The growth in air traffic has "increased the benefit to the airport because we're able to do more business post-CBP with the customer," Hankinson said, "and that results in revenue being generated for the airport."

Vancouver International Airport invested big in retail and restaurant infrastructure enhancements in the areas downstream of CBP preclearance processing,

and it's paying off. The airport's 2014 duty-free sales in its U.S. departure terminal generated more than 10 million Canadian dollars.

CBP worked with the airport and Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, or CATSA, to realign the passenger screening process to place the CATSA preboarding screening before CBP's screening. "The agencies signed an agreement that CATSA would meet U.S. TSA security standards," said CBP Vancouver Preclearance Area Port Director Lee DeLoatch. "Then the airport could put duty-free shopping after the CBP inspection. The vendors agree that they will collect the duties and at the end of each month, they cut a check to the U.S. government for those."

"Once passengers have passed CBP, they're able to shop freely and purchase items knowing that they don't have to go back and declare," added DeLoatch. "So it actually makes the passenger's experience that much greater."

After retail and restaurant sales were located after preclearance processing, sales of duty-free items at Vancouver International Airport shot up 30 percent, said DeLoatch.

Expanding preclearance

The advantages of preclearance for national security and travel facilitation are so great that in 2014 CBP and the Department of Homeland Security announced a formal process for international airports to apply to host preclearance operations.

“The best means we have to disrupt and deter terrorist threats is the strategic stationing of CBP law enforcement personnel overseas, preclearing travelers before they board U.S.-bound flights,” said DeFrancisci. “CBP intends that, a decade from now, one in three air travelers to the U.S. will be precleared, up from 16 percent in fiscal year 2014.”

DHS cooperated with the Departments of State and Transportation on the airport preclearance application parameters. At the close of the application period, more than two dozen foreign airports had expressed interest. “DHS sent technical teams from DHS and State to visit each candidate airport to assess the feasibility of preclearance operations at each location,” said Randy Howe, director of field operations for the CBP Preclearance Field Office.

DHS and State evaluated and prioritized all interested foreign airports. Each applicant was rated on four criteria: facilitation, security, feasibility and strategic impact, with multiple subcategories, including items like national security, passenger facilitation, wait-time impact and economic benefits. “This created a composite score that drove the final decision,” said Howe.

The 10 airports identified in May 2015 as candidates for preclearance were: Brussels Airport, Belgium; Punta Cana Airport, Dominican Republic; Narita International Airport, Japan; Amsterdam Airport Schiphol, Netherlands; Oslo Airport, Norway; Madrid-Barajas Airport, Spain; Stockholm Arlanda Airport, Sweden; Istanbul Ataturk Airport, Turkey; London’s Heathrow Airport and Manchester Airport, United Kingdom. These sites represent some of the busiest departure points to the U.S. — nearly 20 million passengers traveled from these 10 airports to the U.S. in 2014.

CBP has been negotiating the terms of preclearance with each of the candidate airports. The parties also will work out the scale and scope of preclearance operations, such as the numbers of flights CBP processes, the terminals, the hours and potential increases over time.

As the airports will pay for roughly 85 percent of preclearance costs, “they have the ability to negotiate and design the model they want,” said DeFrancisci. They can start with fewer flights precleared and scale up based on their experience, “seeing how their baggage systems work and how they queue and stage their passengers.”



CBP will work with each airport to develop a model that best fits the airport and the air carriers at each site. Each location's geography and climate will create a learning curve for airport, airline and CBP partners, adjusting flights and staffing as the seasons change. For example, Abu Dhabi airport, a current preclearance site, gets "some pretty severe fog," said DeFrancisci. "Out of nowhere, this fog will come in and cripple the airport." He said that the week that preclearance opened, Abu Dhabi had 10 flights delayed by fog.

CBP, the airlines and Abu Dhabi airport adjusted their schedules to deal with the fog and the Persian Gulf heat. CBP began a midnight shift, which avoids the sun rising, heating the ground moisture and creating fog. "Everyone has a stake in the success of preclearance and they're willing to work together," said DeFrancisci.

Pre-inspection: unique to British Columbia

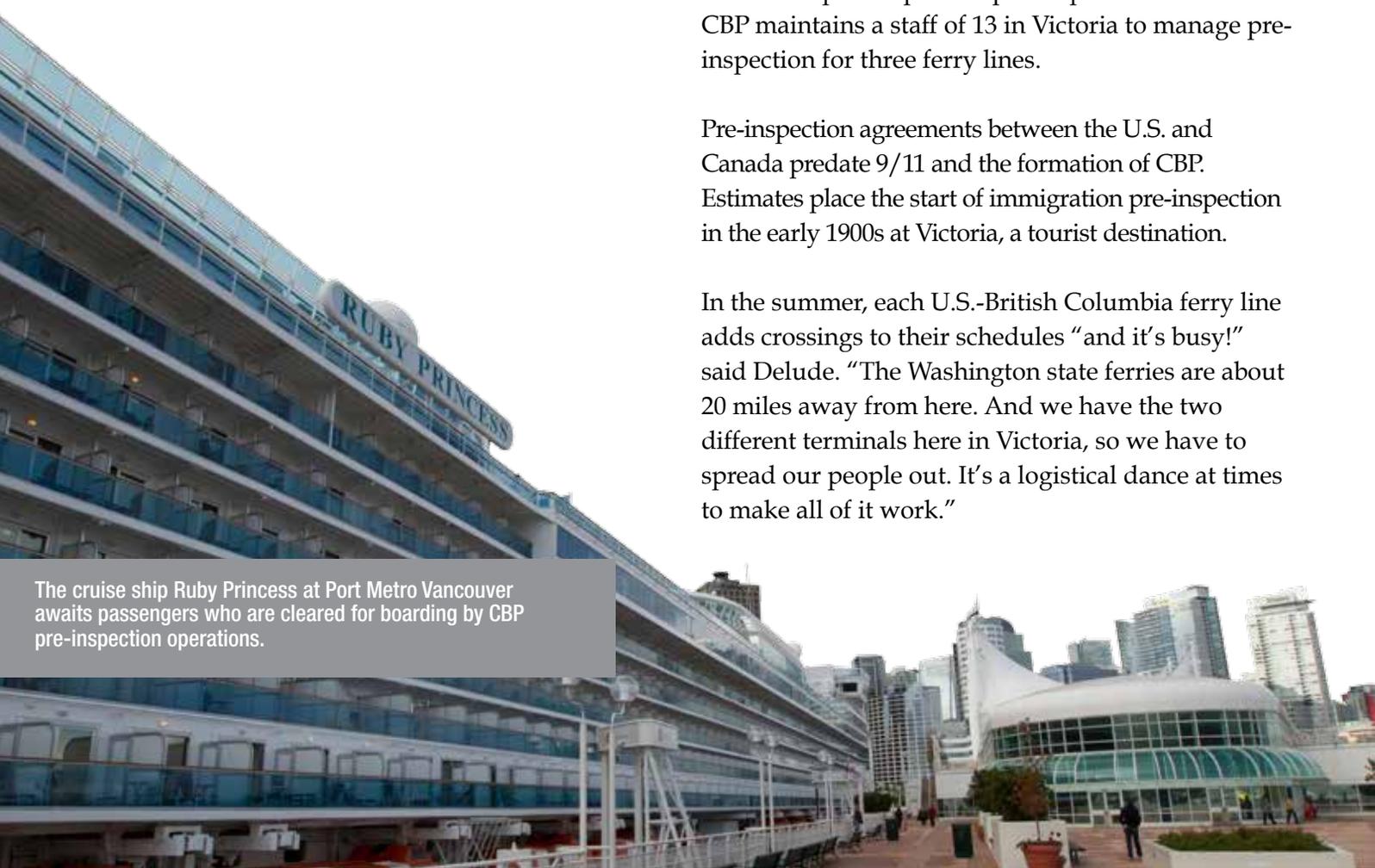
One CBP security process reflects the special, historic relationship between the U.S. and Canada: pre-inspection.

"Pre-inspection only deals with the admissibility portion of the CBP inspection – in other words, whether or not people have the right to travel to the United States," said Donovan Delude, port director for CBP pre-inspection at Victoria, British Columbia. "Whereas preclearance speaks to the customs, agriculture and the admissibility-immigration portions."

CBP pre-inspects travelers to the U.S. at five sites with three different border-crossing modes of transit: ferry, cruise ship and train. CBP officers in Vancouver, who also staff the airport preclearance operations, travel as needed to the city's train station and cruise port to process pre-inspection travelers. CBP maintains a staff of 13 in Victoria to manage pre-inspection for three ferry lines.

Pre-inspection agreements between the U.S. and Canada predate 9/11 and the formation of CBP. Estimates place the start of immigration pre-inspection in the early 1900s at Victoria, a tourist destination.

In the summer, each U.S.-British Columbia ferry line adds crossings to their schedules "and it's busy!" said Delude. "The Washington state ferries are about 20 miles away from here. And we have the two different terminals here in Victoria, so we have to spread our people out. It's a logistical dance at times to make all of it work."



The cruise ship Ruby Princess at Port Metro Vancouver awaits passengers who are cleared for boarding by CBP pre-inspection operations.

Private-sector stakeholders appreciate CBP's efforts to expedite travel and security. "Pre-inspection allows us to catch any [immigration] issues over entry or re-entry, rather than have our customers sail all the way to the U.S. and be potentially turned back," said David Gudgel, chief operating officer of the Clipper, which sails between Victoria and Seattle. "One of the things that we market here is the ease of walking from one country to another—so anything we can do to make that transition easier and simpler is to our benefit and that of our passengers."

"Cruise ships bound for Alaska from Vancouver have benefitted from pre-inspection services for more than 30 years," said Carmen Ortega, manager of cruise services for Port Metro Vancouver. "Nobody wants to spend half their day at their first port of call being processed," said Ortega. "Pre-inspection allows passengers to disembark in Alaska in a more seamless manner."

The growth in popularity of Alaska cruising raises the stakes for cruise lines, Alaska tourism and efficient CBP processing. "The number of Alaska ports of call hasn't changed," said Ortega. "What we have seen is an increase in the size of ships. A ship like this one [the Ruby Princess] carries 3,200 passengers. When we started this business 40 years ago, the biggest ship had maybe 600 passengers."

Ortega credits the collaboration among CBP, Port Metro Vancouver and the Canada Border Services Agency for the smooth, efficient passenger processing.

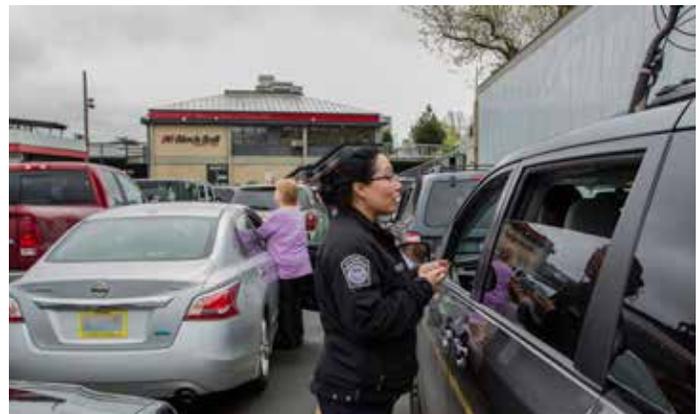
After a hiatus of 14 years, pre-inspection began again in 1995 for the Amtrak Cascades trains, which travel a scenic route from Vancouver to Seattle by Pacific Northwest mountains and waterways. The efficiencies of pre-inspection for this cross-border train route are clear, according to Gay Banks Olson, assistant superintendent of operations for the Amtrak Northwest Subdivision.

"Amtrak and the states of Washington and Oregon [which fund the Cascades operation] are committed to reducing travel time and increasing service," said Olson. "As travel time decreases, your ridership goes up. So even 10 to 15 minutes for us makes a big difference in people's decisions on what transportation mode to utilize."

Pre-inspection gives an economic advantage in the ferry environment as well. "The [ferry] operators here in Victoria bring over 750,000 customers to Victoria each year," said Ryan Malane, vice president of marketing for the Black Ball Ferry Line. "That translates into well over \$160 million in economic impact for Victoria and many more millions to the Olympic peninsula as well as Seattle."

Close cooperation between CBP and the transit stakeholders sustains the success of pre-inspection. The Victoria ferries are "constantly giving us updates on the boats as far as loads they have coming in, what their expected passenger list is going to look like," said Delude from CBP. "The Victoria Clipper is a smaller boat. If the weather may cause issues, they will ask CBP to change inspection time so the boat can depart and beat the weather. CBP does its best to help the boat stay ahead of a storm."

"So we're in communication with our stakeholders on almost a daily basis," he added.



A CBP officer initiates pre-inspection processing by speaking with drivers queued to board one of the ferries between Victoria, British Columbia, and the U.S.



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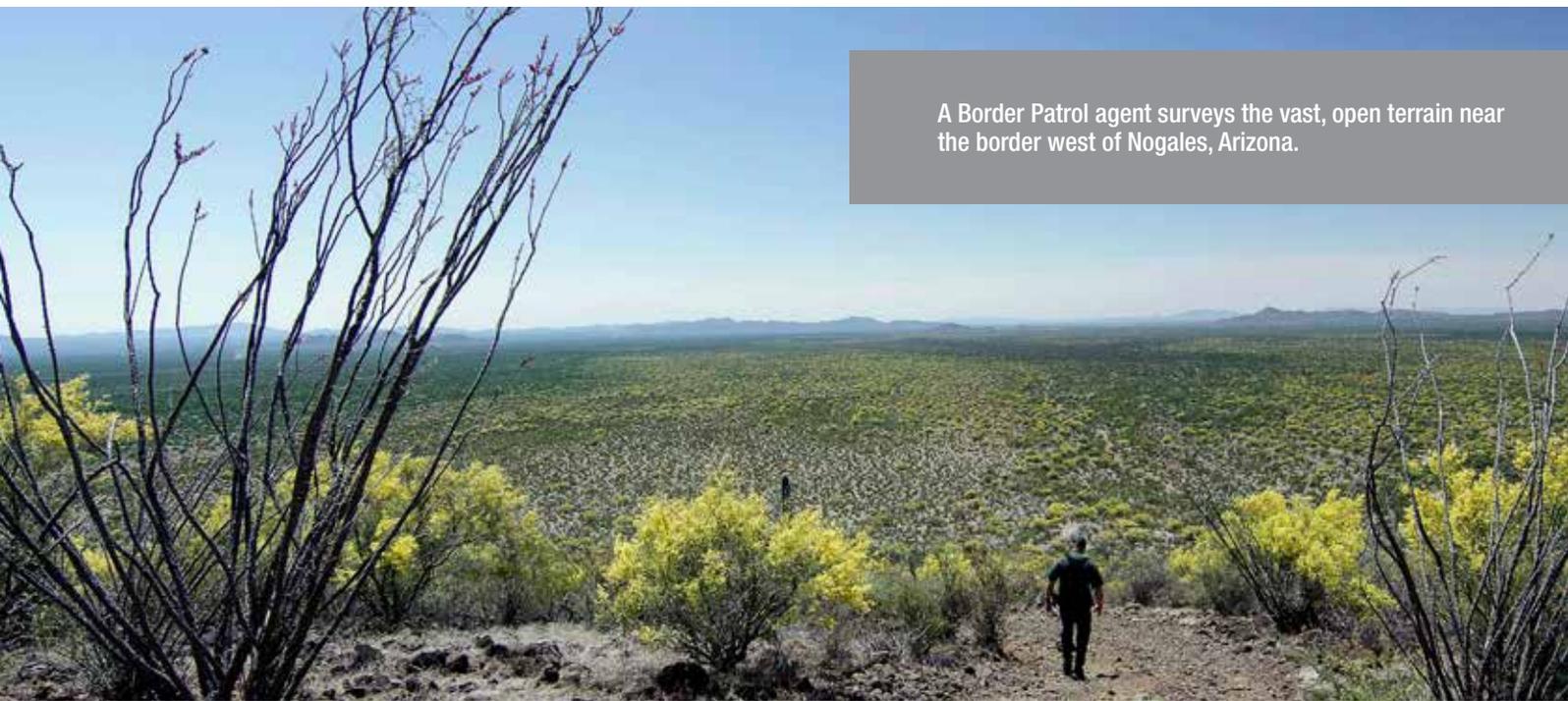
U.S. Customs and
Border Protection

FURTHER REFLECTION

Surveillance technology boosts border security efforts in Arizona

Article and photos by Eric Blum





A Border Patrol agent surveys the vast, open terrain near the border west of Nogales, Arizona.

Arizona's border region north of Mexico is mostly a desert basin interrupted by clusters of rugged mountains, a challenging environment for Border Patrol agents who work to secure it.

For most of the past century, agents patrolled these dusty hills and valleys mostly on their own, relying on personal knowledge, experience, instincts, guts and luck as they pursued answers to this vast territory's challenges and mysteries. Who made those footprints in the sand? Was it a hopelessly lost family in need of help or a gang of armed and desperate drug smugglers? What just caused the brush to crackle, an animal or a person?

"We usually had to do our jobs without a lot of information," said Operations Officer Joseph A. Korchmaros, who has long patrolled this area where he was born and raised. "There was no sure way of knowing when, where or who we would encounter next, and no awareness of the degree of threat. The environment we worked in was a lot like operating in a dark room."

In recent years, Customs and Border Protection has been deploying an array of tools and technologies the U.S. Border Patrol believes are helping to solve its most

difficult challenges. The most recent innovation, linking advanced cameras to high powered radar, is providing a new awareness of threats in this vast territory.

"This new surveillance technology has basically thrown a switch and turned the lights on for us," Korchmaros said. "It changes our working environment dramatically, makes us more effective and efficient and allows us to operate more safely."

Nearly a decade ago the Border Patrol established a three-pronged strategy for better securing U.S. borders: hiring more highly skilled agents, building and maintaining better fences, barriers and access roads, and deploying specialized technologies that help agents monitor their turf.

The result has been appropriations that doubled the number of agents and built an extensive network of border fencing, vehicle barriers and access roads. But the third goal took more trial and error, more testing and evaluation. This deliberate approach went forward under the umbrella of the Arizona Technology Plan, which considered an array of tools for the Tucson Sector.



A Border Patrol agent monitors a portable radar-camera unit that can be transported to strategic locations to help monitor activity in Southern Arizona.

Border Patrol, assisted by CBP's Office of Technology Innovation and Acquisition, is in the final stages of implementing the plan. The project adds to what has been working, such as sensors and night vision goggles, and also enhances and expands the use of video surveillance.

"The true innovation with this technology effort was to access aviation surveillance technologies that combined radar and long-distance cameras and adapt them for border security use," said Supervisory Border Patrol Agent Dustin Roll. "That's been the solution for us that has added the most flexibility and effectiveness."

Radars track movement. Cameras allow agents to "see" what caused that movement. Combining the two allows a small team of agents to monitor vast and varied stretches of border area from a variety of viewpoints. It also allows agent monitors to provide critical information to agents on the ground: How many individuals? Do they appear to be smuggling drugs? Is anyone armed?

And, importantly, it allows the flexibility to provide an array of solutions adaptable to a given location. This is not an expensive breakthrough invention, but rather the adaptation of proven surveillance products for border uses. Depending on the specific challenge, this can range from 120-foot-high towers or similar radar and camera equipment scaled down for mobility by a few agents.

"We have yet to discover that one piece of technology that is a one-size-fits-all solution," said Division Chief Raleigh Leonard. More effective for the Border Patrol is the opportunity to locate towers strategically and to supplement them with more mobile and portable systems. Surveillance equipment does not see through mountains, so different site angles help complete the picture.



In the relatively urban border area of Nogales, high definition cameras focus on the 20-foot barrier that separates the Mexican and U.S. sides of the border. The cameras display movement to agents in the Border Patrol's command and control center. So when a young man managed to climb the fence from Mexico, and used a rope to almost instantly rappel down into the U.S., he landed on his feet and was running off to a neighborhood in just seconds. But he ran straight into agents who intercepted him thanks to the information the agents received from the command center.

Higher above Nogales, forming a bit of an arc around the city, are remote towers that provide an enhanced view of the area. These video surveillance systems have been in operation for years, proving to be invaluable in securing Nogales. As part of the Arizona technology plan, these towers are being upgraded to improve accuracy, reliability and communications to the command center.

These cameras and towers are being supplemented by suitcase-based camera and radar equipment agents transport to key vantage points. Rugged vehicles with telescoping surveillance equipment also can be driven to a location and deployed for up to a week. The "control room" for agents is in the back seat of the

truck's cab. The passenger seat has been flipped around to give access to monitors for the radar system and camera, as well as to a keyboard and mouse or track pad.

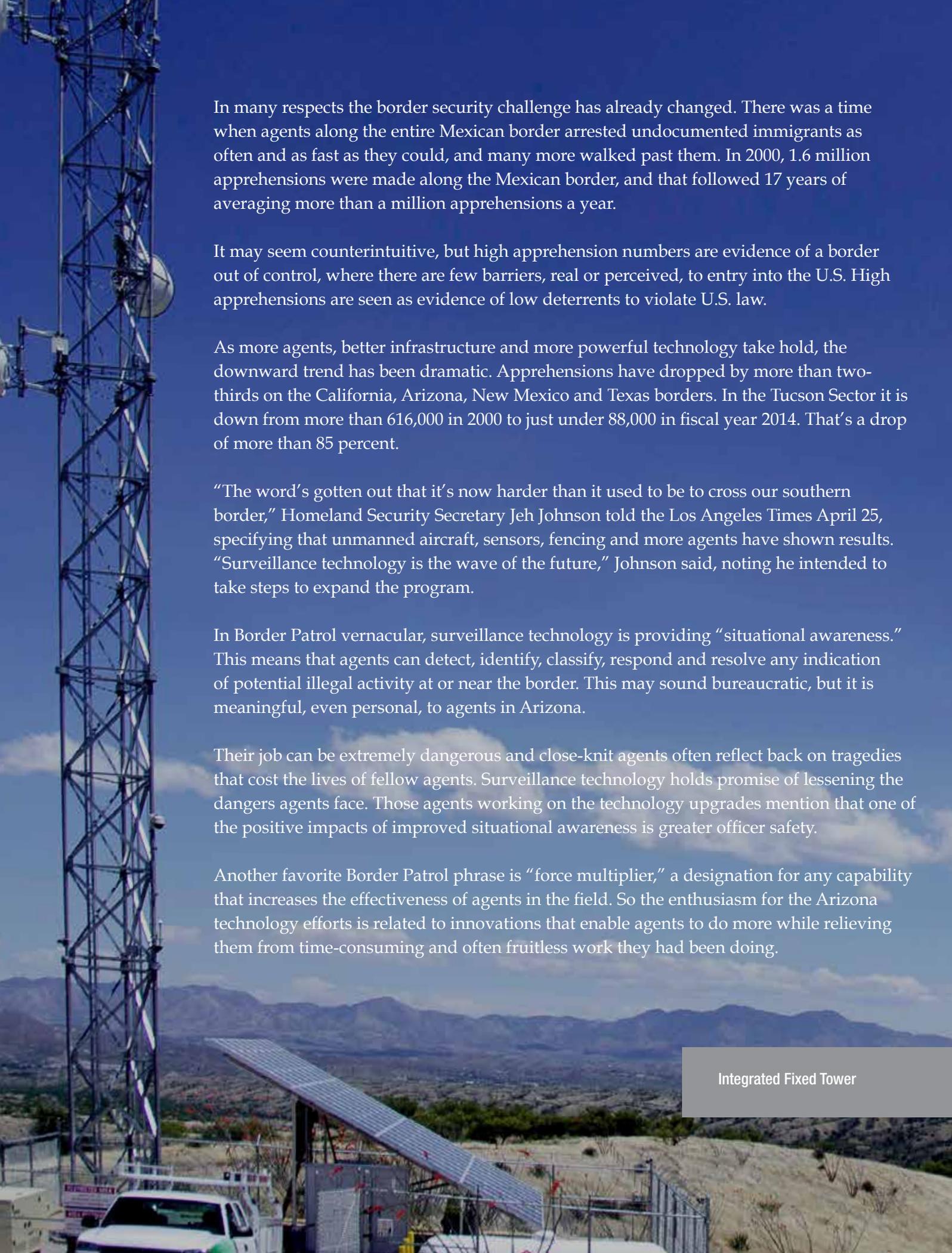
The final arc beyond those tools are the newest Nogales towers with the most precise radar and cameras, providing the longest reach and highest level of communications. These towers are located in the high ground of the rolling hills east and west of the city. The Integrated Fixed Towers passed a series of acceptance tests in August and September 2015. Gaining additional certifications could lead to system expansion to other areas of Arizona and Texas, shining a light on the entire region.

These new fixed towers, powered by solar panels and providing instantaneous integration of images and alerts to the control center, help close the final gaps for those trying a challenging end-around over and through the roughest terrain.

As one agent was being trained on the new systems and was seeing the visual feeds at the Nogales command and control center in late April, he recognized the potential of what he was seeing. "Game changer," the agent predicted.



Customs and Border Protection personnel at the Joint Intelligence and Operations Center monitor situations and deployment of assets along the Arizona-Mexico border.



In many respects the border security challenge has already changed. There was a time when agents along the entire Mexican border arrested undocumented immigrants as often and as fast as they could, and many more walked past them. In 2000, 1.6 million apprehensions were made along the Mexican border, and that followed 17 years of averaging more than a million apprehensions a year.

It may seem counterintuitive, but high apprehension numbers are evidence of a border out of control, where there are few barriers, real or perceived, to entry into the U.S. High apprehensions are seen as evidence of low deterrents to violate U.S. law.

As more agents, better infrastructure and more powerful technology take hold, the downward trend has been dramatic. Apprehensions have dropped by more than two-thirds on the California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas borders. In the Tucson Sector it is down from more than 616,000 in 2000 to just under 88,000 in fiscal year 2014. That's a drop of more than 85 percent.

"The word's gotten out that it's now harder than it used to be to cross our southern border," Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson told the Los Angeles Times April 25, specifying that unmanned aircraft, sensors, fencing and more agents have shown results. "Surveillance technology is the wave of the future," Johnson said, noting he intended to take steps to expand the program.

In Border Patrol vernacular, surveillance technology is providing "situational awareness." This means that agents can detect, identify, classify, respond and resolve any indication of potential illegal activity at or near the border. This may sound bureaucratic, but it is meaningful, even personal, to agents in Arizona.

Their job can be extremely dangerous and close-knit agents often reflect back on tragedies that cost the lives of fellow agents. Surveillance technology holds promise of lessening the dangers agents face. Those agents working on the technology upgrades mention that one of the positive impacts of improved situational awareness is greater officer safety.

Another favorite Border Patrol phrase is "force multiplier," a designation for any capability that increases the effectiveness of agents in the field. So the enthusiasm for the Arizona technology efforts is related to innovations that enable agents to do more while relieving them from time-consuming and often fruitless work they had been doing.

Integrated Fixed Tower



A workman adds finishing touches to a solar panel that will help power a new tower.



A truck-mounted surveillance package is driven to the high ground above open territory south of Tucson, Arizona. The truck contains a full monitoring and communications console in the cab.

The result is that agents are spending less time tracking and watching and more time on other law enforcement activities.

“The increase in technology, infrastructure and personnel in the Tucson Sector has translated into fewer indications of a chaotic border environment,” Leonard said. “We are seeing a safer border environment, with far less activity related to narcotic trafficking and migrant crossings. I believe this can be attributed to hard-working agents supported by advanced detection technology and also supported by collaboration from a multitude of other agencies.”

The realization of the Arizona Technology Plan is seen as a beginning rather than an end. Border security, which largely pits agents versus highly motivated, sophisticated and adaptive smuggling cartels, has been marked by reactionary steps on both sides.

Success in one area deflects illegal activity elsewhere. Successes in Arizona have given way to increased challenges in Texas, especially in the Rio Grande Valley. There is no doubt that some of the lessons learned and tools deployed in Arizona can play a key role in West Texas and elsewhere, despite its different physical environment.

Moving forward, there are other tools and refinements on the Border Patrol wish list. Reduced size and greater mobility of the equipment would allow agents to quickly adapt to changing patterns.

“I see the future of technology, based upon what we are seeing in Tucson, is greater integration,” Leonard said. “You wouldn’t have stand-alone technology solutions, they would all be beamed into a command and control center where one agent or a small team of agents could monitor a large geographic area of the border.”

And Leonard believes that this technology can also be adapted to better safeguard agents through what is termed “blue force tracking,” where agents and their vehicles would have a device that would allow the command center to know where they are at all times, and would help agents know where other agents are in the area.

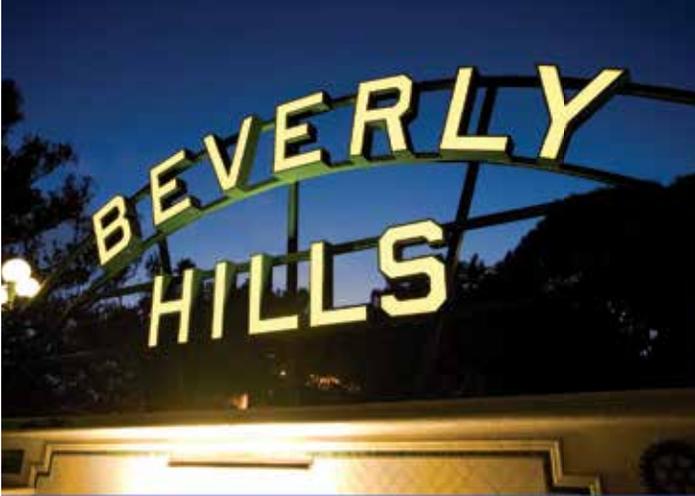
“Besides great agent safety, I believe this would allow us to become much more efficient, much more effective in vectoring in agents to our targets of interest,” Leonard said.

And deeper into the future, Leonard said, he hopes that facial recognition technology can be adapted for border use to allow faster determination of threat levels. Knowing an individual in a remote area is a landowner can save time, but more critical would be to make an early determination that the camera is seeing a known smuggler with a violent criminal record. This would help determine how best to respond and better safeguard agents.

“Our success continues to be determined by the brave and resourceful actions of our agents,” Leonard said. “But the better tools and the more information we give them, the more successful they will be and the safer our communities will be.”



Surveillance technology scans the entire region west of Nogales, Arizona, along fencing or in more mountainous areas where barriers are impractical.



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The Easy Way to the USA





CBP MAKES ITS MARK

Agency proves its prowess, from archery to pistols, during World Police & Fire Games

By Paul Koscak

For 10 days this summer, police, firefighters and other first responders got an opportunity to clash in friendly competition in sports as diverse as bowling, golf, angling, badminton and stair climbing – or as traditional as martial arts, shooting and weightlifting.

More than 60 different events drew approximately 10,000 athletes from 68 nations to a sports extravaganza that rivals the Summer Olympics.

The World Police & Fire Games is held every two years. Previous venues were Dubai, Vancouver and Dublin. This year, the event took place in locations throughout Fairfax and Prince William Counties in Northern Virginia. The games move to Montreal in 2017.

With scores of participants, U.S. Customs and Border Protection played no small role in the big contest that lasted from June 25 to July 5.



An exuberant Matt Phelps sets a 2015 World Police & Fire Games bench press world record. The Bonners Ferry, Idaho, Border Patrol agent reached his goal and his dream, lifting a remarkable 551 pounds. Photo by James Tourtellotte



CBP Officer Juan “Pico” Traversone from Miami International Airport riding his customized cruiser during the 2015 World Police & Fire Games mountain bike event. Photo by Chip Filiault

OVER THE HILLS AND THROUGH THE DIRT

In the woods, it’s you and your bike against the trees, ruts, roots, rocks and ravines. Staying clear of those potential bone breakers is what mountain bikers do best, said Juan “Pico” Traversone, who traveled from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to face the Virginia wilderness.

For one day, Fountainhead Regional Park in Fairfax Station – usually a tranquil reserve – buzzed with activity. Music blared from a portable public address system, interrupted every few minutes as an announcer recognized a rider swooping past the finish line, a roped-off grassy patch. Large red numbers on a digital scoreboard mounted next to the final crossing displayed the time.

Mingling mountain bikers from the Brasilia City Police, Los Angeles Fire Department, Toronto Fire Services, Royal Malaysian Police Service, the Texas State Parks and Wildlife Service and many more

locations, gave the park an Olympic feel. CBP Officer Traversone, 43, who works at Miami International Airport, competed against 29 other mountain bikers in the 40-44 age division.

“I’m the old man on the team,” he said.

Divisions were staggered in five-year increments starting at age 20. Traversone placed 15th, completing a heart-pounding two laps along the twisting trail in an hour and 38 minutes. That’s more than 12 miles of high-octane pedaling and split-second turns.

“The idea is to travel as fast as you can through the woods, zigzagging through the trees without hitting anything,” he said.

But the hills hit him like a brick wall. “There’s nothing in Florida to prepare you for Virginia,” he said. “The hills here killed me.”

Hogan, who grew up in Fairfax and has been with CBP for three years, also competes in weightlifting events. His record is 335 pounds for the bench press and 540 pounds for the deadlift.

Rose also participates in the CBP honor guard and is an emergency medical technician. She completed a couple of marathons during her 10 years of running, but especially enthuses in an event known as “Go Ruck.” Typically, it involves a group of hikers who trek 30 miles with heavy backpacks, mostly at night. On the go for up to 14 hours throughout the night and into the morning hours, the grueling event takes participants through parks and urban environments.

Lukeville Border Patrol Agent James Williams also excelled in the San Diego games, capturing a gold medal by scoring first place in 100- and 200-meter sprints. He competed in the same events at the 2015 games, and while he didn’t place in the top three, Williams was still pleased with his results.

He should be. Of the 28 runners, Williams placed fifth in both events. However, many of those

contestants trained for years, some even had coaches. None of those resources were available to the Lukeville Three, and while they worked out regularly, they were only able to commit to the Fairfax games just 10 days before the event.

Williams, 41, competed in the 40-44 age division and had to excel in several qualifying heats before running in the finals.

Staying in shape in Lukeville takes determination. There are no gyms in the hamlet and the nearest municipal area is 40 miles away. “You have to find ways to workout, even on the street,” said Williams, a six-year CBP veteran.

Williams also has been doing quite a mental work out. He holds a bachelor’s degree in social science, a master’s degree in administrative justice and is working on his dissertation for a doctorate in public policy with a concentration in criminal justice.



Open water competitors making waves on Lake Audubon in Reston, Virginia. Photo by Jim Tourtellotte

PART CHAMPION, MAYBE PART FISH

Life would be empty for Jim Vaughan without a pool. At an early age growing up in Washington, D.C., he grew fond of the water. After all, his mother was a swimming coach at George Washington University.

“My parents were into swimming big time,” he recalled.



Swimmer Jim Vaughan, a retired Border Patrol agent, earned several medals at the 2015 World Police & Fire Games. The 68-year-old competed in two previous world games and plans to swim in the 2017 games in Montreal. Photo by Doug Shaw

So is Vaughan. In fact, many years later, he was rehired as the survival swim instructor at the Border Patrol Academy for a five-year term after retiring from the Border Patrol in 2002.

Now, Vaughan spends his time in the pool doing arduous 3,000-yard workouts often four times per week. He covers that distance in a brisk hour and 15 minutes.

“It’s been a lifestyle for me all my life,” said Vaughan, who now lives in two places he calls home – Denver and Artesia, New Mexico.

When the 6-foot 5-inch, 205-pound swimmer represented the Border Patrol at the World Police & Fire Games, he hit the jackpot – four gold medals and two silver. Vaughan, 68, won the 200-meter freestyle and 50-meter backstroke and competed in two relay team events at the George Mason University pool.

Vaughan is a competition junkie. He represented the Border Patrol at the World Police & Fire Games in Dubai and Vancouver and he plans on competing in 2017 when Montreal hosts the games.

Vaughan also swims in the annual masters games, which he considers even more grueling. “Many of these competitors are former Olympians, people who never quit [training],” he said.

The masters events brought Vaughan to several cities over the years. He placed 11th in the nation in the 50-meter freestyle held in Indianapolis in 2012. When he isn’t competing or working out in Denver’s rarified elevation, Vaughan is on the speaking circuit, pitching leadership. “I’ll speak to any size group,” he said without hesitation, “I’ve been in front of 200 people.” He speaks to schools and volunteer organizations, drawing on his Border Patrol experience and his time in the Marine Corps, where he served during the Vietnam era as both an enlisted Marine and officer.

The aggressive Russian and Australian swimmers stood out the most during this year’s competition. “They were tough,” said Vaughan.

SOME COMPETITORS HAVE MORE THAN TWO LEGS

Take Basco and Billy. Basco is a Dutch shepherd who works with Agent Cruz Esquivel and Billy is a Belgian Malinois who works with Agent Noe Bazan. Bazan and Esquivel are members of the Border Patrol's Tactical Unit, or BORTAC, and dogs play an important role in mitigating the violent situations BORTAC units commonly face.

Both agents are also Border Patrol K-9 handlers who spend a lot of time with their four-footed companions.

How much time? Well, before a dog can work in the field — or have a shot at the service dog competition for that matter — the animal and handler work together through a 12-week behavior course at the Border Patrol's canine center in El Paso, Texas. The training continues one day per week throughout the dog's career, which can last up to seven years, according to Esquivel.

"We even take the dog home to bond with them," he said. "Between work and home, we spend more time with the dogs than our families."

But when they entered the police service dogs event all that investment of time and training paid off. The two agents brought home a combined 10 medals.

At Lake Fairfax Park, canine handlers competed their dogs in four categories: obedience, agility,

handler protection and search. For the spectators, the competition went a long way in retiring some of the perceptions and myths surrounding police service dogs. The event proved dogs can do far more tasks than just charging and attacking. They also save lives.

The dogs navigated an obstacle course to show their agility. The obedience segment involved several command exercises, one that required dogs to stay in an area about 20 yards behind the handler for three minutes without moving.

Still, the competition wouldn't be complete without attack demonstrations. A local canine handler in a protective suit played the bad guy. True to training, Billy exploded forward when unleashed. Within seconds, the dog caught up with the fleeing criminal, latching on to an arm. That made it easy for his handler, Bazan, to catch up and apprehend the subject.

Bazan and his dog Billy — the youngest dog in the competition — won a gold medal in the protection exercise.

"Most of the dogs acquired by the Border Patrol are purchased from European breeding centers," said Bazan. Each breed has its advantages. For instance, the Dutch shepherd is noted for its endurance and obedience while the German shepherd is better suited for detection. The centers not only produce dogs with stable character and temperament, but with an ability to be aggressive when necessary, the "fight drive" as Bazan described it.



Border Patrol Agent Cruz Esquivel gives commands to Basco during pretrial runs in the 2015 World Police & Fire Games police service dog competition. Handlers demonstrated their dogs' skills in obedience, agility, handler protection and search. Photo courtesy World Police & Fire Games



Michael Pullman, a CBP supervisory air interdiction agent, fires his Beretta shotgun in the trap shooting contest at the 2015 World Police & Fire Games, Centreville, Virginia. Photo by James Tourtellotte

FROM SHOT-PUT TO SHOTS

Jacob Frey was between sets of bench presses, trying to prove he was TCA – Toughest Competitor Alive. That swaggering, somewhat ominous title stood out among the constellation of other World Games events. If it seemed a little intimidating, it really had the opposite effect – contestants packed the gym at Westfield High School in Chantilly.

TCA challenged even the toughest competitors. It was really several events in one: a 5K run, shot-put, 100-meter dash, 100-meter swim, rope climb, pullups, bench press and an obstacle course.

Frey knew all those events would make for a long day, so he arrived the night before from Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, to be ready and rested for the 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. TCA event.

During the bench press, Frey said he could request a certain weight and then attempt to lift it. Each weight

station was surrounded by judges with clipboards who sat on folding chairs and documented each lift. Frey, a supervisory Border Patrol agent assigned to the Firearms Training Branch, finished ninth in the TCA, “slightly better than I expected,” he said. “Not great, but not terrible.”

Frey switched gears from power to precision, entering the Police-Action Pistol event. He was one of five CBP shooters who took up the challenge, firing pistols at a variety of targets – some moving, some stationary. Contestants moved through four courses with up to 20 targets.

Timing and accuracy were critical and it took from 40 seconds to a minute to get through each course, he explained “You had to keep moving from target to target and keep shooting,” he said. “Timing was key. I was using my duty gear, while most competitors had specialized guns and equipment.”

Frey placed 59th out of 130 shooters.



The CBP-ICE ice hockey team, in dark jerseys, defeated the Department of Homeland Security's team 4-2 in the first round at the 2015 World Police & Fire Games. Ice hockey matches were played throughout the tournament's seven days. Photo by James Tourtellotte



Hector Arredondo, CBP officer from Sumas, Washington, goes for a strike at the 2015 World Police & Fire Games bowling tournament. Photo by James Tourtellotte

CBP's Gallery of Competition



Stephen Eisman, 64, CBP officer and supervisor from Miami, prepares himself mentally to bench press 353 pounds in the 60-64 age division at the 2015 World Police & Fire Games. Photo by James Tourtellotte.



Sighting a winning shot, Border Patrol Agent James Garcia competes in the pocket billiards contest at the 2015 World Police & Fire Games. Photo by James Tourtellotte.

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A CBP Blackhawk provides air security over University of Phoenix Stadium in preparation for Super Bowl XLIX. Photo by Alexander Zamora



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