

CICTE Informe #7

Counter-Terrorism Activities

The OAS Counter-Terrorism Convention to Go into Effect in July

Nicaragua became the sixth country to ratify the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism. Nicaragua deposited the ratifying documents at the General Assembly meeting in Santiago, Chile on June 10th. The treaty will go into force in July. Thirty-three OAS member countries have signed this treaty, with Nicaragua now joining Antigua and Barbuda, Canada, El Salvador, Mexico and Peru as states that have ratified. The aim of the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism is to prevent, punish and eliminate terrorism, with each state's parties acting to adopt the necessary measures to strengthen cooperation among themselves.

Canada and the U.S. Expand Border Programs

A news release by the *Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency* states that Canada and the U.S. will make improvements to their 30-point Action Plan. Improvements will be made to the FAST and NEXUS programs. The two programs that create a more secure border while maintaining an efficient flow of traffic will be expanded to six more ports and five more border points. FAST is a program that allows commercial ships to clear customs more rapidly. Nexus is a similar program for travelers crossing the border.

Europe Makes Steps to Issue Passports with Data Chips

The European Union has approved a plan to issue passports containing computer chips with biometric data including digital fingerprints and iris scans. The new technology will be used to confirm identity, reduce the number of fraudulent passports, and increase security throughout Europe. The European Union also intends to use the data chip in visas issued to non-European Union citizens. Some opponents argue that the proposed plan lacks accountability.

Upcoming Conferences and Meetings of Note

- July 14-15, CICTE First Annual National Points of Contact (NPC) in Washington. Agenda topics include training initiatives under the auspices of the CICTE Secretariat, communications tools available to the NPCs, status of the CICTE work plan, and the role of the NPC.
- July 28-29 OAS Cyber Security Conference, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Three OAS organizations, CICTE, CITEL, and the REMJA Group of Experts on Cyber Crime, are jointly sponsoring a conference to examine the threats and potential

courses of action for the OAS in regards to the security of our networks and critical infrastructure systems.

Recent Developments in the News:

El Espectador.com reported that the United States will consider backing a peace process between the Government of Colombia and the illegally armed insurgent and paramilitary forces. This is the first time that the U.S. has proposed to finance a peace process in Colombia.

The *Washington Post* reported that an Ohio truck driver who met with Osama bin Laden and other top al Qaeda leaders plotting to destroy New York's Brooklyn Bridge and launch a simultaneous unspecified attack in Washington plead guilty to charges to providing material support to a terrorist organization in a sealed case filed in federal court in Alexandria. He provided al Qaeda with services that included carrying cash, providing bin Laden with information about "ultralight" aircraft and surveying equipment for sabotaging railroad tracks and cutting suspension bridge cables.

In another story, the *Washington Post* reveals news of cooperation between the United States and France on a high-level working group of the Group of Eight. The working group will develop biometric technology to prevent passport fraud. The biometric technologies will include fingerprints, iris scans, or facial recognition software to verify identity and validity of documents.

The *Washington Post* has also reported on a new Virginia laboratory selected to conduct anti-bioterrorism research. The lab, known as Biotech Six, will handle research in deadly infectious disease and pathogenic substances such as SARS, Ebola and West Nile Virus. The new facility will contain eight sealed rooms and a "Biosafety Level 4" room. The lab will have new equipment that could perform tests to identify chemicals and assess the how far the chemicals have spread.

The *New York Times* reported on a United States General Accounting Office (GAO) report that revealed that as many as 30 suspected terrorists may still be in the United States because of continuing flaws in the U.S. visa program and poor communication between federal agencies. The GAO report can be read on CICTE's OLAT.

In another report, the *New York Times* relates that the U.S. federal appeals court unanimously upheld the ruling that the Bush Administration acted properly in freezing the assets of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development. The Foundation has been linked to the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas.

New Documents on OLAT

- Border Security: New Policies and Procedures are Needed to Fill Gaps in the Visa Revocation Process by U.S. GAO

- Organized and Serious Crimes Ordinance – Hong Kong legislation
- Drug Trafficking recovery of proceeds ordinance – Hong Kong legislation
- United Nations Anti-Terrorism Measures Ordinance – Hong Kong legislation
- Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- Common Sense Guide for Home and Individual Users - Internet Intelligence Alliance
- Common Sense Guide for Senior Managers: Top Ten Recommended Information Security Practices - Internet Intelligence Alliance
- Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act, 2002 - United States legislation