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Publisher, Zhi Hamby-Nye

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Take care,

Zhi Hamby-Nye, Editor

Henry Ziegler, Associate Editor

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Issues covered in the CABLE Gram include: Homeland Defense, Homeland Security, Terrorism, Federal Law Enforcement, First Responders, Money Laundering, Identity Theft, NBC Weapons, Cybercrimes, Smuggling, Narco Trafficking, Hazardous Materials and other related topics.

We search the topics and Websites that you request, so it is important for you to provide feedback. We are in our infancy and the CABLE Gram will be as useful as you help make it. Please let us know the topics and keywords that will assist you in your professional endeavors. Send all comments and suggestions to zhi@cablegram.org – please type CABLE Gram in the subject line.

Please forward the CABLE Gram to all people you feel will find it useful!

FEDERAL

1. Better terror screening needed (UPI, 3 May 2006)

WASHINGTON - The U.S. government needs to do more to ensure that immigration officials have the information they need to weed out potential terrorists trying to get into the country, say the nation's top terror hunters. The U.S. National Counter-Terrorism Center Tuesday issued the unclassified version of its National Strategy to Combat Terrorist Travel. The strategy, mandated by the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act, was first published in classified form in February. The unclassified version outlines and assesses key inter-agency policy initiatives designed to stop suspected terrorists getting into the United States, and to make it harder for them to travel internationally. It recommends increased information sharing about potential or suspected terrorists within the government -- and with foreign allies.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.wpherald.com/storyview.php?StoryID=20060503-115526-6074r>

2. Report: Private sector's out of loop on homeland security capabilities (The Executive, 4 May 2006)

The nonpartisan Council on Foreign Relations released a report yesterday that found that the federal government has failed to mobilize the private sector on homeland security. The report, written by America is Vulnerable author Stephen E. Flynn and the director of

the Homeland Security Center at the Reform Institute, Daniel B. Prieto, says that “the federal government is not doing enough to harness the capabilities, assets and goodwill of the private sector to bolster our nation state of preparedness.” Flynn and Prieto find the Bush administration’s conclusion in the 2002 National Strategy for Homeland Security that “the government should only address those activities that the market does not adequately provide” to be flawed. “The White House and Congress wrongly presume that market mechanisms on their own will provide sufficient incentives to provide the necessary level of security,” the report says. “Security and safety are public goods whose provision is a core responsibility of government at all levels.” The report, titled “Neglected Defense,” finds that the reorganization of the federal government since Sept. 11 has made communication between the public and private sector more difficult and that the private sector has not been effectively integrated into response and recovery planning, as shown by the response to Hurricane Katrina.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?O2102301D>

3. Pentagon not ready for next disaster, Clarion-Ledger, 4 May 2006)

WASHINGTON - With hurricane season less than a month away, Pentagon officials said some of the problems the National Guard and reserves faced in responding to Hurricane Katrina have yet to be fixed. The Commission on the National Guard and Reserves heard testimony from top military officers Wednesday who said the Guard has taken steps to address some of its shortcomings. But when asked if the Pentagon is ready for the next major disaster, Paul McHale, assistant secretary of defense for Homeland Defense, said, "No, but we're getting there." An inability to communicate with state emergency responders and active duty troops prompted Guard officials to buy \$800 million in new communication equipment, said Army Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, head of the National Guard Bureau. He also said the Guard has increased training and disaster planning with state officials.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.clarionledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060504/NEWS/605040383>

4. Federal agency releases first strategy for blocking terrorists' travel (Canadian Press, 2 May 2006)

The U.S. government has drawn up its first strategy aimed at limiting terrorists' ability to travel, though acknowledging the United States could be years away from successfully clamping down on the threat. At Congress' request, the National Counterterrorism Center assembled the 60-page document, released Tuesday, to lay out programs aimed at preventing terrorists from travelling in the United States. Many of the programs have become part of all travellers' routines since the 19 hijackers came into the country to launch the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks: watch lists, airport screening and enhanced passport requirements. Others are less visible, such as newly formed terrorism task forces.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?A5206201D>

5. US won't ease security rules for 'registered traveler' plan (Boston Globe, 2 May 2006)

The Transportation Security Administration won't back off from strict security standards for "registered traveler" programs, even though its hard line is causing several airports -- including Logan -- to reconsider offering the service. The TSA fears the program, set to start in June, could be infiltrated by "home-grown" terrorists like last summer's London subway and bus suicide bombers, all Muslim Britons of Pakistani origin who had no criminal records or other issues that background checks would have flagged.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?V2BC62F0D>

6. TSA Takes 10 Hours to Discover Its Test Image Caused a Bomb Scare (ABC News, 5 May 2006)

At 1:37 p.m. last Wednesday, an alert Transportation Safety Agency screener at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport spotted what looked like a bomb - see the ABC exclusive X-Ray image - and pressed his alarm. That was just about the last thing the TSA did right in terms of identifying the image. It was not until after 10:30 that night, more than 10 hours later, that the federal agency discovered that image was a test image designed to check the alertness of screeners, the TSA confirmed. The screener was alert. The software was not, and it never alerted authorities to the fact that it was a test image. In the interim, the "serious software glitch" caused a massive bomb scare and a two-hour security clampdown, during which cops and federal employees hunted for the suspect and the carry-on luggage - neither of which could be found. It also cost Delta more than \$1.3 million in business losses at the nation's busiest airport, according to a letter Delta wrote to TSA.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/story?id=1923077&page=1>

7. DHS urged to approve standards for private airport screeners (GovExec.com, 2 May 2006)

The Transportation Security Administration has not completed performance standards for its private screeners, the Government Accountability Office said in a report issued Monday. Only after the agency establishes criteria by which the Homeland Security Department can judge screeners will it be possible to hold individual airports responsible for negligence by a contractor, GAO said. The Homeland Security Department shares some of the burden for not having completed the criteria, the report (GAO-06-166) stated. As part of its Screening Partnership Program, which allows airports to apply to use private screeners in place of federal ones, TSA developed performance goals for private screeners in the areas of security, customer service, management and cost. But DHS still must approve the draft, GAO said.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=33972&dcn=e_hsw

8. Panel OKs test program for 100 percent cargo scanning (By Chris Strohm, CongressDaily, 3 May 2006)

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee approved a major maritime security bill Tuesday that would require the Homeland Security Department to take steps toward scanning all cargo containers at foreign ports before they are shipped to the United States. While marking up the measure, the committee approved an amendment

by Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., that would require Homeland Security to set up test programs at three foreign ports within a year through which all cargo containers will be given a radiation and image scan before being loaded on ships bound for the United States. After analyzing results from the test programs, Homeland Security would be required to implement a program for scanning all U.S.-bound cargo at every foreign port "as soon as practicable and possible."

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=33982&dcn=e_gvet

9. DHS Implements Immediate Measures to Secure Access to Ports (Department of Homeland Security, 4 May 2006)

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Michael Chertoff announced today that the department is taking significant steps to enhance security by checking the backgrounds of port workers. The department will begin conducting name-based background checks on nearly 400,000 port workers within the United States. These checks will be an initial measure as the department expedites the rollout of a comprehensive nationwide biometric-based Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) in 2006. "It is fundamental that individuals who pose a security threat do not gain access to our nation's ports," said Secretary Chertoff. "The name-based checks will provide an immediate security boost while we simultaneously complete the work to implement a secure national transportation worker credential." The preliminary name checks will be completed by the summer of 2006 and will initially be required for longshoremen and maritime employees of facility owners and operators. Ultimately, all individuals will require a TWIC in order to be eligible for unescorted access to secure areas.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.emilitary.org/article.php?aid=6395>

10. Industry clout eases nuke rules - A federal watchdog agency says NRC staff urged tighter security against terrorism, but industry reps said it was too expensive (The Independent Weekly, 3 May 2006)

Concern over corporate profits appears to have trumped public safety in the crafting of a new rule regulating security at the nation's commercial nuclear power plants. So warns the Government Accountability Office, an independent federal agency that conducts audits for Congress. In a report released last month, the GAO found that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission ignored the advice of its professional staff and scaled back recommended security upgrade requirements for commercial nuclear plants--and it did so after inappropriately consulting with nuclear industry leaders during the decision-making process. The GAO's revelations come as debt-ridden Progress Energy remains under NRC and state investigation for security problems at its Shearon Harris nuclear plant near Raleigh.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A31234>

11. House attempt at bill revamping FEMA stalls (GovExec.com, 4 May 2006)

The House Homeland Security Committee abruptly called off a Wednesday afternoon briefing at which the panel was expected to announce a bipartisan consensus on how to best restructure the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Committee member Rep. Dave Reichert, R-Wash., said directions to cancel the briefing came "from Democratic leadership," and the move caught him off-guard. A bill to overhaul FEMA is "just about written and ready to be dropped," Reichert said. "I'm told [there] was 100 percent agreement" among parties involved in crafting the bill.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=33987&dcn=e_gvet

12. Legislators hone in on FBI weaknesses (By Brittany R. Ballenstedt, National Journal's Technology Daily, 3 May 2006)

The FBI came under fire at a Tuesday hearing for some of its approaches to combating terrorism while attempting to maintain Americans' civil liberties and for shoddy progress on upgrading its information technology infrastructure. Senate Judiciary Committee top Democrat Patrick Leahy of Vermont emphasized the FBI's participation in domestic spying at the expense of the privacy and civil liberties of U.S. citizens. A recent report by Justice Department Inspector General Glenn Fine revealed that several FBI agents tapped the wrong telephones, accessed the wrong e-mails or continued to listen to conversations a year after warrants had expired. "All of this should concern all who value privacy rights and the free exchange of ideas in our society," Leahy said.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=33981&dcn=e_gvet

13. Flu plan requires rewriting of federal telework guidance (GovExec.com, 4 May 2006)

The White House plan released Wednesday for responding to a possible influenza pandemic requires the Office of Personnel Management to update its telework guidance to provide instructions for alternative workplace options during an outbreak. Specifically, the plan calls for an OPM telework guide and two courses, one for managers and the other for employees, to be updated within three months. Within the same time frame, the personnel agency would need to provide guidance on continuity of operations planning and human capital management. The 234-page "National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan," which focuses on urging state and local government entities to make preparations, also requires the Homeland Security Department to provide within six months guidance on pandemic influenza continuity of operations planning.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=33986&dcn=e_gvet

14. Smuggling a threat to carry bird flu to US, specialist says (AP, 3 May 2006)

SINGAPORE - A top bird flu specialist predicted yesterday that the H5N1 virus will not reach the United States this year via migratory birds, and warned bird smuggling poses a bigger threat for transmitting the deadly disease. Robert G. Webster, a virologist at the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, said the virus will eventually arrive in the United States, possibly carried by infected birds illegally brought into the country. "While wildlife people in the United States are watching for the appearance of this virus, I would

suspect that it may not come this year," he said, adding it has been rare for bird flu viruses to reach the Americas from Europe. "If it doesn't come this year, don't relax, because it will eventually come," said Webster, in Singapore for a two-day conference that is expected to draw leading bird flu experts.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?E6DC31F0D>

15. Moussaoui Given Life Term by Jury Over Link to 9/11 (New York Times, 4 May 2006)

ALEXANDRIA, Va. May 3 - A federal jury rejected the death penalty for [Zacarias Moussaoui](#) on Wednesday, with some jurors concluding that he played only a minor role in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The verdict, calling for life in prison, seemed to surprise most people in the courtroom, notably Justice Department prosecutors who had relentlessly urged the jurors that Mr. Moussaoui should be executed for his role in the attacks.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?X4EC21F0D>

16. Students eager for federal jobs, unsure how to get them (GovExec.com, 3 May 2006)

There is a high level of interest in federal jobs among college students, but they don't know enough about specific opportunities and agencies to pursue them, a new study has found. Forty-two percent of college juniors and seniors surveyed by the Partnership for Public Service, a nonprofit organization devoted to attracting young people to government service, said they were extremely or very interested in working for the federal government. Interest in federal service was nearly as high as that for large private companies (49 percent) and small private companies (45 percent). And government work edged out nonprofit jobs (40 percent), arguably the sector in the most direct competition for employees.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=33976&dcn=e_gvet

17. Ireland: Charities 'launder dirty money' (BBC, 4 May 2006)

Organised criminals in Northern Ireland with links to paramilitaries are using charities to launder the proceeds of crime, MPs have been warned. The evidence was put before a meeting of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee in Westminster on Wednesday. DUP MP Gregory Campbell, a committee member, said charity regulations needed to be tightened. The government intends to do so, with the establishment of a Charity Commission for Northern Ireland. Mr Campbell said committee members took time to question officials at Wednesday's meeting about how much more tightly controlled the system would be in the future.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/4971492.stm

STATE AND LOCAL NEWS

18. AL: Man charged in bogus CIA scam (Mobile Register, 03 May 2006)

According to the indictment, White tricked Sondra Maniatis of Mobile into giving him \$39,000. Part of the money was purportedly for a special investment opportunity open only to CIA agents, authorities said. The rest was supposed to be a temporary payment to secure a scholarship at the American University of Paris for Maniatis' daughter, who was not named in the indictment. Assistant U.S. Attorney Maria Murphy said law enforcement investigators have cases involving the impersonation of government agents from time to time, although, she added, White is accused of defrauding his victim of a relatively high amount of money. "This one is unusual because of the amount of fraud alleged," she said. Lt. John Murphy, a spokesman with the Baldwin County Sheriff's Office, said investigators were preparing separate state charges against White stemming from the joint probe with the FBI.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?I29D52F0D>

19. AZ: illegal aliens challenging human smuggling charges (KVOA, 4 May 2006)

Lawyers for nearly 50 illegal immigrants charged with conspiracy to commit human smuggling have filed motions to have the charges dismissed. A Los Angeles attorney brought into the case last week by the Mexican Consul General's Office in Phoenix will file another motion claiming Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas is violating state and federal law and using the conspiracy charges to control illegal immigration, which is the federal government's job. Thomas and Sheriff Joe Arpaio have redoubled efforts to arrest illegal immigrants and charge them with violating the Arizona human trafficking law.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://kvoa.com/Global/story.asp?S=4859401&nav=HMO6HMaY>

20. CA: Mexican Mafia Members Arrested for Murder Conspiracy in L.A. (Jim Kouri, 4 May 2006)

A California task force investigation into a Pomona area street gang following the murder of a California Highway Patrol Officer two years ago resulted today in conspiracy to commit murder charges filed against four men accused in an alleged Mexican Mafia contract murder. The targeted victim survived last summer's planned killing, in large part due to intervention by officers involved in the undercover investigation, authorities said.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.commonvoice.com/article.asp?colid=4795>

21. CA: Ten face charges of transporting hazardous materials (Signonsandiego News Services, 4 May 2006)

RIVERSIDE – Arraignments are scheduled for Thursday and Friday for a Temecula woman and nine others accused of illegally transporting hazardous waste. Ten people are charged with illegal hazardous materials transportation. Two are also charged with child endangerment for allegedly bringing minors on the trips, according to court records. The arrests followed a two-day sting operation by the Riverside County District Attorney's Office, the county's Department of Environmental Health and the Riverside Fire Department.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/riverside/20060504-0245-trash.html>

22. FL: Boat captain indicted on smuggling charges (AP, 2 May 2006)

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. - A Bahamian boat captain was indicted Tuesday on federal charges stemming from an alleged attempt to smuggle people into the United States. Prosecutors say George Bridell Rolle, 26, used a 26-foot speedboat in an attempt to smuggle a group of Haitians, Jamaicans and Bahamians from the Bahamas to the United States on April 21. The boat capsized about 25 miles off Fort Lauderdale and was spotted by a private vessel with five people clinging to the overturned hull. Later, the body of Rolnique Metayer, 35, of Haiti was found floating nearby. Yves Jean, 40, of Haiti is missing and presumed dead, along with a 42-year-old man from Jamaica whom officials have identified only as John.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/1110AP_BRF_Human_Smuggling.html

23. KY: Leaking CW Rocket Found at Blue Grass Depot (Global Security Newswire, 3 May 2006)

Workers at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Kentucky on Monday located an M55 rocket that had been leaking sarin nerve agent vapor since March, the *Richmond Register* reported (see [GSN](#), March 29). Depot personnel began their search after detecting the leak on March 13. "We knew it was a very small leak, but in order to safeguard the community, we persevered," said James Rooney, civilian executive assistant at Blue Grass Chemical Activity. "The persistence paid off." The rocket was placed in a leak-proof container and moved to a storage igloo used to house other leaking munitions.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://actnow.saferworld.org/ctt.asp?u=4081520&l=122952>

24. LA: 256th Infantry Brigade Changes (KLFY, 3 May 2006)

Some big changes lie ahead for members of the 256th Infantry Brigade. Its new commander, Colonel Ronnie Johnson, is playing an active role in converting the 256th to a somewhat smaller brigade combat team. While working on that transition, the new commander is getting soldiers ready to respond this hurricane season. In order to better fit forces for whatever missions the United States Army may have in the future, such as homeland defense and war fight, Colonel Ronnie Johnson says the 256th Infantry Brigade must convert into smaller units combat arms units.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.klfy.com/Global/story.asp?S=4856005>

25. MD: TSA, state expand canine security program for mass transit (Baltimore Business Journal, 1 May 2006)

Three dogs trained to sniff for explosives are patrolling Maryland transit buses and trains as part of expanded national security efforts to protect mass transit lines, the [Transportation Security Administration](#) said Wednesday. Officers from the [Maryland Transit Administration](#) and [Maryland Transportation Authority](#) and three German shepherds recently began patrolling MTA buses and MARC and light rail trains, officials

said Wednesday. The officers participated in a 10-week training session in San Antonio, Texas, to learn how to handle the explosive-detection canines. TSA offered and funded the program to train officers in 10 states. The federal agency said it will partially reimburse the participating state governments for costs, including salaries, overtime, dog food and veterinary expenses associated with the new canine units.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://baltimore.bizjournals.com/baltimore/stories/2006/05/01/daily25.html?jst=b_in_hl

26. MN: Identity theft - A concern some in county have with illegal immigrants (St. James Plaindealer, 4 May 2006)

With talk and demonstrations about immigration prevalent in the nation and close to home in St. James, one major topic that surfaces is identity theft and its relation to illegal immigrants. Assistant Chief of St. James Police, Rick Eisfeld, said one of the biggest issues he's seen in regard to illegal immigrants in St. James is identity theft. "If those workers were documented they wouldn't have to steal someone's social security card," he said.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.stjamesnews.com/articles/2006/05/03/news/news4.txt>

27. MO: Residents Worried by Planned Biodefense Facility (Global Security Newswire, 3 May 2006)

The U.S. Homeland Security Department is looking at 29 sites around the country that could house the planned \$450 million National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, *The Kansas City Star* reported yesterday (see [GSN](#), April 4). The laboratory would replace the Plum Island Animal Disease Center in New York. It would seek cures for animal diseases, including some that could be used in acts of terrorism. One proposed location, farm property owned by the University of Missouri-Columbia, is near an elementary school, a retirement home and residential areas, the *Star* reported. "These facilities are important; this kind of research is important," said Columbia resident Laura Nurnberg. "But to put it next to nursing homes, residential areas and schools is kind of thoughtless." Other residents also expressed concerns about terrorism dangers and property values, while at least one person said she was not worried.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.nti.org/d_newswire/issues/2006_5_3.html#3BDD2C04

28. NJ: Lawmakers consider bills to curb public corruption (AP, 3 May 2006)

TRENTON - New Jersey legislators are trying to demonstrate that they are serious about combatting corruption among public officials and employees, in a state with a reputation stained by numerous high-profile scandals over the years. The Senate Judiciary Committee on Thursday was scheduled to hold a hearing on six bills that would raise the stakes for those convicted of a crime involving their office. "I thought it was appropriate that our first committee meeting this year on legislation deal symbolically and substantively with an issue that has been deviling New Jersey and America for many, many years. And that's public corruption," said committee chairman Sen. John H. Adler, D-Camden.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?S1FC52F0D>

29. SD: Powder delays delivery of mail (Lawrence County Journal, 4 May 2006)

SPEARFISH - A white, powdery substance in the morning mail at the Spearfish Post Office shut down Spearfish mail delivery for three hours Wednesday. The powder, which four hours later was determined to be a non-fat dairy product, was contained in a clear plastic bag and was stuck to the outside of an envelope, according to Spearfish Post Office supervisor Lornie Stalder. A clerk discovered the bag while boxing mail about 8:50 a.m., Stalder said. The crew notified the Postal Inspection Service and halted public access to rental boxes in the building. The Spearfish Police Department was summoned with its narcotics field-testing equipment. Police investigators determined the powder was not a narcotic.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.rapidcityjournal.com/articles/2006/05/04/news/local/news05.txt>

KEY PEOPLE

30. FBI loses more senior officials to private sector (Chicago Tribune, 4 May 2006)

WASHINGTON - Two more senior FBI officials announced plans to quit in recent days, continuing a hemorrhage of top talent to the private sector that has complicated the bureau's efforts to refashion itself as a counterterrorism agency. On Friday the FBI announced the departure of Gary Bald, head of the bureau's newly formed National Security Branch, who is taking a job with a cruise line. On Tuesday, Bank of America announced it had hired the bureau's No. 3 official, Chris Swecker, the acting executive assistant director. Swecker's predecessor, Grant Ashley, left the FBI just three months ago for a security post at a casino. Another senior executive, Louis Reigel, who headed the cyber crime division, retired to join a food service company earlier this year. The turnover is particularly acute among counterterrorism officials, such as Bald, who had been in his job overseeing the FBI's fledgling domestic intelligence operation for only eight months.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/politics/14484285.htm>

31. General Nesbitt Appointed Georgia's Homeland Security Director (The Weekly, 3 May 2006)

SAVANNAH, Ga. – Governor Sonny Perdue announced today the appointment of Major General William T. Nesbitt as Georgia's director of homeland security. Nesbitt will report directly to Governor Perdue and will oversee all homeland security issues in the state of Georgia. "General Terry Nesbitt is a leader who will take Georgia's homeland security office to the next level," said Governor Sonny Perdue. "He brings the most relevant experience possible to the table – the ability to lead multiple civilian, military and law enforcement organizations at a time of heightened alert."

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.theweekly.com/news/2006/May/03/Tery_Nesbitt.html

GANG ACTIVITY

32. Gonzales Grants \$30M To Support Anti-Gang Efforts (AP, 2 May 2006)

DENVER Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales on Tuesday announced \$30 million in grants to support anti-gang efforts through the national Project Safe Neighborhoods program. "Gun crime and gang violence are shattering communities across the nation," Gonzales said at the Justice Department's annual conference on the project, which included an estimated 1,300 law enforcement officers, prosecutors and community leaders. In addition to the anti-gang funding, the government is planning to provide \$10 million in grants to address gun-related crime not necessarily tied to gangs. Gonzales is already targeting six sites -- Los Angeles, Tampa, Fla., Cleveland, Dallas/Ft. Worth, Milwaukee and the "222 Corridor" from Easton to Lancaster in Pennsylvania -- with specific anti-gang funding.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://cbs4denver.com/local/local_story_122221043.html

33. FL: Shoplifting, Now an Organized Crime (First Coast News, 3 May 2006)

JACKSONVILLE, FL - According to police, organized shoplifting is almost like a business. There is a difference between shoplifting and organized retail crime. "This guy or person might go to ten different stores and that's a day," said Andy Stewart, police officer. Authorities say criminals even bring a shopping list telling them what they need to steal and what they can sell it for on the black market. The stolen goods may even go through several levels of organized crime. "One of those levels is the repackaging plants where they clean them up make them look fresh and get it back into the stream of commerce," said Michelle Ahlimer with the Retailers Association. Experts say some items are repackaged and sold again or, more likely sold at flea markets or on the internet.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.firstcoastnews.com/news/spotlight/news-article.aspx?storyid=56985>

34. MD: Federal prosecutors in Md. to hold anti-gang summit (Baltimore Sun, 3 May 2006)

Federal prosecutors in Maryland will host an anti-gang summit June 1, using part of a \$2 million grant received this year to develop and implement programs to combat gangs in conjunction with community leaders. Experts say Baltimore and the surrounding region has long been troubled by loosely affiliated drug gangs, which have been strategically targeted by federal prosecutors. Federal intervention received recent attention when prosecutors brought murder charges in U.S. District Court against 19 suspected members of the Hispanic gang MS-13 in suburban Washington.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?N5302501D>

35. MD: County Officials Work to Nip Gang Activity Early (The View, 3 May 2006)

The Washington, D.C. area has made headlines for an alarming rise in gang activity recently, and local officials are stepping up vigilance toward potential gang threats in Howard County. Although gangs remain a low threat here, police are taking proactive

measures in an attempt to prevent more violent crimes, such as those associated with MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha), a Latino gang responsible for several high-profile assaults and murders in northern Virginia. At an April 19 presentation sponsored by the county's Association of Community Services, police officers explained how to recognize gang symbols to about 60 human service providers, officials and members of the general public at Oakland Mills' Meeting House.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.theviewnewspapers.com/article.asp?article=7514&paper=1&cat=193>

36. NM: Gangsters target Bernalillo County sheriff (KRQE News 13, 4 May 2006)

ALBUQUERQUE - Bernalillo County Sheriff Darren White is watching his back after receiving word a prison gang wants him dead. The death threat stems from the manhunt for alleged cop killer Michael Astorga, a reputed member of the gang during his last stint in prison. Astorga, 29, is now back in jail charged with killing Bernalillo County Deputy James McGrane Jr. during a traffic stop in the East Mountains on March 22. Astorga also is charged in the Nov. 5 killing of Candido Martinez in Albuquerque. The manhunt ended with his arrest in Juarez, Mexico, on April 3. During the manhunt, officers roused members of Astorga's family and gang members who may have sheltered and transported Astorga while he was on the run.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.krqe.com/expanded.asp?ID=14979>

37. TX: Alleged Mexican Mafia member retracts testimony - Man also accused of assaulting Texas Ranger (The Brownsville Herald, 4 May 2006)

An alleged member of the Mexican Mafia retracted his testimony that implicated nine other gang members in a capital murder case and assaulted a Texas Ranger on Tuesday, a Cameron County official said. Alleged Mexican Mafia member Luis Carlos Mares, 31, claims in a hand-written affidavit signed on Friday and notarized on Sunday that he was coerced by Texas Ranger Victor Escalon into implicating nine other gang members in the November 2003 death of Harlingen resident JoAnn Chavez.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.brownsvilleherald.com/ts_more.php?id=70614_0_10_0_C

38. VA: More arrests made in city gang attacks (Daily Progress, 3 May 2006)

Charlottesville police on Tuesday arrested a pair of 17-year-olds in connection with the brutal, gang-related beatings of two teenagers, with a promise that more arrests would be made by week's end. The detaining of the two Charlottesville High School students brings the number of suspects in custody to four. Both teens arrested Tuesday are suspected of taking part in the April 21 beatings of a 15-year-old boy and a 17-year-old boy who, according to police, refused to join the Bloods.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?G5402501D>

39. UK: Parents will be warned of gang links (The Herald, 3 May 2006)

Parents will be summoned to a police station to be warned if their children are becoming embroiled in gang activity involving knives and under-age drinking. A pioneering

scheme targeting those on the fringes of teenage gangs was unveiled yesterday on the south side of Glasgow. Officers will take the names and addresses of all young people they find during anti-gang operations, even if they are not charged. The parents of children whose names crop up more than once will receive "alert" letters, including an invitation to the local police station to discuss the danger of being lured into violent or antisocial behaviour.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.theherald.co.uk/news/61251.html>

40. Italy: 100 businesses offer "mob-free" shopping in Sicily (Bloomberg News Service, 4 May 2006)

More than a hundred businesses in Palermo, Sicily, that refuse to give in to Mafia extortion have teamed up to offer mob-free shopping 15 years after the murder of the local clothing-maker who inspired the effort. The list of shops and companies released Wednesday was compiled by a group of anti-Mafia activists inspired by Libero Grassi, who was gunned down for speaking out against extortion. The group has also put together a list of more than 7,000 consumers who pledge to do their shopping only where the mob doesn't collect its monthly extortion fee.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.app.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060504/BUSINESS/605040379/1003>

NARCO TRAFFICKING

41. AR: Alleged cocaine smugglers face \$1 million bonds (Hope Star, 3 May 2006)

Circuit Judge Duncan Culpepper apparently doesn't want two alleged drug runners to leave Nevada County anytime soon. More often than not, Culpepper is lenient when it comes to setting bonds for local, small-time alleged criminals. Not this week. Early Monday morning, a couple traveling east on Interstate 30 and were traveling 82 mph in a 70 mph zone. Arkansas State Police reports show that the Maryland couple, Tequi Garrison, 39, of La Prata, and Melvin Pearson, 36, of Maryland, as well, were traveling east on I-30 when a state trooper pulled over the vehicle for a "normal" stop.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.hopestar.com/articles/2006/05/03/news/news2.txt>

42. CA: Feds lower boom on Bay Area drug ring (Chronicle, 4 May 2006)

Hundreds of federal agents up and down the state conducted raids Wednesday targeting a San Francisco-based cocaine- and methamphetamine-trafficking operation that was infiltrated by use of wiretaps, authorities said. Indictments against 19 people were unsealed Wednesday after what authorities described as a multiyear investigation that included electronic monitoring of the defendants and their telephones. Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephen Jigger said the defendants had distributed large quantities of methamphetamine and cocaine in the Bay Area and Hawaii. The operation had "direct ties to Mexico," where the drugs allegedly were produced, Jigger said.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/05/04/BAG5HIKCKK1.DTL>

43. CA: Fresno man arrested for allegedly smuggling opium from Laos (AP, 3 May 2006)

SAN FRANCISCO - A Fresno man was arrested on drug smuggling charges at San Francisco International Airport after arriving from Laos with nearly 15 pounds of opium hidden in shampoo bottles, authorities said. Ying Her, 41, was being held without bail Wednesday and faces 20 years in prison if convicted of a charge of importation of a controlled substance, said Virginia Kice, spokeswoman for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Her was arrested Friday after a customs officer discovered a brown substance in anti-dandruff shampoo bottles that Her later admitted was opium, according to an affidavit. Her was scheduled to appear Thursday in San Francisco federal court. Previous hearings were delayed so he could get a Laotian translator.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?H2DE23F0D>

44. FL: \$250,000 bail set for airline worker accused of smuggling cocaine in luggage (South Florida Sun-Sentinel, 4 May 2006)

A federal judge set bail Wednesday at \$250,000 for a former American Airlines employee accused of smuggling suitcases filled with cocaine through Miami International Airport. Federal authorities say Manuel Lorenzo, 50, agreed to intercept two drug-filled suitcases arriving from Haiti and to replace the bags' international tags with domestic ones so inspectors would not closely examine them.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?H2CE54F0D>

45. ID: Recognizing the Gang Problem in Ada Co. (KTRV, 4 May 2006)

Boise, Idaho - Gang activity is increasing in the Treasure Valley, and the Ada County Sheriff's Office is moving into prevention mode. They first want to educate the public about the problem, and then use the public to solve the problem. "There is a growing gang problem here. There is a gang problem here now," said Ada County Sheriff Gary Raney. According to Raney, almost all the of the area's gang activity stems from the need to control the drug trade.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.fox12news.com/Global/story.asp?S=4857421>

46. KS: Illegal immigrant sentenced for transporting cocaine (AP, 3 May 2006)

TOPEKA, Kan. - An illegal immigrant who authorities say was traveling in a car with more than 230 pounds of cocaine has been sentenced to more than nine years in federal prison. Vincente Marquez Padilla, 36, a Mexican citizen, will be deported after serving his sentence, which was handed down Monday, the U.S. attorney's office said. "He was arrested in a car carrying 89 bundles of powder cocaine," said U.S. Attorney Eric Melgren, adding that Padilla is a former Mexican police officer. "He was fully aware of the nature of the cargo and he was participating in the delivery of the drugs."

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.kansas.com/mld/kansas/news/state/14490855.htm>

47. LA: Drug laboratory discovered; three people arrested (Shreveport Times, 4 May 2006)

NATCHITOCHEs - Hazardous materials stored next to a child's cereal box. Red phosphorus found under a child's play station in the kitchen. That's part of what greeted Natchitoches Multijurisdictional Drug Task Force agents when they recently busted a clandestine methamphetamine lab in a Natchitoches residence. The arrests of three people ended months of investigation and surveillance that focused on one man's allegedly involvement in methamphetamine production, according to Natchitoches Sheriff Victor Jones Jr.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?I4502101D>

48. TX: Texas Border Sheriffs See Increase In Smuggling (KFOXTV, 4 May 2006)

Local border sheriffs meeting in south Texas have a better idea of the kind of violence happening along the Mexican border. They say they haven't seen more border incursions, but since forming the Texas Border Sheriffs Coalition, they've collected enough data to start analyzing it. They say what they've found in the last 24 hours surprised them with an increase in human and drug smuggling. Also of significance in this latest round of meetings is that the El Paso Intelligence Center, known for its drug interdiction, is now a partner with the coalition in sharing border intelligence.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.kfoxtv.com/news/9157441/detail.html>

49. UT: Mexican nationals arrested for dealing heroin and cocaine to kids (ABC4, 4 May 2006)

Authorities say the suspects sold the wrong kind of kiddie balloons. Three Mexican nationals were arrested early Wednesday morning by a Salt Lake County sheriffs narcotics team for allegedly selling heroin and cocaine. "We know for a fact they were dealing to young adults and juveniles in the east side," said Sgt. Kevin Matthews of the Salt Lake County sheriffs office. After getting a tip, undercover police went to work. They claim to have purchased small quantities of heroin and cocaine from the suspects.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?N6602601D>

50. Under U.S. Pressure, Mexico President Seeks Review of Drug Law (New York Times, 04 May 2006)

After intense pressure from the United States, President Vicente Fox has asked Congress to reconsider a law it passed last week that would decriminalize the possession of small amounts of drugs as part of a larger effort to crack down on street-level dealing. In a statement issued late Wednesday, Mr. Fox said the law should be changed "to make it absolutely clear that in our country the possession of drugs and their consumption are and continue to be crimes."

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/04/world/americas/04mexico.html>

51. Turkmenistan: Drug, Smuggling Busts in Turkmenistan, Smugglers to be Resettled (nCa, 3 May 2006)

Ashgabat - Law enforcement agency heads told Niyazov Tuesday during a meeting of cabinet of ministers that attempts have been foiled to smuggle narcotics into Turkmenistan. Head of the border services of Turkmenistan said that 34 kilograms of crack, 3 kilograms of heroine and lesser quantities of raw opium (tiryaq) had been recovered during operations. Minister of national security of Turkmenistan informed that a ring of smugglers had been busted who were smuggling automotive lubricants in Uzbekistan. He said that the smugglers who were living near the border areas have been taken into custody. Niyazov asked the smugglers, who belong to the Dashoguz region, to be resettled into some other areas away from the border. "They are not heeding our warnings. They are too well-to-do and are not in need. They have gone too far. So, please, organize their resettlement and report how many of them are resettled," Niyazov said. The president also said the drug situation in his country was improving. Recalling a recent drug seizure in the south of the country, the president said: "Please continue making seizures, because once they [drugs] enter the country they will spoil young people. I think that the spread of drugs inside the country is declining."

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.newscentralasia.com/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=1732>

CYBERTHREAT & THEFT

52. FCC approves Net-wiretapping taxes (c|net, contributed by Rick Forno, 3 May 2006)

WASHINGTON - Broadband providers and Internet phone companies will have to pick up the tab for the cost of building in mandatory wiretap access for police surveillance, federal regulators ruled Wednesday. The Federal Communications Commission voted unanimously to levy what likely will amount to wiretapping taxes on companies, municipalities and universities, saying it would create an incentive for them to keep costs down and that it was necessary to fight the war on terror. Universities have estimated their cost to be about \$7 billion.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://news.com.com/FCC+approves+Net-wiretapping+taxes/2100-1028_3-6067971.html

53. Net censorship spreads worldwide (BBC, 4 May 2006)

Repressive regimes are taking full advantage of the net's ability to censor and stifle reform and debate, reveals a report. Written by the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) pressure group the report highlights the ways governments threaten the freedom of the press. The report has a section dedicated to the internet and the growing roster of nations censoring online life. This censorship is practised on every continent on Earth, said the report.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4973114.stm>

TECHNOLOGY

54. Ten Thousand Satellite Modems For Disaster Recovery Organizations (SPX, 3 May 2006)

Milpitas CA - Globalstar, Inc., a world leader in providing mobile satellite voice and data services to business, and Orbit One Communications, Inc. of Bozeman, Montana announced today the purchase of an additional 10,000 OrbiTRAX simplex satellite tracking devices by various Federal, State and private organizations, who will activate these units in preparation for the 2006 hurricane season. The OrbiTRAX tracking devices are being delivered to support the field logistics requirements of the various public and private organizations, and will allow those customers to track and manage their dispersed assets during and after a hurricane, or any other natural or man made disaster.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?H2EE12F0D>

55. AVID Developing New UAV Concept For Homeland Security (SPX, 4 May 2006)

Blacksburg VA - A potential terrorist slips across the U.S. border under the cover of darkness. Unchallenged, he disappears into the night - or so he thinks. Unknown to this intruder, he's been detected all along - from 20,000 feet. And now, as he rests behind a rock, he's being watched by a 2-foot-wide unmanned aerial vehicle hovering quietly a few feet away. Moments later the suspect is captured by federal agents alerted to his location. Mission completed; the UAV lands nearby, where it is picked up and readied for the next assignment.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?Y14F22F0D>

RESOURCES

56. ParetoLogic Whitepaper Exposes Risk of Electronic Identity Theft Through Unsecured Medical Records (PRWeb, 3 May 2006)

A newly released whitepaper outlines the risks of identity theft and breach of confidentiality associated with Electronic Health Records. Viewed as a gold mine of personal information by spyware distributors, electronic medical records are a prime target for infiltration and violation by spyware and malware.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.prweb.com/releases/2006/5/prweb380624.htm>

OPPORTUNITIES

57. A Really Great Telescope for Sale

If any of you astronomy buffs are looking to upgrade your equipment, a friend has a Meade 7 inch GPS2000 Masutov-Cassergain telescope, for sale, brand new in the box for \$2,500 (original price was \$4,199). If you're interested call Patti at 410-707-5097.

FULL REPORTS

58. U.S. Sealing Off Massive Tunnel Between California and Mexico (By Eric Green, Washington File Staff Writer, 3 May 2006)

Washington - The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has announced it has begun sealing off a massive cross-border tunnel that linked warehouses between Tijuana, Mexico, and Otay Mesa, California, near the city of San Diego.

In a May 2 statement, Homeland Security said the mineshaft-like passageway is one of the largest and most sophisticated tunnels ever uncovered along the U.S.-Mexico border. The tunnel, about 0.8 kilometers long, is considered both a security threat and a safety hazard, which is why the United States is taking steps to seal it permanently.

Homeland Security said a private contractor it hired excavated a small section of the tunnel and poured in a cement plug May 2, closing the passageway where it crosses the international border. The next step in the process is to fill in with concrete the entire tunnel on the U.S. side of the border.

The tunnel first was discovered in January as a result of a long-term, investigation by U.S. authorities. (See [related article](#).)

A task force of U.S. law enforcement agencies is using an array of high-tech equipment and intelligence information to pinpoint the location of underground passageways along the international border between Mexico and the United States. Since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, U.S. authorities have discovered more than 20 cross-border tunnels along the U.S.-Mexico border in California and Arizona.

Michael Unzueta, special agent-in-charge for investigations in San Diego for the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency, said the tunnels pose a threat to national security "whether they are designed to smuggle drugs, people, weapons or other contraband." He added that ICE is committed to working with its law enforcement partners in the United States and elsewhere "to dismantle the tunnels and the criminal organizations behind them." ICE is the investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

To date, one suspect has been arrested in the case related to the Tijuana-Otay Mesa tunnel. Carlos Eugenio Cardenas-Calvillo, who worked at the Otay Mesa warehouse that concealed the tunnel's U.S. entrance, is charged with conspiracy to import a controlled substance.

The Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, launched by Mexico, Canada and the United States in March 2005, aims to provide "smart, secure borders" that aid in cross-border travel while protecting against security threats. More information about the partnership is available from a [fact sheet](#) posted on the White House Web site.

For more information on U.S. policies, see [Mexico](#).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

59. Understanding the Immigration Security Process - Homeland Security fact sheet explains security checks for immigration benefit applicants (Dept. of State, 3 May 2006)

An explanation of the immigration security check system was issued by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services April 25 in response to some applicant frustration about delays in the process.

All applicants for a U.S. immigration benefit are subject to criminal and national security background checks to ensure they are eligible for that benefit. The agency acknowledges a small number of delays, but assures the public they are not based on race, ethnicity, religion or national origin.

For related information, see [Visas, Passports and Immigration](#).

The text of the fact sheet follows:

(begin fact sheet)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Fact Sheet
April 25, 2006

Immigration Security Checks-How and Why the Process Works

Background

All applicants for a U.S. immigration benefit are subject to criminal and national security background checks to ensure they are eligible for that benefit. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Federal agency that oversees immigration benefits, performs checks on every applicant, regardless of ethnicity, national origin or religion.

Since 2002, USCIS has increased the number and scope of relevant background checks, processing millions of security checks without incident. However, in some cases, USCIS customers and immigrant advocates have expressed frustration over delays in processing applications, noting that individual customers have waited a year or longer for the completion of their adjudication pending the outcome of security checks. While the percentage of applicants who find their cases delayed by pending background checks is relatively small, USCIS recognizes that for those affected individuals, the additional delay and uncertainty can cause great anxiety. Although USCIS cannot guarantee the prompt resolution of every case, we can assure the public that applicants are not singled out based on race, ethnicity, religion, or national origin.

USCIS strives to balance the need for timely, fair and accurate service with the need to ensure a high level of integrity in the decision-making process. This fact sheet outlines the framework of the immigration security check process, explaining its necessity, as well as factors contributing to delays in resolving pending cases.

Why USCIS Conducts Security Checks

USCIS conducts security checks for all cases involving a petition or application for an immigration service or benefit. This is done both to enhance national security and ensure the integrity of the immigration process. USCIS is responsible for ensuring that our immigration system is not used as a vehicle to harm our nation or its citizens by screening out people who seek immigration benefits improperly or fraudulently. These security checks have yielded information about applicants involved in violent crimes, sex crimes, crimes against children, drug trafficking and individuals with known links to terrorism. These investigations require time, resources, and patience and USCIS recognizes that the process is slower for some customers than they would like. Because of that, USCIS is working closely with the FBI and other agencies to speed the background check process. However, USCIS will never grant an immigration service or benefit before the required security checks are completed regardless of how long those checks take.

How Immigration Security Checks Work

To ensure that immigration benefits are given only to eligible applicants, USCIS adopted background security check procedures that address a wide range of possible risk factors. Different kinds of applications undergo different levels of scrutiny. USCIS normally uses the following three background check mechanisms but maintains the authority to conduct other background investigations as necessary:

- **The Interagency Border Inspection System (IBIS) Name Check-** IBIS is a multi-agency effort with a central system that combines information from multiple agencies, databases and system interfaces to compile data relating to national security risks, public safety issues and other law enforcement concerns. USCIS can quickly check information from these multiple government agencies to determine if the information in the system affects the adjudication of the case. Results of an IBIS check are usually available immediately. In some cases, information found during an IBIS check will require further investigation. The IBIS check is not deemed completed until all eligibility issues arising from the initial system response are resolved.
- **FBI Fingerprint Check-**FBI fingerprint checks are conducted for many applications. The FBI fingerprint check provides information relating to criminal background within the United States. Generally, the FBI forwards responses to USCIS within 24-48 hours. If there is a record match, the FBI forwards an electronic copy of the criminal history (RAP sheet) to USCIS. At that point, a USCIS adjudicator reviews the information to determine what effect it may have on eligibility for the benefit. Although the vast majority of inquiries yield no record or match, about 10 percent do uncover criminal history (including immigration violations). In cases involving arrests or charges without disposition, USCIS requires the applicant to provide court certified evidence of the disposition. Customers with prior arrests should provide complete information and certified disposition records at the time of filing to avoid adjudication delays or denial

resulting from misrepresentation about criminal history. Even expunged or vacated convictions must be reported for immigration purposes.

- **FBI Name Checks**-FBI name checks are also required for many applications. The FBI name check is totally different from the FBI fingerprint check. The records maintained in the FBI name check process consist of administrative, applicant, criminal, personnel and other files compiled by law enforcement. Initial responses to this check generally take about two weeks. In about 80 percent of the cases, no match is found. Of the remaining 20 percent, most are resolved within six months. Less than one percent of cases subject to an FBI name check remain pending longer than six months. Some of these cases involve complex, highly sensitive information and cannot be resolved quickly. Even after FBI has provided an initial response to USCIS concerning a match, the name check is not complete until full information is obtained and eligibility issues arising from it are resolved.

For most applicants, the process outlined above allows USCIS to quickly determine if there are criminal or security related issues in the applicant's background that affect eligibility for immigration benefits. Most cases proceed forward without incident. However, due to both the sheer volume of security checks USCIS conducts, and the need to ensure that each applicant is thoroughly screened, some delays on individual applications are inevitable. Background checks may still be considered pending when either the FBI or relevant agency has not provided the final response to the background check or when the FBI or agency has provided a response, but the response requires further investigation or review by the agency or USCIS. Resolving pending cases is time-consuming and labor-intensive; some cases legitimately take months or even several years to resolve. Every USCIS District Office performs regular reviews of the pending caseload to determine when cases have cleared and are ready to be decided. USCIS does not share information about the records match or the nature or status of any investigation with applicants or their representatives.

(end fact sheet)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

60. Bush Administration Refines Pandemic Preparedness Plan - 300 government actions outlined; individual responsibility emphasized (By Charlene Porter, Washington File Staff Writer, 3 May 2006)

Washington – The Bush administration unveiled a far-reaching plan May 3, directing federal government agencies to take more than 300 actions to prepare for an outbreak of pandemic influenza.

As Homeland Security Adviser Frances Townsend presented the package to the media at a White House briefing, she emphasized that the occurrence of a highly pathogenic avian influenza virus in nations across Asia, Europe and Africa does not constitute a human pandemic of disease. Nor, she said, can reliable predictions be made about whether a

pandemic is imminent, or when it could occur. Nonetheless, government, businesses, schools, families and individuals need to recognize the possibility and prepare, she said.

“We should understand and prepare for the worst-case scenario,” Townsend said.

The plan demands that federal agencies take some very specific actions, regarding the safety and protection of employees in the event of pandemic. It also requires them to develop a plan for maintaining essential operations at a time when high numbers of employees could be absent due to their own illness or that of a family member. The White House also is ordering government agencies to draw up a communications plan to explain their operations in a time of crisis.

That is the governmental plan, but Townsend said the potential consequences of pandemic illness – potentially millions of people sick -- are so vast that everybody needs to be prepared.

“This means that individual actions are perhaps the most important element of our preparedness and response activities,” Townsend said. The homeland security expert said the plan will rely on individuals exercising some common sense if illness begins to take hold in their towns – avoiding trips to shopping malls or canceling vacations, for instance.

In a federal system, in which the U.S. Constitution reserves certain powers and responsibilities to state and local authorities, the national government is limited in how it can direct other entities to prepare or respond to any event, including pandemic illness. Federal authorities have been reaching out to state and local organizations – public and private – with dozens of meetings to underscore the threat of pandemic and urge the adoption of local preparedness plans.

Those meetings have been held in cities across the country since the overarching national pandemic strategy was first announced in November 2005. (See [related article](#).)

STOPPING A PANDEMIC

The national flu pandemic response plan includes a key international element because the outbreak of disease within the United States likely will depend on whether the animal disease has mutated into a human disease in another country. Townsend said the United States is committed to action wherever that may happen.

“The key elements of an international response effort include, first, agreed epidemiological triggers for international response and containment, the rapid, transparent reporting and sharing of samples, rapid response teams, stockpiles of countermeasures and logistical support for an international response,” she said.

The United States already has committed more than \$330 million to the international effort to contain the disease at the first human outbreak. “Minimizing the opportunities

for the virus to mutate and helping other nations to prepare should a pandemic virus emerge is a global responsibility and is also the first line of defense for the United States,” she said.

President Bush announced the launch of the international partnerships in September 2005 at the United Nations to heighten awareness of the threat and to work to establish resources for international containment. Donor governments have pledged about \$2 billion to that effort so far. (See [related article](#) and [fact sheet](#).)

Questioned about whether the United States would close its borders if human pandemic illness broke out overseas, Townsend said the action probably would be ineffective and impractical, given the substantial movement of people, goods and commerce across U.S. borders every day.

“There's a period of time very early on in a potential pandemic where that may be effective, not in stopping the arrival of the virus, but in buying us time in slowing the spread of the pandemic,” Townsend said. “We look at things like departure screening, on-plane screening and arrival screening.”

Decisions about border screening and restrictions on cross-border travel would be made in consultation with international partners, Townsend said.

The new implementation strategy does not address the distribution of vaccine and anti-viral drugs in the event of disease outbreak, Townsend said, because those are decisions that cannot be made in a hypothetical way.

Reporters questioned Townsend with a number of “what ifs” that she turned aside, and instead pointed to some “remarkable performance and progress” that has been made in the last few months.

“One of the actions in the plan is to expand the Medical Reserve Corps, a community-based program of volunteer health and medical providers, by 20 percent: that meant from 350 to 450 chapters in 2006,” Townsend said. “That objective was placed in the draft plan early in 2006, and the Medical Reserve Corps has already achieved it.”

The Bush administration urged the Congress to earmark \$7 billion for national and international pandemic preparedness plans, but the lawmakers so far have approved just over half that amount. Townsend said the administration will continue to press Congress for increased spending in the current budget cycle and in years to come.

The White House also issued a [fact sheet](#) on the preparedness plan May 3.

For further information, see the [National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Implementation Plan](#) (PDF, 234 pages).

The central source for U.S. government information on pandemic preparedness is pandemicflu.gov.

For ongoing coverage of avian influenza and international efforts to combat it, see [Bird Flu](#).

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