

Informe #3 January 31, 2003

CICTE's Third Annual Meeting Concludes in San Salvador

Member States pledged renewed political commitment and additional resources at CICTE's Third Regular Session in San Salvador, El Salvador, Jan. 22-24.

Representatives from 29 Member States, four Permanent Observer States, the United Nations, Inter-American Defense Board, International Committee of the Red Cross, Central American System of Integration (SICA), and a number of other organizations attended. Licda. Maria Eugenia Brixuela de Avila, Foreign Minister of El Salvador, chaired the conference, and El Salvador was elected to the CICTE Chair for the 2003 term.

The Committee approved the Declaration of San Salvador confirming the political will of the OAS Member States to fight terrorism, the CICTE Work Plan, and CICTE's recommendations to the Special Hemispheric Conference on Security, scheduled for May in Mexico City. These documents will be posted on the CICTE web page (<http://www.cicte.oas.org/>) in the near future.

Also of note, Argentina, Chile, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States announced new donations to support the work of the CICTE Secretariat. These countries join Brazil in making contributions to CICTE in 2003. Current contributions now exceed \$1 million.

Other Recent Presentations:

CICTE Executive Secretary Steven Monblatt met with a group of legislators from six countries who are developing a common Central-American legislative counter-terrorism strategy. The program, held in San Salvador, was sponsored by the Forum of Presidents of Central American Assemblies (FORPREL) and held under the aegis of the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy.

CICTE Program Director Kevin Newmeyer spoke at the recent Transportation Safety and Security Workshop sponsored by George Washington University and the International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS) 28-29 January. The meeting was held to discuss the possible consequences of terrorism-induced transportation disasters and what might be done to prevent or mitigate them.

CICTE will make a presentation at the UN Counter Terrorism Committee (CTC) sponsored meeting of international, regional and subregional organizations early March in New York. The meeting will focus on increasing cooperation in the fight against terrorism.

Recent Developments in the News:

Canada and Antigua and Barbuda became the first Member States to ratify the Inter-American Convention on Terrorism. The Convention will enter into effect 30 days after a total of six nations ratify.

In December, the *New York Times* reported an assessment by The Canadian Security and Intelligence Service that Al Qaeda is operating in Canada. The information was disclosed in court proceedings related to the arrest of Mohammed Harakat, an Algerian national living in Ottawa. The intelligence brief stated that Al Qaeda supports and network “have the capability and conviction to provide support for terrorist activities in North America. Harakat is reported to have traveled on a false Saudi Arabian passport.

The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* reported 16 January that the US Customs Service will double the size of its operations designed to uncover terrorist financing. Customs Commissioner Robert Bonner (who led the US delegation to CICTE’s Third Regular Session) stated that shutting off terrorist financing is the organization’s highest priority. A new division will be dedicated to examining financial systems that can be exploited by terrorist such as charities, gold sales and the informal money exchange systems known as “hawalas.”

In Peru, *La Republica*, provided coverage of President Toledo’s request to the legislature for new anti-terrorism laws to ensure that convicted rebels are not set free and do not escape justice following a recent Constitutional Court decision to strike down some 1992 anti-terrorism laws. In a 7 January televised address to the nation, Toledo asked the Congress for special powers to provide clear and precise regulations on terrorism and public security. He also requested the creation of a special anti-terrorism court to pursue related crimes, economic and security support for anti-terrorism judges, and the formation of a high level judicial working group to develop the legal framework to confront terrorism in Peru.

New ideas:

US and Canadian authorities recently announced a new program in the Detroit-Windsor area designed to speed transit of preapproved U.S. and Canadian citizens across the border. The program requires commuters to meet detailed requirements, including a security check and to pay \$50 for a five-year membership in the program. Participants use special identification cards issued by U.S. and Canadian customs. More information is available at www.ccra.gc.ca/nexus

In a 29 January article, CNN Español reported that Australia initiated the first passport control system based on facial recognition technology. The system, called SmartGate, scans the passport photo and then compares it with the traveler’s face. The pilot project at the Sydney Airport is currently being tested with crewmembers from Qantas Airlines. The project will be expanded to other airports in 2004.