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Commissioner Kerlikowske Meets with Community Stakeholders

Commissioner Kerlikowske receives a briefing on Automated Passport Control (APC) kiosks.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske recently traveled to Southern California and Chicago where he observed CBP operations and met with community stakeholders.

Commissioner Kerlikowske's four-day trip in Southern California began on April 16, 2014, with operational tours of the Los Angeles/Long Beach Seaport and the Los Angeles International Airport. The Commissioner also participated in stakeholder roundtables where leaders from chambers of commerce, legislative bodies, local organizations, and partners from the south side of the border discussed border security and facilitation topics. Participants both praised recent CBP initiatives and local outreach and offered suggestions for future improvements.

On May 7, 2014, the Commissioner toured CBP operations at the Chicago O'Hare International Airport and the International Mail Facility and attended several meetings with officials and industry leaders in the trade and travel communities from the Chicago region. Discussions highlighted the great progress that CBP has made by working with its partners in the trade and travel communities, in carrying out trade transformation initiatives that simplify and modernize trade processes and improve enforcement of trade laws, and in implementing travel facilitation initiatives such as the Automated Passport Control kiosks that decrease wait times.

"CBP relies on relationships with our local community stakeholders to provide insight and direction for our future needs as an agency," said Commissioner Kerlikowske. "As an agency, CBP is committed to continued engagement with our community stakeholders to facilitate the flow of trade and travel across the border while protecting the country and local communities."

For additional information, please contact the Office of Congressional Affairs.

CBP Conducts International Border Interdiction Training in Budapest

The threats that led to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and its subsequent security initiatives are not faced solely by the United States. Foreign nations around the world are confronted by the challenges presented by international terrorism, transnational crime, and the need to secure their country's borders while promoting economic vitality through trade and travel. Sharing expertise and experience to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of border operations is essential to addressing worldwide challenges and threats. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Office of International Affairs (INA) supports this international effort by developing and implementing programs, including training and assistance, to foreign border control agencies.

INA recently conducted an International Border Interdiction Training (IBIT) at the International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Budapest, Hungary, for 23 experienced law enforcement personnel from Bulgaria and Serbia. ILEAs, administered by the U.S. Department of State, help advance U.S. interests through international cooperation while promoting global social, political, and economic stability through combating crime. CBP's IBIT courses share CBP inspectional techniques and methodologies with foreign counterpart law enforcement agencies. During the training, which was held from March 31 to April 4, 2014, CBP instructors provided presentations on numerous aspects of border security, including commercial and passenger vehicle search techniques, behavior analysis, document analysis, passenger admission and selectivity, human trafficking, and explosives.

Course participants were instructed on the use of search tools, such as the Fiber Optic Scope, Buster, Undercarriage Mirror and the Laser Range Finder, and practiced using them. Using the appropriate tools and techniques, participants executed simulated vehicle searches to locate and remove concealed bundles of mock narcotics, several plastic firearms and currency. A second training scenario simulated the processing of a personal vehicle crossing the international border while the passenger was carrying a concealed weapon.

In 2013, CBP conducted 141 courses in 58 foreign countries providing law enforcement personnel with the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out the effective inspection, detection, and interdiction of terrorists, contraband, and other threats to public safety and national security. CBP is committed to working with our foreign counterparts and partners to share best practices and enhance all nations' abilities to grapple with the complexities of border management in today's global environment.

For additional information, please contact the Office of Congressional Affairs.

U.S. and Uruguay Sign Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement

Commissioner Kerlikowske and Minister Almagro sign a CMAA on May 14.

On May 14, 2014, the United States signed a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement (CMAA) with Uruguay marking a significant milestone in collaboration between the two countries. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske signed the agreement on behalf of CBP and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sr. Luis Almagro signed the agreement on behalf of Uruguay. The bilateral agreement is a valuable tool for each country's respective customs administrations to prevent, repress, and investigate customs offenses.

"Customs authorities around the globe are securing nations and communities against the threat of terrorism and transnational crime while facilitating legitimate commerce," said Commissioner Kerlikowske. "This agreement strengthens our nations' resilience against threats by expanding cooperation and information sharing with our international partners."

With this new agreement signed, CBP and ICE now have 69 CMAAs with other customs administrations across the world. CMAAs provide the legal framework for the exchange of information and evidence to assist countries in the prevention, detection, and investigation of customs offenses and crimes associated with goods crossing international borders, including duty evasion, trafficking, proliferation, money laundering, and terrorism-related activities. CMAAs also serve as foundational documents for subsequent information sharing arrangements, including mutual recognition arrangements on authorized economic operator programs.

For additional information, please contact the Office of Congressional Affairs.

U.S. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Travel Card Program

On May 13, 2014, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) published an Interim Final Rule in the Federal Register to establish the U.S. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Business Travel Card (ABTC) Program.

The U.S. ABTC Program is a voluntary program to facilitate travel for U.S. citizens engaged in verified business in the APEC region and U.S. government officials engaged in APEC business. In order to participate, applicants must also be members of a CBP trusted traveler program such as Global Entry, SENTRI or NEXUS, meaning they will go through or have already undergone a thorough vetting process including a review of all relevant national security and criminal databases prior to enrollment. The U.S. ABTC will enable access to fast-track immigration lanes at participating foreign APEC member airports. The Interim Final Rule will be open for public comment for 30 days.

"Expedited entry benefits that come with the U.S. APEC Business Travel Card will allow U.S. businesses to remain competitive with other APEC member companies conducting business in the region," said CBP Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske.

The ABTC was created through the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Business Travel Cards Act of 2011 and the APEC Business Travel Card Operating Framework. This rule sets forth the eligibility requirements, the application procedures and fee, and the parameters of the program. The ABTC will enable access to fast-track immigration lanes at participating members' airports, which is expected to save card holders an average of 43 minutes. Fully participating APEC members may provide "pre-clearance benefits" to card holders of other fully participating members. Pre-cleared card holders would not need to apply for visas or entry permits each time they travel to other participating APEC members.

APEC is an economic forum whose primary goal is to support sustainable economic growth and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region. APEC is comprised of 21 members, including the United States. APEC's business facilitation goal is to reduce the costs of business transactions and to help importers and exporters in the Asia-Pacific region meet to conduct business more efficiently. Facilitating travel for qualified business people within the APEC region contributes to the business facilitation goal, to free, open trade and investment, and to the U.S. economy.

For additional information, please contact the Office of Congressional Affairs.

CBP Enforcement News

CBP Officers Nab Smuggler with $67K of Methamphetamine

San Luis, AZ – On May 9, 2014, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers arrested a man for attempting to smuggle more than 22 pounds of methamphetamine into the United States. CBP officers had referred the driver for an inspection of his Jeep SUV. A narcotics detection canine alerted officers to 20 packages of crystal methamphetamine in the vehicle's spare tire. The drugs, worth nearly $67,000, and vehicle were seized. The subject was turned over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations.

— Visit the CBP Newsroom for the full story.

Border Patrol Agents Seize More than $63K in Heroin During Bus Inspection

Salton City, CA – On May 8, 2014, El Centro Sector Border Patrol agents assigned to the Indio Station apprehended a female suspected narcotics smuggler at the Highway 86 checkpoint and seized heroin and methamphetamine. Border Patrol agents had referred the intercity bus for secondary inspection where a canine detection team alerted to two carry-on bags. A search of the two bags revealed three packages of heroin wrapped in clear tape. The heroin had a combined weight of approximately seven pounds with an estimated street value of $63,360. The woman, a United States citizen, and narcotics were turned over to the Drug Enforcement Administration for further investigation.

— Visit the CBP Newsroom for the full story.