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CABLE Gram Volume 3 Issue 64

28 November 2006 CABLE Gram™

Good Morning All,

In the Current Update:

FEDERAL

1. Nuclear plant info available to public (NBC, 27 Nov 2006)
2. Dems to Tackle Homeland Security Issues (AP, 23 Nov 2006)
3. Emergency preparedness exercises remain an imperfect science (GovExec.com, 27 Nov 2006)
4. 18 Cities, Areas Picked for Crime Study (AP, 22 Nov 2006)
5. Transportation sector lags in joining infrastructure protection effort (GovExec.com, 23 Nov 2006)
6. Cargo jets carry some risks along with shipments (USA Today, 20 Nov 2006)
7. Travelers' ID program on fast track despite Hill concerns (By Chris Strohm, CongressDaily, 22 Nov 2006)
8. US sets \$28 fee to vet travelers for flier program (Reuters, 24 Nov 2006)
9. DHS chief says foreign courts inhibit U.S. security efforts (By Chris Strohm, CongressDaily, 20 Nov 2006)
10. Business groups protest impending U.S. border fees (Globe and Mail, 21 Nov 2006)
11. DHS continues to integrate IT contracting processes (GovExec.com, 20 Nov 2006)

STATE AND LOCAL NEWS

12. CA: Berkeley considering need for nano safety (Sqan Francisco Chronicle, 24 Nov 2006)

13. FL: Florida Man Pleads Guilty To Smuggling Romanians (WFTV, 28 Nov 2006)
14. IA: Drug smuggling leads to more questions on penitentiary's future (AP, 27 Nov 2006)
15. MI: Feds charge man with cash smuggling at Detroit Metro Airport (WLNS, 22 Nov 2006)
16. MN: Group seeks probe after imams removed from plane (AP, 21 Nov 2006)
17. MS: MSU research project would help keep waterways secure (AP, 20 Nov 2006)
18. NJ: Hazmat drill stresses preparation (Record Breeze, 22 Nov 2006)
19. SD: New screening machines will add security, cut time - CT scanners check baggage for explosives (Argus Leader, 28 Nov 2006)
20. TX: Jury resumes deliberations in smuggling deaths retrial (AP, 28 Nov 2006)
21. WA: Medical identity theft becoming a big problem (KXLY, 28 Nov 2006)

GANG ACTIVITY

22. CA: Gang member to be sentenced to 21 years in slaying (Sign On San Diego, 27 Nov 2006)
23. KY: Police Say Gang activity on par with other cities (The Courier-Journal, 27 Nov 2006)
24. PA: Bethlehem Gets Money for Gang Resistance Education (WFMZ, 27 Nov 2006)
25. TN: Police to double number of gang officers (Nashville City Paper, 28 Nov 2006)
26. Canada: Dozens of arrests in Montreal mob crackdown (Globe and Mail, 22 Nov 2006)
27. Italy: More than fifty Mafia members are jailed (Enjoy France, 25 Nov 2006)
28. China breaks more than 1,300 organized crime gangs (Xinhuanet, 24 Nov 2006)

NARCO TRAFFICKING

29. CA: Laborers Warned About Meth Trade Dangers (ABC News, 23 Nov 2006)
30. IN: Heroin use rising in Indy - Popularity of addictive drug could lead to increased thefts (Indianapolis Star, 26 Nov 2006)
31. KY: After 20 years, war on marijuana changes (Lexington Herald-Leader, 25 Nov 2006)
32. NM: Marijuana Smuggling Busts Rise Due To Rain (KFOX-TV, 21 Nov 2006)
33. St. Regis smuggling operation busted up (WWTI, 21 Nov 2006)
34. Canada-based drug traffickers peddling more ecstasy in U.S., says report (CP, 15 Nov 2006)
35. Mexican Drug Gang Runs Newspaper Ads (AP, 23 Nov 2006)
36. Spain: Colombian drug smuggling network broken up (Typically Spanish, 27 Nov 2006)
37. 10 years before Afghan poppy eradication (UPI, 16 Nov 2006)
38. Report: Afghan Officials Aid Traffickers (AP, 28 Nov 2006)
39. Ice gangs smuggling from Asia (Sunday Herald Sun, 26 Nov 2006)

CYBERTHREAT & THEFT

40. Homegrown Terrorists Recruited to Attack America (First Coast News, 21 Nov 2006)
41. Starting out: Online resumes can trigger identity theft (Gannett News Service, 24 Nov 2006)

42. Printer's Error Raises ID Theft Risk for Chicago Retirees (ConsumerAffairs.Com, 27 Nov 2006)
43. Stolen DOT computers lead to laptop theft ring (FCW, 22 Nov 2006)
44. China sentences Web porn king to life in prison (Reuters, 22 Nov 2006)

COUNTERFEIT

45. Counterfeiting Threat to U.S. Currency Low, Report Says - U.S. currency authorities say dollar still a trusted international tender (By Jaroslaw Anders, USINFO Staff Writer, 28 Nov 2006)
46. U.S. and Georgia investigate S. Ossetia counterfeiters (Reuters, 26 Nov 2006)

TECHNOLOGY

47. FBI system to check gun buyers misfires (FCW, 28 Nov 2006)
48. New homeland security buzz: Bomb-sniffing bees (Reuters, 28 Nov 2006)
49. NYPD Installs "Sky Watch" In Harlem Neighborhood (NY1 News, 23 Nov 2006)
50. English Police Road-Test Hand-Held Fingerprint Scanner (Agence France-Presse, 22 Nov 2006)

RESOURCES

51. National Drug Intelligence Center Releases National Drug Threat Assessment 2007 (Dept of Justice, 15 Nov 2006)
52. New Training Programs Will Help Fight Trafficking in Persons - Classes teach to recognize trafficking victims, build partnerships (By Wendy Lubetkin, USINFO Special Correspondent, 28 Nov 2006)

OPPORTUNITIES

53. Pentagon hires students to recruit classmates for civilian jobs (GovExec.com, 27 Nov 2006)
54. Homeland security degree offered (AP, 19 Nov 2006)
55. College courses in homeland security on the rise (GovExec.com, 27 Nov 2006)

EVENTS

56. East Baltimore community forum on pandemic flu planned (The Johns Hopkins University Gazette, 27 Nov 2006)

FULL REPORTS

57. Counterfeit Drugs Seen as Growing Problem - Companies, governments work to combat piracy (By Judy Aita, USINFO Staff Writer, 16 Nov 2006)
58. Homeland Security Dept. Opposes Racial Profiling, Official Says (By Stephen Kaufman, USINFO Staff Writer, 22 Nov 2006)

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.

FEDERAL

1. Nuclear plant info available to public (NBC, 27 Nov 2006)

What if an airplane were to crash into a nuclear plant? How long would it take terrorists to penetrate security barriers outside nuclear facilities? What are the most vulnerable parts of a nuclear plant to attack in order to inflict maximum damage? The answers to all those questions, and many more, are available to the public, as NBC News discovered in a recent hidden-camera investigation. Accessing that very information - along with thousands of other sensitive documents from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) - is as easy as walking into a public library, finding the right files, printing them out and walking out with the documents in hand, no questions asked. Many of the documents we were able to access were among the thousands of files the NRC pulled from its Web site after 9/11, deemed too sensitive to be available to the public. But that same effort to clean out sensitive information, it seems, was never made with NRC's document collections in public libraries across the country.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15922717/>

2. Dems to Tackle Homeland Security Issues (AP, 23 Nov 2006)

WASHINGTON - Better communication systems, improved rail security and more rigorous oversight are high on the list of homeland security issues Democrats plan to examine when they assume control of Congress in January. "You'll see a committee that is not afraid to take on tough issues," Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., the incoming chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, told The Associated Press in an interview. Thompson said he told Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff that he wants to meet with the department's senior leadership more often than in the past, ideally once a month. "Twice a year is not enough," he said. The issue of "interoperability," whether police and emergency communication systems are compatible, is at the top, he said.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/index.php?nid=78&sid=984392>

3. Emergency preparedness exercises remain an imperfect science (GovExec.com, 27 Nov 2006)

It is now an infamous hurricane. Category 3 upon landfall, it ripped through the Gulf Coast region, fulfilling worst fears by hitting low-lying New Orleans. The storm "brought sustained winds of 120 [miles per hour], up to 20 inches of rain in parts of southeast Louisiana and a storm surge that topped levees in the New Orleans area," according to a press release from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. But Hurricane Pam existed only on paper as part of a training exercise conducted by FEMA and local officials in July 2004, a year and one month before Hurricane Katrina. The real-life version of The Big One exposed widespread flaws in the government's ability to respond to disasters, making Hurricane Pam a symbol, in many minds, of the questionable effectiveness of preparedness exercises. The simulation illuminated some lessons later applied with successful results, but as a whole, the system seemed unready, despite the rehearsal.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=35549&dcn=e_gvet

4. 18 Cities, Areas Picked for Crime Study (AP, 22 Nov 2006)

WASHINGTON - The government selected 18 cities and sprawling suburban regions Wednesday to study for clues on why homicides and other violent crimes are on the rise nationally. The Justice Department study comes after FBI data in September showed violent criminal activity _ including rape, murder, robbery and aggravated assault _ rising by 2.2 percent from last year. That marked the first increase in violent crimes since 2001. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales announced the study at a Boston meeting last month with police chiefs and other law enforcement officials. It will be rolled out in three phases: looking at crime increases in cities, analyzing those results for any trends, and identifying federal programs that can help.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/index.php?nid=78&sid=944903>

5. Transportation sector lags in joining infrastructure protection effort (GovExec.com, 23 Nov 2006)

The transportation industry is lagging behind others that have formed councils to better coordinate with the government on protection of national resources, auditors said in a recent report. "Sector councils" established under the Homeland Security Department's National Infrastructure Protection Plan are aimed at ensuring that businesses are linked to one another and to the government, and can perform essential functions in the event of an emergency. Private sector participation is voluntary, but encouraged by DHS. "Some sectors reported being further along in developing a plan than others," and Transportation Security Administration officials said in August they had "only begun drafting plans for each transportation mode such as aviation, rail and ports," the Government Accountability Office stated in the report.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=35538&dcn=e_gvet

6. Cargo jets carry some risks along with shipments (USA Today, 20 Nov 2006)

A woman walked into Bruce Bernstein's Pompano Beach, Fla., parcel shipping store with a box that she said had to arrive before July 4th. Inside were 28 pounds of fireworks, bottle rockets and illegal, high-powered firecrackers known as M-80s. "It would have taken down a plane no problem," says Bernstein, recalling an incident from two summers ago that underscores the difficulties private shippers have with keeping hazardous materials off planes. The Associated Mail and Parcel Centers, which represents over 3,000 small shipping centers, estimates that each year thousands of packages like this one slip unnoticed onto planes all over the USA. The leading industry trade group and the government have stepped up efforts to educate the public about shipping flammable goods.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.usatoday.com/travel/news/2006-11-19-packages-risk_x.htm

7. Travelers' ID program on fast track despite Hill concerns (By Chris Strohm, CongressDaily, 22 Nov 2006)

A senior Homeland Security Department official said Tuesday the department still hoped to implement border crossing requirements by January 2008 for travelers entering the United States from Canada and Mexico, even though Congress gave the administration a deadline extension because of concerns that rushing the program might disrupt travel and trade. The department is working to establish a rule that would require U.S. citizens and foreign travelers entering the United States by land ports of entry to have a secure, government-approved identification document starting in January 2008, said Paul Rosenzweig, acting assistant secretary for international affairs. That date coincides with an original deadline under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. But an amendment to extend the deadline to June 1, 2009 was passed as part of the fiscal 2007 Homeland Security appropriations bill, which President Bush signed into law last month.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=35542&dcn=e_gvet

8. US sets \$28 fee to vet travelers for flier program (Reuters, 24 Nov 2006)

The U.S. government said on Friday it will charge \$28 annually to process background checks on each airline passenger who joins a privately run traveler registry aimed at speeding the trip through airport security. The Transportation Security Administration said the fee charged to private companies would cover the agency's costs for performing the checks and overseeing the program. Previous TSA fee estimates of up to \$100 had generated a backlash from airports and companies interested in the program. They said higher cost would sap passenger interest.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?K1972244E>

9. DHS chief says foreign courts inhibit U.S. security efforts (By Chris Strohm, CongressDaily, 20 Nov 2006)

Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff on Friday decried what he described as an "activist" and "left-wing" interpretation of laws in foreign countries, saying it affects the U.S. government's ability to protect the nation. In a far-reaching speech to the Federalist Society, a legal community of conservatives and libertarians, Chertoff said judicial activism is "flourishing" in international circles and foreign courts, and increasingly affects the U.S. government's ability to conduct domestic security affairs. There is "broad legal activism" in other countries, he said, that goes beyond the type of judicial activism that occurred in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s. He charged that "vaguely defined" legal positions could trump the activities of a sovereign nation to protect itself.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=35527&dcn=e_gvet

10. Business groups protest impending U.S. border fees (Globe and Mail, 21 Nov 2006)

Canadian and U.S. business groups are calling on Washington to halt plans to impose new border fees, arguing that the "heavy-handed and disruptive" strategy will cause unnecessary price increases on both sides of the border. In a letter to three members of the U.S. cabinet, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce also called on the two countries to hold talks to identify "legitimate" risks associated with cross-border commercial traffic, particularly involving fruits and vegetables.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?B3B254D3E>

11. DHS continues to integrate IT contracting processes (GovExec.com, 20 Nov 2006)

The Homeland Security Department continues to work toward integrating processes for acquiring information technology, but the effort remains challenging, in part because of disparate policies from the legacy agencies that formed the department, officials said Thursday. For instance, "unfortunately, there is not a single standard" on whether foreign companies can do business with the department's various agencies, said William Thoreen, procurement officer for DHS' Enterprise Acquisition Gateway for Leading Edge Solutions (EAGLE). He said this in response to a question from an Australian audience member following a speech before the Association for Federal Information Resources Management, a professional group for technology contractors. Thoreen said DHS spends as much as \$6 billion annually on IT acquisitions alone.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=35511&dcn=e_gvet

STATE AND LOCAL NEWS

12. CA: Berkeley considering need for nano safety (San Francisco Chronicle, 24 Nov 2006)

Berkeley is proposing what a city official says would be the world's first local regulation of nanomaterials -- engineered particles and fibers so vanishingly small and super-

efficient that they promise to revolutionize industry but pose possible health risks to people if inhaled or exposed to skin. The proposal, which comes as federal officials are considering regulations on the growing nanotechnology industry, is "the first actual regulation of nanoparticles per se," said Nabil Al-Hadithy, the city of Berkeley's hazardous materials manager.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2006/11/24/MNGP9MJ4KI1.DTL>

13. FL: Florida Man Pleads Guilty To Smuggling Romanians (WFTV, 28 Nov 2006)

DAVENPORT, Fla. - It's a guilty plea for a Romanian citizen living in Davenport charged with illegally smuggling 24 Romanians into the country. A statement from the US Attorney's Office said Constantin Durbalau of Davenport admitted to the charges as part of a plea agreement. Durbalau and another person prepared fraudulent visa applications for the Romanians claiming they were performers coming to work at circuses in Florida. Authorities said they paid Durbalau up to \$3,500 for each visa.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.wftv.com/news/10411946/detail.html>

14. IA: Drug smuggling leads to more questions on penitentiary's future (AP, 27 Nov 2006)

FORT MADISON - Drug smuggling amid yearlong efforts to step up surveillance at Iowa's only maximum security prison is adding fire to the debate over whether a new prison should be constructed. A weeklong lockdown ended last Tuesday at Iowa State Penitentiary after the cells of 44 inmates were searched because one was suspected of drug use. Further drug testing showed other inmates were involved, said Fred Scaletta, spokesman for the Iowa Department of Corrections. "I can't comment on how the drugs made it through security, but this is obviously a concern," he said, declining to provide the number of inmates suspected of illegal drug use. "We are still investigating this." The incident came one year into heightened security measures that were implemented after two inmates escaped in November 2005.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?V2E05184E>

15. MI: Feds charge man with cash smuggling at Detroit Metro Airport (WLNS, 22 Nov 2006)

DETROIT A federal grand jury has indicted a man of trying to smuggle more than 78 thousand dollars into the U-S aboard a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit. The statement from U-S Attorney Stephen Murphy made no reference to earlier statements linking the Ethiopian-born U-S citizen to narcotics and computer messages involving cyanide and nuclear power. The lawyer for Sisayehiticha Dinssa accused the government of racial profiling. The 34-year-old has been jailed since his arrest November 14th when a dog caught the scent of narcotics on cash he was carrying.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.wlns.com/Global/story.asp?S=5719857&nav=0RbQ>

16. MN: Group seeks probe after imams removed from plane (AP, 21 Nov 2006)

MINNEAPOLIS, Minnesota - The Council on American-Islamic Relations called Tuesday for an investigation into the behavior of airline staff and airport security in the removal of six Muslim scholars from a US Airways flight a day earlier. A passenger raised concerns about the imams -- three of whom said their normal evening prayers in the airport terminal before boarding the Phoenix-bound plane, according to one -- through a note passed to a flight attendant, according to Andrea Rader, a spokeswoman for US Airways.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/US/11/21/passengers.removed.ap/index.html>

17. MS: MSU research project would help keep waterways secure (AP, 20 Nov 2006)

STARKVILLE, Miss. - Engineers at Mississippi State University are working on a homeland security project aimed at thwarting terrorist threats on U.S. inland waterways. Officials said the joint research project between the university and the Oak Ridge National Laboratory seeks to devise a computer tracking and monitoring model that will identify in real time river-based barges and other vessels carrying potentially dangerous cargoes. Mississippi State's department of industrial and systems engineering, using a \$441,000 research grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, plans to develop and field-test a prototype system early next year. "The proposed system will alert decision-makers to possible security threats by identifying strange carriers, strange destinations and deviations from pre-trip plans, including schedules and routes," said Mingzhou Jin, an assistant professor with the engineering department.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.sunherald.com/mld/sunherald/news/politics/16059034.htm>

18. NJ: Hazmat drill stresses preparation (Record Breeze, 22 Nov 2006)

A tanker overturns on Route 42 in Gloucester Township. Oil covers a half-mile stretch of asphalt. Motorists stop their vehicles as a sense of confusion sets in. What happens now? Enter the Camden County Hazmat Team. "These are actually people that handle the spill itself," Camden County Fire Marshal Paul Sandroock said. Last Friday, more than 30 police officers, firefighters and EMT personnel took part in a Hazmat drill at the Camden County Fire Academy on the Lakeland complex in Gloucester Township. Members of the Collingswood, Winslow, and Voorhees Township fire departments were among those present at the exercise. The drill capped off a two week, 80-hour program that trains interested personnel how to prepare for Hazmat emergencies. A combination of volunteer and career firefighters made up the majority of the group, Sandroock said.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?Y2122284E>

19. SD: New screening machines will add security, cut time - CT scanners check baggage for explosives (Argus Leader, 28 Nov 2006)

Air travelers from Sioux Falls can feel more secure this holiday season as the airport next month installs new machines to screen all checked luggage for explosives. "It's going to change the way the airport looks quite a bit," said Mark Moberly, assistant federal security director for the Transportation Security Administration in Sioux Falls. It's all part of the government's ever-evolving plans for increased airport security to guard against

terrorist attacks like those of Sept. 11, 2001. Under the new system in Sioux Falls, three Reveal CT-80 baggage scanners will automatically screen bags. The CT-80s - which cost more than \$250,000 and are paid for by the TSA - will replace the current baggage screening method in which TSA workers inspect bags by hand with the help of an explosive-detection machine.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?W2F01484E>

20. TX: Jury resumes deliberations in smuggling deaths retrial (AP, 28 Nov 2006)

HOUSTON - A federal jury in Houston has resumed deliberations Tuesday in the retrial of a trucker blamed in the nation's deadliest human smuggling attempt. Deliberations started Monday in the case involving the May 2003 deaths of 19 illegal immigrants. They were among about 70 people transported in a closed truck trailer that was abandoned near Victoria. Tyrone Williams is being retried on 58 counts of conspiracy, harboring and transporting illegal immigrants. He faces a possible death sentence if convicted.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?S5012384E>

21. WA: Medical identity theft becoming a big problem (KXLY, 28 Nov 2006)

SPOKANE - For years, people have heard about the dangers of identity theft, people stealing your personal information to eventually get drugs or money. But there's a new trend. It's called medical identity theft, and tens of thousands of people could be victims and not even know it. Medical ID theft takes things a step farther, and it could put lives danger. Pilot and business owner Joe Ryan thought it was a joke when he opened a letter from a collection agency saying he owed more than \$40,000 for a surgery he never had.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.kxly.com/news/index.php?sect_rank=2§ion_id=560&story_id=6498

GANG ACTIVITY

22. CA: Gang member to be sentenced to 21 years in slaying (Sign On San Diego, 27 Nov 2006)

SAN DIEGO – A gang member who pleaded guilty Monday to voluntary manslaughter for gunning down a Lincoln Park man during a confrontation in the Gaslamp Quarter will be sentenced next month to 21 years in state prison. Michael Bickham also admitted a gun use allegation in the Feb. 25 death of 23-year-old Alton Gilbert, who was gunned down about 1:45 a.m. on E Street between Fifth and Sixth avenues, as several area bars were closing. Formal sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 9 before Superior Court Judge William Kennedy.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/metro/20061127-1306-gaslampkill.html>

23. KY: Police Say Gang activity on par with other cities (The Courier-Journal, 27 Nov 2006)

Gangs do exist in Louisville, Lt. Col. Philip Turner told members of a Metro Council subcommittee on Monday. Turner said he doesn't believe, however, that Louisville is

seeing any more gang activity than cities of similar size. "There's an issue with gangs in our community as there is in any community," Turner said before the council's minority affairs committee Monday. Turner went before the committee to address concerns that some members have about several recent homicides involving teenagers.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?I2E14184E>

24. PA: Bethlehem Gets Money for Gang Resistance Education (WFMZ, 27 Nov 2006)

Local, state and federal officials are hoping education will help them put an end to gangs. The city of Bethlehem got a federal grant today - more than 68-thousand dollars. The money will be used to create a Gang Resistance Education and Training program... or GREAT for short. U.S. Attorney Pat Meehan, Bethlehem Mayor John Callahan, and Police Commissioner Randall Miller were on hand for the presentation. The program will provide kids with life skills to help them avoid delinquent behavior and violence.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://wfmz.com/view/?id=29214>

25. TN: Police to double number of gang officers (Nashville City Paper, 28 Nov 2006)

The number of specialized officers Metro Police devotes to its permanent anti-gang unit will double in January. An announcement, made rather quietly last week by Chief Ronal Serpas at a briefing of the Metro Council's Public Safety Committee, would increase the number of officers from six to 12. The six new members of the Specialized Operations Division will come from other areas of the department, according to police officials. More than 20 officers have already applied for the six positions. While the news made up just a small part of a more detailed presentation by Serpas, members of the Council say it is a very big deal.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?F3F15684E>

26. Canada: Dozens of arrests in Montreal mob crackdown (Globe and Mail, 22 Nov 2006)

Police in Montreal fanned out early Wednesday in a massive organized crime sweep, arresting dozens of people and laying hundreds of charges in what one expert says could mark one of the biggest blows to the Sicilian mafia in Canadian history. Almost 70 people were rounded up and more than 80 warrants issued in the raids, which the RCMP said targeted "traditional Italian organized crime." "We have penetrated the very heart of this organization," said RCMP superintendent of criminal operations Richard Guay at joint conference held with the Montreal police and Quebec provincial police Wednesday afternoon. "Concretely, the heads of the organization were arrested." One of those arrested was 82-year-old Nicolo Rizzuto, the father of reputed Montreal mob boss Vito Rizzuto, who was extradited to the United States three months ago to face racketeering charges in connection with three murders committed 25 years ago.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?B4902384E>

27. Italy: More than fifty Mafia members are jailed (Enjoy France, 25 Nov 2006)

Fifty-seven Mafia members who had been close to supremo Bernardo Provenzano have been given jail sentences amounting to a total of 300 years, according to Italian press. A Palermo judge in Sicily convicted the criminals for protecting Bernardo Provenzano while he was on the run and others were involved in managing Mafia funds. Bernardo Provenzano, 73, spent forty years in hiding before he was arrested in April at an isolated farm near Corleone, close to Palermo. Among the 57 convicted Mafia members, one group is said to have organised for Bernardo Provenzano to travel to southern France to receive cancer treatment under an assumed name.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.enjoyfrance.com/content/view/635/31/>

28. China breaks more than 1,300 organized crime gangs (Xinhuanet, 24 Nov 2006)

BEIJING - Chinese police have cracked more than 1,300 criminal gangs in the latest campaign against organized crime, authorities said. Between March and October, Chinese prisons received 887 new inmates charged for gang crime, Hu Yiding, deputy director of prison administration under the Ministry of Justice said. By the end of October, police had referred 196 cases of alleged organized crime for prosecution and 1,347 crime gangs had been broken, according to the office for national campaign against organized crime. This shows that the campaign against organized crime has been effective, said a spokesman for the office. In China, organized crime gangs are sometimes protected by officials through bribery, threat or other means.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2006-11/23/content_5369971.htm

NARCO TRAFFICKING

29. CA: Laborers Warned About Meth Trade Dangers (ABC News, 23 Nov 2006)

MERCED, Calif.- Fotonovelas pocket-sized picture books popular in Mexico have gotten a California makeover that authorities hope persuades immigrant laborers to resist the easy-money temptation of the methamphetamine trade. Thousands in the meth-plagued Central Valley have read the bilingual graphic-novel story of Jose, a farmworker who creates tragedy for his family by working for a drug ring. "No Vale La Pena," or "It's Not Worth It," has inspired a Spanish-language docudrama, and police from Tennessee to Colorado have requested copies of both projects.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=2675954>

30. IN: Heroin use rising in Indy - Popularity of addictive drug could lead to increased thefts (Indianapolis Star, 26 Nov 2006)

While the drug still makes up a minority of the cases at Indianapolis' drug court, heroin is increasingly easy to find on the city's streets, according to police, as it is elsewhere in Indiana and the nation. "I'm seeing a lot, lot more heroin," said Jamie Guilfooy, an IPD narcotics detective since 2001. "I never saw any up until the last year." Guilfooy and other Indianapolis Police Department narcotics investigators have confiscated nearly 1,000

grams -- about 2.2 pounds -- of heroin this year, more than 10 times what they seized in 2005. Indiana State Police project they will investigate close to 700 heroin cases this year, twice as many as last year and three times as many as in 2004.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?I5A04584E>

31. KY: After 20 years, war on marijuana changes (Lexington Herald-Leader, 25 Nov 2006)

Police destroyed more marijuana growing outdoors in Kentucky this year than they had in more than a decade, according to numbers compiled by state police. One factor in the increase was that the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration brought in several helicopters and an airplane for six weeks during the summer, creating more opportunity for airborne spotters to find pot patches, said Lt. Ed Shemelya, head of the marijuana-eradication program for the Kentucky State Police. "Anybody in this business will tell you the more eyes you get in the sky, the more dope you'll find," Shemelya said. Police cut and burned 557,276 plants this year, up nearly 50,000 from the 2005 total and the most since 1995. Arrests also were up: 475 in 2006 compared to 452 in 2005. It's been 20 years since the state police and Kentucky National Guard carried out their first coordinated effort to destroy cultivated marijuana in 1986. The story since has been what Shemelya calls a "cat and mouse game" in which each side has gotten more sophisticated and changed tactics.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.kentucky.com/mld/kentucky/16094573.htm>

32. NM: Marijuana Smuggling Busts Rise Due To Rain (KFOX-TV, 21 Nov 2006)

Border Patrol officials attribute the recent spike in drug busts on the border to summer rains. "Lately Border Patrol has seen an increase in drug trafficking. Not only in New Mexico, where typically we have a lot of narcotics coming across the border, but also here in Texas, in Hudspeth and El Paso counties," said Patrick Berry, Border Patrol agent. Berry said most of the busts are for cocaine and marijuana. This weekend agents made five separate seizures that totaled \$933,408 in value, the largest of the five busts being \$501,120 worth of cocaine hidden in a secret compartment beneath a pickup truck. Agents stopped the vehicle on Saturday on I-25, north of Las Cruces.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.kfoxtv.com/news/10372497/detail.html>

33. St. Regis smuggling operation busted up (WWTI, 21 Nov 2006)

Two men have been arrested by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for allegedly running a smuggling operation on the St. Regis reservation. 36-year-old Patrick Johnson of Hogansburg and 31-year-old William Cook of Cornwall are accused of being the kingpins of a drug and cigarette smuggling operation via an underground cigarette manufacturing plant located on the U.S. side of the reservation. The plant, MHP Manufacturing, was used to produce illegal cigarettes that were smuggled across the border and sold in Ottawa, Montreal, and New Brunswick.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?L6B01284E>

34. Canada-based drug traffickers peddling more ecstasy in U.S., says report (CP, 15 Nov 2006)

Washington - Asian drug traffickers based in Canada have gained control over most of the ecstasy distribution in the United States and expanded their reach, an American drug report says. The National Drug Threat Assessment released by the U.S. Justice Department also says the production of high-potency marijuana in Canada is a problem. Potency of seized marijuana samples has more than doubled from 2000 through 2005, says the drug threat assessment report, which is published annually.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://fightforjustice.blogspot.com/2006/11/canada-based-drug-traffickers-peddling.html>

35. Mexican Drug Gang Runs Newspaper Ads (AP, 23 Nov 2006)

MEXICO CITY - A violent Mexican drug gang took out a rare, half-page ad in newspapers in which they claimed to be anti-crime vigilantes who wanted to stop kidnapping, robbery and the sale of methamphetamine in the western state of Michoacan. The Family, a shadowy group believed to be allied to Mexico's Gulf drug cartel, has claimed responsibility in the past for bloody killings, such as a Sept. 6 attack in which gunmen dumped five severed human heads into a bar in the Michoacan city of Uruapan.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.federalnewsradio.com/?nid=82&sid=984964>

36. Spain: Colombian drug smuggling network broken up (Typically Spanish, 27 Nov 2006)

National Police in Murcia have arrested four members of a Colombian network which used women from their country to smuggle cocaine into Spain, and then forced them to work as prostitutes in the Region. The women, who were flown in on forged papers, were told that their debts to the network would be paid off by smuggling the drugs. Once here, however, they were told the debt remained unpaid and were put to work in alternative nightclubs in Murcia. The arrests were made in Torrealgüera last Friday night. Police seized cocaine with an estimated street value of 250,000 €.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.typicallyspanish.com/news/publish/article_7604.shtml

37. 10 years before Afghan poppy eradication (UPI, 16 Nov 2006)

Eradicating poppy cultivation in Afghanistan will take at least a decade, according to the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Poppy cultivation more than doubled in the last four years in Afghanistan, from 74,000 hectares in 2002 to 165,000 hectares in 2006. Afghanistan is the world's largest supplier of opium, a byproduct of poppies. Poppy sap can be refined into morphine and heroin. The United States spent \$532 million in 2005 attempting to eradicate poppies and discourage Afghan farmers from planting it, so far without success.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.upi.com/SecurityTerrorism/view.php?StoryID=20061116-124101-1809r>

38. Report: Afghan Officials Aid Traffickers (AP, 28 Nov 2006)

Afghanistan's criminal underworld has compromised key government officials who protect drug traffickers, allowing a flourishing opium trade that will not be stamped out for a generation, an ominous U.N. report released Tuesday said. The fight against opium production has so far achieved only limited success, mostly because of corruption, the joint report from the World Bank and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said. The findings show a "probability of high-level (government) involvement" in drugs, said Doris Buddenberg, the UNODC's Afghanistan representative and co-editor of the report. The report in particular presented a strong indictment of the Interior Ministry, which runs the country's police, and said Afghanistan's criminal underworld could not operate without the support of the political "upperworld." "The majority of police chiefs are involved," one senior police officer told the report's authors on condition of anonymity. "If you are not, you will be threatened to be killed and replaced."

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.wtop.com/?nid=385&sid=650222&sidelines=1>

39. Ice gangs smuggling from Asia (Sunday Herald Sun, 26 Nov 2006)

CRIME gangs manufacturing the drug ice are smuggling large quantities of cold and flu tablets from Asia after a crackdown on over-the-counter sales in Australian pharmacies. The ingredients for the drug can be bought legally in Asia, where some tablets are up to 90 per cent pure ephedrine or pseudoephedrine. Australian Customs has seized 24 kilos of the drugs -- potentially worth up to \$31 million on the street -- from luggage and postal packages in the past six months. Malaysia, the Philippines, China and Indonesia, where high concentrations of ephedrine are sold over the counter, have emerged as the main sources since the Australian chemist shop crackdown. Supplies in tablet and powder form have been secreted in teddy bears, women's clothing and books.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,,20820382-662,00.html>

CYBERTHREAT & THEFT

40. Homegrown Terrorists Recruited to Attack America (First Coast News, 21 Nov 2006)

JACKSONVILLE, FL - It's a video showing a room full of children sharing their dreams. They are not excited about being doctors, lawyers or teachers. Instead, the children shout, "We are the nation of Hezbollah. I shall sacrifice my life for Allah." A group of children in training to be a mujahideen, or holy warrior. Online there are videos of those warriors. One suicide bomber announces he is readying himself to blow up a group of American soldiers. The video goes on for eight minutes and even shows the explosion. In the background are cheers from those taking the pictures. The video is just some of the many the First Coast News I-team found on the internet from sites like Youtube and Myspace.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.firstcoastnews.com/news/local/news-article.aspx?storyid=69676>

41. Starting out: Online resumes can trigger identity theft (Gannett News Service, 24 Nov 2006)

Job seekers beware: There's an identity thief trolling the resume waters, just hoping to catch you and your personal information unaware. "People looking for work just don't realize how susceptible they are," says Heather Galler. "Having your resume online these days is like the yellow pages for the entire world." Galler, CEO of JobKite.com, has heard plenty of horror stories about unsuspecting job hunters who have their personal information lifted from various job sites online, including university Web sites containing old resumes that provide enough personal information to make an identity thief's day. In response to the increasing number of online identity thefts, a Carnegie Mellon University professor recently developed a program that searches online job boards, searching for the "holy trinity" of information greatly desired for identity theft: name, address and Social Security number. Under the program, known as "Identity Angel," a person receives an automated warning message if the program finds those three ingredients online.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://masl.to/?T2025284E>

42. Printer's Error Raises ID Theft Risk for Chicago Retirees (ConsumerAffairs.Com, 27 Nov 2006)

A printing contractor employed by Chicago's public schools accidentally sent out a list of 1,740 retired employees' information as part of a mass mailing of health insurance information this past weekend. The information includes names, addresses, and Social Security numbers, raising fears that the mistake could lead to identity theft. All Printing & Graphics, of Broadview, Ill., mailed a 125-page spreadsheet containing labels with the information to the employees, mistaking them for health care providers.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2006/11/chicago_id_theft.html

43. Stolen DOT computers lead to laptop theft ring (FCW, 22 Nov 2006)

An investigation into two recent laptop computer thefts from the Transportation Department's Office of Inspector General has helped uncover a ring of laptop thieves, according to the latest status report on the incidents. On July 27, someone stole an OIG special agent's laptop from a locked car near Miami. The laptop contained personally identifiable information about 133,000 Florida residents. Following that episode, officials reviewed an April theft of an OIG laptop that occurred in Orlando, Fla. That laptop belonged to the special agent-in-charge of the Miami OIG office.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.fcw.com/article96913-11-22-06-Web>

44. China sentences Web porn king to life in prison (Reuters, 22 Nov 2006)

BEIJING - A Chinese court sentenced the founder of the country's largest pornography Web site to life imprisonment on Wednesday and jailed another eight of the site's organizers, state media reported. The Taiyuan Intermediate People's Court handed down the sentence to Chen Hui, 28, and ordered the confiscation of 100,000 yuan (\$12,500), Xinhua news agency said. The other eight were jailed for terms ranging from 13 months to 10 years. Chen founded "Pornographic Summer" in 2004 and went on to start three more pornography Web sites, making money by charging registration fees of \$25 to \$33 to some of the 600,000 members they attracted.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:
<http://makeashorterlink.com/?Q6AA1504E>

COUNTERFEIT

45. Counterfeiting Threat to U.S. Currency Low, Report Says - U.S. currency authorities say dollar still a trusted international tender (By Jaroslaw Anders, USINFO Staff Writer, 28 Nov 2006)

Washington - Counterfeiting of U.S. currency remains low, and the U.S. dollar continues to be viewed as a highly reliable legal tender, according to a report published jointly by the U.S. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, the U.S. Secret Service and the Department of the Treasury. "People all over the world look to American currency for safety and security," U.S. Treasurer Anna Escobedo Cabral said in a press release that accompanied the report issued in late October. "I am pleased to learn that while counterfeiters may try to undermine the integrity of our money, American vigilance has upheld its reliability." The study attributes the success to intensive data gathering and law enforcement, regular redesigning of American banknotes and worldwide educational programs. As a result, only about one in 10,000 bills is counterfeited, the study says.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:
<http://masl.to/?R5C02584E>

46. U.S. and Georgia investigate S. Ossetia counterfeiters (Reuters, 26 Nov 2006)

The U.S. Secret Service is working with police in the former Soviet republic of Georgia to investigate an international counterfeiting operation that produces fake \$100 bills that have been seized in the United States and Israel, the Washington Post reported on Sunday. The counterfeiting operation, based on the separatist enclave of South Ossetia, has produced more than \$20 million in fake bills that have been transported to the United States and Israel, according to investigators cited by the Post. The counterfeit notes have been passed at numerous businesses in Baltimore, Maryland; New York City; Buffalo, New York; and Newark, New Jersey, the newspaper said. It said the notes have also surfaced in Georgia and neighboring Russia.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:
<http://masl.to/?R1A72144E>

TECHNOLOGY

47. FBI system to check gun buyers misfires (FCW, 28 Nov 2006)

The background-checking system the FBI uses to screen prospective gun buyers crashed several times late Nov. 26 and early Nov. 27, according to bureau officials. The National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), based in Clarksburg, W.Va., checks the records of people seeking to buy guns by using the National Crime Information Center and the Interstate Identification Index. The system was down for a total of about 30 minutes, but the outages could have caused significant delays in the background-checking process. Consequently, the delays could have prevented someone from buying a gun or led a seller to sell a gun without waiting for the process to finish.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.fcw.com/article96929-11-28-06-Web>

48. New homeland security buzz: Bomb-sniffing bees (Reuters, 28 Nov 2006)

PHOENIX, Arizona - Scientists at a U.S. weapons laboratory say they have trained bees to sniff out explosives in a project they say could have far-reaching applications for U.S. homeland security and the Iraq war. Researchers at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico said they trained honeybees to stick out their proboscis -- the tube they use to feed on nectar -- when they smell explosives in anything from cars and roadside bombs to belts similar to those used by suicide bombers. Researchers in the program, dubbed the Stealthy Insect Sensor Project, published their findings Monday.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/TECH/science/11/28/bombsniffing.bees.reut/index.html>

49. NYPD Installs "Sky Watch" In Harlem Neighborhood (NY1 News, 23 Nov 2006)

The NYPD has installed a patrol tower in a Harlem neighborhood in an effort to cut crime in the high-risk neighborhood. The two-story booth tower, called Sky Watch, gives the officer sitting inside a better vantage point from which to monitor the area. Officers in the booth have access to a spotlight, sensors, and four cameras. The tower is portable and can be moved to the areas that need it most. Residents in Harlem say they like the idea, though some wonder if the appearance of Sky Watch has anything to do with the two new luxury condos built on a nearby corner.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.ny1.com/ny1/content/index.jsp?stid=1&aid=64500>

50. English Police Road-Test Hand-Held Fingerprint Scanner (Agence France-Press, 22 Nov 2006)

London - Police in England and Wales began trialling hand-held electronic fingerprint readers on motorists Wednesday, the latest piece of new high-tech equipment being wielded in the fight against crime. Police say the device could save vast amounts of time and resources by identifying suspects on the spot rather than taking them to a police station -- should their prints be on the national database. The scanner allows officers to search the 6.5 million fingerprints held on record and should produce a result within five minutes. Estimates suggest it could save police more than 2.2 million pounds (4.2 million dollars, 3.3 million euros) per year. The pilot scheme is being tested by traffic police in Luton, northwest of London, and is voluntary because under existing law, members of the public are not obliged to give their fingerprints at the roadside.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?B3B92504E>

RESOURCES

51. National Drug Intelligence Center Releases National Drug Threat Assessment 2007 (Dept of Justice, 15 Nov 2006)

WASHINGTON - The National Drug Intelligence Center, a component of the Department of Justice, has released the National Drug Threat Assessment 2007 detailing national drug trafficking and abuse trends within the United States. The assessment

identifies the primary drug threats to the nation, tracks drug availability throughout the country and analyzes trafficking and distribution patterns of illicit drugs within the United States. It evaluates the threat posed by illegal drugs comparing availability, production and cultivation, transportation, distribution and demand.

The National Drug Threat Assessment 2007 details these emerging threats based on the most currently available law enforcement, intelligence and public health reporting and data.

Key findings of the report are as follows:

-- Following a sharp decrease in methamphetamine production within the United States, Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTO), who produce ice methamphetamine in Mexico, have gained considerable strength and expanded their presence in drug markets throughout the country, including smaller communities in Midwestern and Eastern states.

-- The expanded presence of Mexican DTOs in drug markets throughout the country have enabled some to introduce Mexican black tar and brown powder heroin in southeastern and Midwestern states. Although South American heroin is still the predominant heroin in most eastern drug markets, Mexican DTOs' ability to sell Mexican heroin beyond traditional western state heroin markets presents new challenges to law enforcement.

-- Although coca cultivation is higher than previously estimated, cocaine availability and use in the United States have not significantly changed.

-- Ecstasy (MDMA) availability and distribution have increased significantly. Asian DTOs based in Canada have gained control over most MDMA distribution in the United States and have expanded distribution to a level similar to that of 2001.

-- Asian criminal groups based in Canada have contributed significantly to both the increase in potency of marijuana and its distribution throughout the United States.

-- While rates of pharmaceutical drug abuse exceed that of all other drugs except marijuana, recent successes in reducing the illegal diversion of pharmaceutical drugs, particularly pharmaceutical narcotics such as OxyContin, have caused some individuals addicted to such drugs to substitute other drugs, such as heroin, for prescription narcotics.

-- Most Mexican and Colombian DTOs have resorted to consolidating illicit drug proceeds into large bulk cash shipments and smuggling them into Mexico primarily through south Texas. U.S. regulatory and law enforcement efforts have made it increasingly difficult for drug traffickers to launder illicit proceeds in U.S. financial institutions.

The National Drug Threat Assessment 2007 was prepared in partnership with federal, state and local agencies. The assessment also has incorporated information collected through the administration of the National Drug Intelligence Center's national survey of

more than 3,200 state and local law enforcement agencies and thousands of field interviews with law enforcement and public health officials.

A copy of the National Drug Threat Assessment 2007 can be found at <http://www.usdoj/ndic>.

52. New Training Programs Will Help Fight Trafficking in Persons - Classes teach to recognize trafficking victims, build partnerships (By Wendy Lubetkin, USINFO Special Correspondent, 28 Nov 2006)

Geneva - A unique new tool designed to fight trafficking in persons around the world is being officially launched this week by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the U.S. Department of State. The new package of training programs aimed at immigration and law enforcement officials, legislators and nongovernmental organizations represents a "milestone in establishing a comprehensive global counter-trafficking strategy," said IOM spokesperson Jean-Philippe Chauzy. The training modules were developed by IOM, with funding from the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, and based on extensive experience in the field and feedback from participants in IOM pilot programs in Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:
<http://masl.to/?F2D03284E>

OPPORTUNITIES

53. Pentagon hires students to recruit classmates for civilian jobs (GovExec.com, 27 Nov 2006)

In its quest to hire a new generation of civilian employees, the Pentagon has started paying students to recruit their college classmates. So far, the Defense Department has hired two students -- one at Michigan Tech University and one at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez -- to market Defense jobs to their peers. Next fall, the Pentagon plans to expand the program to three more schools. Speaking at an October press conference on the campus of Michigan Tech in upper Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, Patricia Bradshaw, deputy undersecretary for civilian personnel policy, announced Robert Frankovich as the university's student recruiter. Frankovich is both a GS-4 Defense Department employee, earning about \$10 per hour, and a business management major.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:
http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=35550&dcn=e_gvet

54. Homeland security degree offered (AP, 19 Nov 2006)

Justan Holloway's class schedule next year will look more like an action movie plot than an academic pursuit. The Savannah State University sophomore will study international terrorism, disaster planning, criminology, social psychology and Arabic. Mr. Holloway, 19, plans to be among the first to enroll in the college's new degree program in homeland security. The program is modeled after one at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond and is among a growing number of homeland security

majors available nationwide as schools try to meet a rising demand for workers trained in a variety of national defense areas.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20061118-105838-6012r.htm>

55. College courses in homeland security on the rise (GovExec.com, 27 Nov 2006)

Colleges and universities increasingly are offering homeland security courses, as higher education is coming to accept the new subject area but perhaps not fully embrace it as a distinct discipline. "The jury's out on whether or not this will evolve," said Todd Stewart, a retired Air Force major general, who is now director of Ohio State University's Program for International and Homeland Security. However, he added, homeland security is believed among experts to be the "most rapidly growing area of new academic programs." Stewart also serves as the director for the university's National Academic Consortium for Homeland Security, which has attracted more than 300 colleges and universities as members. "There was very little academic discipline [in the area of homeland security] before [Sept. 11, 2001,]" said David O'Keeffe, chief executive officer of the Naval Postgraduate School Center for Homeland Defense and Security.

CABLE Gram Suggested URL:

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?articleid=35546&dcn=e_gvet

EVENTS

56. East Baltimore community forum on pandemic flu planned (The Johns Hopkins University Gazette, 27 Nov 2006)

Johns Hopkins flu experts will host a community education forum from 4 to 5:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 1, to discuss how people can best protect themselves and their families from infection during a flu pandemic.

The event will be held at the East Baltimore Development Inc. Resource Center, 1731 Chase St., and will follow a free flu vaccination clinic sponsored by the Baltimore City Health Department from 2 to 4 p.m.

Certified infection control specialist Pat Rosenbaum, a nurse epidemiologist at JHH, will lead the discussion, offering practical tips on how to reduce the risks of flu infection and prevent it from spreading should a family member get sick. Rosenbaum will also describe Johns Hopkins' plans to help safeguard the community, hospital staff and patients in the event of a worldwide outbreak. A question-and-answer session will follow her remarks.

FULL REPORTS

57. Counterfeit Drugs Seen as Growing Problem - Companies, governments work to combat piracy (By Judy Aita, USINFO Staff Writer, 16 Nov 2006)

New York - Counterfeit goods threaten security, economic growth and public safety worldwide, U.S. and private industry officials warn. Of increasing concern, they say, is the flood of counterfeit medicines into the marketplace.

Trade in counterfeit and fake goods, officially referred to as intellectual property piracy, "negatively impacts our society through the loss of profits, jobs, revenue and poses risks to the community in both consumer safety through the sale of unsafe products and through the presence of criminal organizations responsible for the sale and distribution of those products," says Salvatore Delesandro, deputy special agent in charge of the New York office of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

"Fakes" most often bring to mind designer handbags and brand-name foot apparel, but modern-day pirates counterfeit everything from life-saving drugs to cell phone batteries, from auto parts to computers, many posing serious threats to the health and safety of buyers.

Counterfeiting costs \$500 billion globally and an estimated \$300 billion in the United States annually, Delesandro said November 14 at a seminar organized by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to call attention to the problem. (See [related article](#).)

But the cost of counterfeiting goes beyond money, says John Theriault, vice president of global security for Pfizer Pharmaceutical Company, the largest drug manufacturer in the world.

"The very first issue with counterfeit drugs is that they pose a serious threat to patient health and safety. It is a very serious health issue," Theriault said. In the beginning, the most counterfeited medicines were the erectile dysfunction drug Viagra and malaria medicines, but now other drugs such as heart and cancer medicines, cholesterol-lowering products, flu vaccines and contraceptives are being counterfeited.

"The explosion of counterfeit medicines into the global marketplace ... is a problem that is a lot bigger and a lot more expensive than people realize," Theriault said. It is not a problem unique to Pfizer, but one that affects every ethical, legitimate, research-based pharmaceutical company.

The situation became so serious that in 1998, Pfizer set up its own security unit to begin tracing and documenting the scope of the problem.

Counterfeit medicine is a "shadow industry" that has grown up because there is so much money involved, Theriault said. "We have found counterfeit versions of Pfizer medicine in 65 countries."

The World Health Organization estimates global sales of counterfeit medicines at \$35 billion to \$40 billion a year. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) estimates that counterfeits make up more than 10 percent of the global medicines market and are present in both industrialized and developing countries, with up to 25 percent of the medicines consumed in poor countries being fake.

In 2004, about 10.5 million units of counterfeit Pfizer products were seized globally and the company expects that about 10 million units will be seized this year.

SERIOUS THREAT TO PATIENTS' LIVES

The problem ranges from drugs that contain the same active pharmaceutical ingredients but are produced in unregulated conditions to those containing lethal ingredients. Many are produced by criminals with sophisticated equipment capable of duplicating near-perfect copies of the authentic packaging.

The problem has been "exacerbated in the extreme by the Internet," Theriault added. The anonymity and massive communication capability offered by the Internet is a prescription for disaster where medicines are concerned, he said.

"We've had reports of counterfeit products with high levels of heavy metal, with arsenic, with nickel," Theriault said. "We've seen counterfeit product coming out of Latin America that actually contained boric acid, highway paint and floor polish. The product looked very nice. ... The contents were disastrous."

Citing another example, he said Canadian officials are investigating five deaths that may be related to fake Norvasc, a blood pressure medication.

Pfizer's strategy, Theriault said, "is to try to convince governments to deal harshly with people who are engaged in manufacturing and selling counterfeit goods. We work with regulatory agencies and local law enforcement."

"This is a trade issue among countries, it is an issue that developing countries have as much interest in as mature markets," he said. "Private industry has a huge stake in this, but private industry cannot solve the problem alone."

"Arrests show that we are making progress and governments are beginning to take this problem a little more seriously. In 2004, there were 369 arrests, about the same in 2005 and over 400 so far in 2006 worldwide," he said.

China and India are often referred to as the epicenters of the counterfeit medicine trade, but the biggest counterfeit case in the United States was in 2003, when more than 18 million tablets of the cholesterol-lowering drug Lipitor, the world's largest-selling medicine, were recalled from the U.S. market. Those tablets were produced in Costa Rica, Theriault said.

For more information, see [Protecting Intellectual Property Rights](#).

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

58. Homeland Security Dept. Opposes Racial Profiling, Official Says (By Stephen Kaufman, USINFO Staff Writer, 22 Nov 2006)

Washington - The U.S. Department of Homeland Security said it will review the conduct of its employees who were involved with the removal of six Muslim imams from a November 20 domestic flight bound from Minneapolis to Phoenix.

Homeland Security press secretary Russ Knocke also told *USINFO* November 22 that the department is “opposed to the concept of racial profiling,” and its profiling techniques are based on suspect behavior rather than targeting ethnicities or faiths.

However, Knocke said that U.S. commercial airline pilots, bearing responsibility for the aircraft and safety of its passengers, are “within their authority at any time” to request law enforcement assistance, and “it’s always better to err on the side of safety and security than it is being wrong.”

According to press reports, a passenger aboard a US Airways flight told a flight attendant that the six men were engaged in suspicious behavior and security personnel subsequently removed those six men from the flight. The men were questioned by the FBI and Secret Service, and then were released, according to press reports.

The men, who flew to Phoenix on a later flight, said they only were praying, and the incident has been condemned by civil rights groups such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Security personnel are trained “to look for abnormal human behavior that might suggest that an individual is attempting to get past our front line personnel with nefarious intent. That is in no way racial profiling. That is behavioral profiling,” Knocke said.

The November 20 incident resulted in “a very inconvenient situation” for the six imams, as well as the passengers traveling on that aircraft, but Knocke said passengers need to be vigilant about alerting authorities if they see anything they feel is abnormal.

“Ultimately, it seems that the information had led to a misjudgment, but we’re not going to be critical of that judgment,” he said.

He said that Homeland Security involvement in the incident was minimal and that the six imams successfully passed through the same security checkpoint screening procedures other passengers are subjected to “without incident.” Knocke added that any time a Homeland Security employee is accused of engaging in racial profiling or other inappropriate behavior, “our office of civil rights and civil liberties will look into that as a routine matter.”

The incident occurred at the beginning of the Thanksgiving holiday period, when an estimated 25 million people are expected to board U.S. airline flights.

US Airways said in a November 21 statement that it does not “tolerate discrimination of any kind,” and pledged a thorough internal investigation into the matter.

"We are always concerned when passengers are inconvenienced and especially concerned when a situation occurs that causes customers to feel their dignity was compromised," the US Airways statement said. The airline also pledged to "cooperate fully" with law enforcement officials to "determine the facts surrounding the incident."

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

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