I. DHS, European Union Sign Agreement on Collection of Passenger Data

Secretary Tom Ridge, Irish Ambassador Noel Fahey (representing the Presidency of the European Union), and European Union Ambassador Günter Burghardt, (representing the European Commission) signed an agreement on May 28 allowing U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to collect airline Passenger Name Record (PNR) information relating to flights between the United States and the European Union.

Although air carriers have been providing PNR data since March 2003 under an interim arrangement, this agreement will establish the legal basis for such information to be collected and transferred consistent with U.S. and European Union (EU) laws.

The agreement will be in effect for three-and-a-half years once it is implemented, with renegotiations to start within one year of the agreement’s expiration date. The comprehensive arrangement concluded with the EU, which includes this agreement as well as a more specific set
of undertakings setting forth in detail how CBP will process and handle PNR data, contains specific guidance on the use and retention of the PNR data. The guidance includes the following:

- Data will be retained by CBP for three-and-a-half years, unless associated with an enforcement action.
- Only 34 PNR data elements will be accessed by CBP, to the extent collected in the air carriers' reservation and departure control systems.
- CBP will filter and delete "sensitive data," as mutually identified by CBP and the European Commission.
- PNR data will be used by CBP strictly for purposes of preventing and combating:
  1) terrorism and related crimes;
  2) other serious crimes, including organized crime, that are transnational in nature; and
  3) flight from warrants or custody for the crimes described above.

“The U.S. and the EU are equally committed to not only improving the safety of air passengers and the security of our borders, but also to protecting the privacy of air passengers consistent with both U.S. and European laws,” said Secretary Ridge. “Today’s signing is the result of more than a year of negotiations between the United States and the European Commission, and is a sign of our united commitment to combat terrorism.”

Without an agreement, air carriers were placed in a situation where they could either face fines for violating EU privacy laws or penalties for failing to provide passenger data to CBP; although, under the interim arrangement, no enforcement actions were taken. The May 28 agreement removes air carriers from that situation and strikes a balance between facilitating legitimate travel while contributing to the security of the United States and EU member states.

II. HR Design News Corner: The Meet and Confer Process

As we continue our review of the more than 3,500 comments that were formally received on our proposed HR system, we focused our initial analysis on the comments received from employee representatives. The Homeland Security Act provides for consideration of these comments from employee representatives as part of a minimum 30-day “Meet and Confer” period. This critical period will help ensure that our new HR system meets employees’ needs and supports the critical mission of the Department.

What is the purpose of the Meet and Confer process?
The objective of the Meet and Confer period is to discuss the comments submitted by employee representatives, seek clarification on certain issues, and explore options for possible modification of the proposed regulations. At the completion of this process, the Secretary may proceed with final regulations. The Meet and Confer process is scheduled to begin the week of June 14.

Who will be involved in the Meet and Confer process?
The Meet and Confer process will involve individuals from the following groups:

- One principal representative from each of the four largest DHS unions: the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU), the National Association of Agriculture Employees (NAAE), and the National Federation of Federal Employees (NFFE).
• One representative from one of the non-union employee associations with members in DHS that submitted official comment on the proposed regulations (Senior Executive Association (SEA), Federal Managers Association (FMA), Federally Employed Women (FEW)).
• Four representatives from DHS including two senior staff members from the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer and two senior line employees from other parts of DHS.
• Two senior human resource advisors from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

We have asked the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) to facilitate productive discussions during the Meet and Confer process.

What happens after the Meet and Confer process?

After reviewing the analysis of all the comments made by the public, employees, employee representatives, and the recommendations derived from the Meet and Confer process, Secretary Ridge and OPM Director James will make decisions on the Department’s new HR system and ask DHS and OPM personnel experts to prepare the final rule. The final rule will outline the decisions made by Secretary Ridge and Director James around the six personnel areas for which the Homeland Security Act provides flexibility: pay, classification, performance management, labor relations, adverse actions, and appeals.

The final rule will then be sent to the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA) for review. OIRA’s role is to review the rule from multiple perspectives before clearing it. Once cleared by OMB, DHS will notify Congress, Secretary Ridge and Director James will sign the final rule, and the rule will be submitted to the Federal Register for publication. Details on final regulations will be communicated in our weekly DHS Today articles as well as the DHS Internet and intranet sites. In addition, we plan to distribute another series of MAX HR communications products such as brochures and toolkits to highlight the key facts of the final regulations.

What is the timeline for final regulations?

Due to the uniqueness of each proposed rule and the different timeframes for the review processes, it is difficult to determine the exact date final regulations will be published. However, we currently are aiming for publication in late summer or early fall of 2004. Once the rule becomes final, we propose that labor relations, adverse actions, and appeal systems go into effect no sooner than 30 days later. Performance management and pay conversions will be phased in by component beginning in late 2004.

DHS leadership is committed to keeping all DHS employees informed throughout the regulatory process. If you have any ideas or suggestions about the proposed regulations or our communications please email us at MAXHR@dhs.gov.

III. Memorial Day Message to DHS Employees from Secretary Ridge

More than anything, Memorial Day is a time of remembrance. We gather to remember the sacrifices that made our great freedom-loving nation what it is today. It also is a time to remember the many veterans who served our nation in lands distant and in ways not always known. I am proud to be part of a Department with a civilian workforce of nearly 40,000
veterans—90 of whom served in World War II and continue the proud tradition of securing the homeland. Virgil Westdale is one of those veterans. At 86 years old, he serves as a TSA screener at Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Virgil served in the 442\textsuperscript{nd} Regimental Combat Team unit comprised of Japanese-Americans—the most decorated unit for its size in the Army. He received several commendations, including four battle stars and the World War II Victory Medal. He will be joining President Bush at the ceremony on Saturday dedicating the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. This memorial commemorates not only those who fought and died in both the Atlantic and Pacific theatres of that war, but those citizens on the home front who answered the call by making sure our troops had the best of everything.

We, at this very moment in history, find ourselves once again at war. It is a war that is being fought on foreign soil and on our home front. We stand shoulder to shoulder with those who wear the uniform and who fight to bring freedom, justice, and opportunity to countries where these principles have disappeared. Our war is the war on terrorism. Ultimately, we will prevail in this conflict because of the dedicated people we have at this Department – people like Virgil and like you.

In keeping with our National Moment of Remembrance at 3 p.m. on May 31, I ask that you pause and reflect upon all those who helped preserve our great nation. Their service and sacrifice should inspire us all to continue the work of defending our nation and its cherished ideals.

- Secretary Tom Ridge

**IV. Sixty Years Later, TSA’s Veteran Screener Still Securing the Homeland**

When thousands of veterans arrive in Washington, D.C., to participate in the dedication of the World War II Memorial, there will be many stories of sacrifice and of defending the United States. Many of these vets still do their part in one way or another, but fewer and fewer are still on the front lines actively securing the homeland. Virgil Westdale, a Transportation Security Administration screener at Gerald R. Ford International Airport, is one of the few.

Born Virgil Nishimura in 1918, the son of a Japanese immigrant and his American wife, Westdale grew up on farms in Indiana and Michigan. He had already earned a private pilot’s license as a young man, before he enlisted in military flight school in 1942. Westdale reported to infantry training at Camp Shelby, Miss., where he joined the 442\textsuperscript{nd} Regimental Combat Team, a unit comprised of Japanese Americans, and one that would become the most decorated unit in the U.S. Army. Because he was taller than other recruits, Westdale was assigned the heavy Browning automatic rifle. And with his flying background, he was assigned to the regiment’s field artillery battalion, which used spotter planes to identify enemy positions.

Between 1943 and 1945 his unit saw intensive action in Italy, France, and Spain. Westdale particularly remembers the “bloody battle” of Monte Cassino in Italy, and the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp in Germany, a “horrifying place,” where “the people first thought we were Japanese coming to kill them, then realized the troops were Americans coming to their
rescue,” he recalls. Westdale’s Regimental Combat Team also saved 211 men of The Lost Battalion of the 36th Division.

Following the war, Westdale returned to college at Western Michigan University, where he earned two degrees in business and paper technology. He worked for Burroughs Corp. in Detroit from 1950 to 1966, and then AM International in Chicago, Ill., where he became principal scientist before retiring in 1988.

But after a few years, the father of three and grandfather of seven, returned to work as a screener supervisor for Globe Aviation Services at Ford International. He became a TSA Screener in 2002. “I had to be part of something, doing something that’s needed,” says Westdale. “This job allows me to work indoors, it’s clean, and I get to meet lots of people. What more could you want?”

According to Federal Security Director John Mumma, there’s no slowing down for Virgil Westdale: “He’s a real superstar—one of our best screeners.”

_Virgil is scheduled to be profiled on ABC News Saturday Night, May 29._

**V. Secretary Outlines Goal for Getting Americans Better Prepared**

In successive speeches this week to the American Red Cross and the Council for Excellence in Government, Secretary Ridge said the Department aims to have nearly half of all Americans better prepared for a terrorist attack by the end of 2004.

To reach this goal, Ridge said the Department will launch two new citizen preparedness endeavors – _Ready for Business_ and _Ready for Kids_ – and will continue to expand the volunteer-based Citizen Corps while working with organizations in the private sector such as the Red Cross.

Ridge acknowledged the Council for Excellence in Government’s report released this week found a need to raise the baseline level of preparedness in the United States. The report, based in part on a series of town hall meetings the Council sponsored throughout the country, found an information gap between citizens and government.

“Making sure our citizens are informed is, without doubt, one of our most important goals,” he said. “We have emergency preparedness experts in government who are constantly at work on information and advice that will make a difference in the event of a crisis. What is encouraging about the CEG report is that it shows that there is, indeed, a great desire for this information. Citizens want to know how they can best protect their families.”

Ridge said there has been marked progress in people taking action on emergency preparedness, pointing to a 12 percent increase to 40 percent overall in parents with children at home who have made emergency preparations.

Although the Department has tools available for Americans to get ready for a potential attack, Ridge said the federal government alone will not be the one to prepare everyone.

“Citizens should feel empowered to take pro-active steps to make their places of study and business safe and prepared for any type of disaster,” he said. “Our own efforts as a government will then be able to enhance the efforts already begun at the grassroots level.”
Ridge said the Department is counting on the Red Cross to play a large role in getting Americans better prepared, noting that it can reach citizens through its network of 900 local chapters. “As we further pursue emergency preparedness – we do so along two tracks – building our operational capacity and nurturing a culture of citizen preparedness. In both areas, we look to the expertise, training, and experience of the Red Cross to strengthen and further our efforts.”

VI. ICE Arrests Saudi Man with Ties to Two 9/11 Hijackers; Deports Material Witness in 9/11 Terrorism Probe to Yemen

A 34-year-old Saudi national believed to have ties to two of the deceased 9/11 hijackers was arrested May 27 in San Diego, Calif., by agents with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Hasan Saddiq Faseh Alddin, a legal permanent resident of the United States, was taken into custody on immigration charges resulting from two prior convictions for domestic violence. The arrest stems from an exhaustive investigation by San Diego's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF).

"ICE agents in San Diego are working closely with our federal law enforcement partners to monitor and assess information related to potential terrorist attacks in the United States," said Mike Unzueta, Deputy Special Agent-in-Charge for ICE investigations in San Diego. "We're committed to taking immediate action on intelligence we obtain to prevent another terrorist attack on American soil."

Alddin was arrested near his residence in Vista, Calif. He is believed to have associated with friends of two of the deceased 9/11 hijackers who lived in the San Diego area, Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid al-Midhar.

The two men were on board the American Airlines plane that crashed into the Pentagon. In Sept. 2001, Alddin roomed with a close friend of the two hijackers. The roommate departed the United States the day before the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

In another ICE case, a Yemeni national held as a material witness in connection with the 9/11 terrorism attacks is back in his native country today after being deported by ICE. ICE officers accompanied 26-year-old Mohdar Abdullah on the return flight to Yemen.

“ICE is dedicated to restoring the integrity of our immigration system. By removing individuals who have exploited the system, in this case an associate of known terrorists, we systematically eliminate risk and enhance our security,” said Assistant Secretary Michael J. Garcia.

Abdullah and another Yemeni national, Omar Bakarbashat, were arrested by federal agents shortly after the 9/11 attacks because of their close ties to two of the hijackers from the San Diego area, Nawaf Alhazmi and Khalid al-Midhar. Alhazmi and al-Midhar were aboard the American Airlines plane that crashed into the Pentagon.
Court documents filed in the 9/11 investigation revealed that Abdullah provided substantial assistance to Alhazmi and al-Midhar, helping them obtain Social Security cards, driver licenses, and information on flight schools.

ICE sought to deport Abdullah based on his conviction for visa fraud. The former San Diego State student pleaded guilty in Oct. 2002 to charges that he lied on an application to legalize his immigration status by falsely claiming that he belonged to a persecuted minority group in Somalia.

Abdullah received a six-month prison sentence for his conviction, but was released immediately into ICE custody because of time served. He was ordered deported by an immigration judge in May 2003 and he lost his subsequent legal efforts to overturn that ruling.

VII. Information Exchange System for G-8 Summit Events Announced

As part of its Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) initiative, the Department on May 28 announced the implementation of its Internet-based counterterrorism communications system for use by homeland security officials, state and local leadership, and first responders during the G-8 Summit events at Sea Island, Ga., in June.

The system will also be implemented for other upcoming National Security Special Events as well as in connecting states, territories, Washington, D.C., and 50 major urban areas to strengthen the exchange of information. (See related article below.)

“The homeland is more secure when each hometown is more secure,” said Secretary Ridge. “The better we share information between the federal government and our state and local partners, the more quickly we are able to implement security measures where necessary.”

The HSIN initiative is supported by the Joint Regional Information Exchange System (JRIES) that was originally developed by state and local authorities in partnership with the federal government. This system allows all states and major urban areas to collect and disseminate information between federal, state, and local agencies involved in combating terrorism. The network is a secure 24/7 real-time collaborative tool that has interactive connectivity with the Department’s Homeland Security Operations Center. This secure system significantly strengthens the exchange of real-time threat information at the Sensitive-but-Unclassified (SBU) level to all users.

“We believe that the use of this system is critical in providing a more secure environment for not only the G-8 Summit but for other upcoming special events nationally,” said Asa Hutchinson, Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security.

HSIN participants using the JRIES system to create a more secure environment for the G-8 Summit events were provided software licenses, technology, and training to participate in the implementation and use of JRIES for information sharing and situational awareness during this special timeframe. Under the leadership of state and local homeland security advisors, this special implementation of the system provides unique access for a variety of users, including federal, state, and local law enforcement; U.S. Coast Guard; National Guard; State Emergency Operations Centers; first responders; and others. Future program implementation will include the county level, communication at the classified SECRET level, and the involvement of the private sector.
HSIN’s JRIES is a counterterrorism communications initiative founded and managed in conjunction with state and local governments, counterterrorism authorities, and law enforcement agencies. At the request of state and local partners, this platform has been adopted by Homeland Security as the system of choice for information sharing.

VIII. DHS Agencies Protect National Special Security Events

G-8 Summit in Georgia Will Utilize Many Departmental Assets

As Secretary Ridge announced several weeks ago, the country is entering a period in which there are several high profile events that the Department of Homeland Security believes could be attractive targets for terrorists. Across the country, there will be an increase in security – from a more pronounced local law enforcement presence to extra Homeland Security assets deployed during special events.

Certain events designated as National Special Security Events (NSSEs) – the G-8 Sea Island Summit, Democratic National Convention and the Republican National Convention – will receive additional assistance from both the federal government and state and local authorities.

The upcoming G-8 Summit, taking place in Georgia from June 8-10, is an illustrative example of how the many agencies of DHS work together with the relevant local authorities toward the common goal of homeland security. Although the Department is unable to provide specific information with respect to the security plan surrounding the G-8 Summit, below is an overview of how DHS agencies are working together to provide security at one of our nation’s most visible events.

United States Secret Service (USSS)

- The U.S. Secret Service is the lead agency for the design, coordination, and implementation of the operational security plan for the G-8 Sea Island Summit. This entails creating the overall security blueprint plan with partner state and local agencies, and providing leadership to the participating federal entities.
- The Secret Service and its law enforcement partners will emphasize the importance of prevention and deterrence for the G-8 Summit as well as preparation to handle a variety of potential situations which may arise during the course of this event.
- Should the need arise for a response to a tactical threat, the Secret Service will be prepared to respond by employing a number of specialized units with unique expertise.
- For security reasons specific methods of protection and preparation are not revealed, however, there is a tremendous amount of advance planning and coordination in the areas of venue, motorcade and airspace security, communication, credentialing, and training.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

- ICE is providing the second largest cadre of federal law enforcement personnel in support of security and public safety efforts at the G-8 Summit.
- ICE Office of Investigations is deploying a large number of Special Agents, and many government owned vehicles, to comprise units focusing on security aspects of the G-8.
ICE Federal Protective Service (FPS) will deploy personnel to Savannah, Brunswick, and St. Simons Island. Their mission is to ensure public safety and continuity of operations at federal facilities in the area. The FPS deployment includes K-9 Explosive Detection teams, uniformed officers, intelligence and undercover agents, bicycle and motorcycle officers, rapid response teams, and WMD/HAZMAT technicians.

FPS will position one Mobile Command Vehicle (MCV) in Savannah and another in Brunswick to serve as force multipliers for federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. MCV’s are highly advanced communication centers, with capacity to operate as primary or backup radio base stations for all levels of law enforcement, monitor video cameras from U.S. government facilities, retrieve other types of closed circuit video signals, and receive real-time aircraft video feeds.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- FEMA is the lead agency responsible for consequence management for all National Special Security Events and will be in charge of providing emergency management coordination and any needed response and recovery assets.
- FEMA is providing multiple disaster response teams, capabilities, and assets to support the event including the following: urban search and rescue task forces; National Disaster Medical System teams, facilities and coordination with the local medical community; pharmaceutical stockpile; strategic national stockpile cache; emergency management teams and emergency response teams; emergency command and control capabilities; logistical and communications support.

Coast Guard

- As the primary federal maritime law enforcement agency, Coast Guard personnel will provide comprehensive waterside coverage on and over the water for the G-8 Sea Island Summit coordinating closely with state, local, and other federal maritime law enforcement assets.
- Numerous Coast Guard units and personnel will be involved in this event including boat crews, law enforcement boarding teams, pilots and aircrew, support personnel, and a wide variety of Coast Guard assets.
- Coast Guard helicopters will assist in security zone surveillance and enforcement as well as air interdiction efforts.
- The Coast Guard's Captain of the Port has worked closely with commercial shipping interests and other waterway users to minimize the effects of security zone enforcement on recreational boating, commercial fishing, and the free flow of commerce into and out of the Ports of Brunswick and Savannah.

Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

- Approximately 700 official international attendees will arrive during the week of June 7 to attend the Summit. CBP will be responsible for smoothly processing these visitors into the United States. In addition, numerous “advance teams” will arrive at least 10 days in advance of the Summit. CBP Field Liaison Division will coordinate with the Department of State to handle all requests for port courtesies to ease entry processing into the United States for this event.
CBP will coordinate with the Secret Service to provide x-ray equipment to scan commercial vehicles and delivery trucks as they enter the venue area. Similar screening tactics were used during the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC)

- FLETC, which is only minutes from Sea Island, will provide logistical, training, and contingency support to numerous federal, state, and local agencies. Housing and transportation issues will also be supported by FLETC staff.
- The Joint Information Center (JIC) will be located at the FLETC campus in Brunswick, Ga. This multi-agency media support unit will concentrate on collecting and disseminating information about Summit security activities to the more than 4000 expected press.

Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

- TSA screeners will be deployed to help provide physical security screening at various venue sites.
- TSA will provide security screeners, Assistant Federal Security Directors for Law Enforcement, and aviation security inspectors to assist with screening Summit visitors and attendees.
- TSA is taking steps to enhance aviation security at affected commercial and general aviation airports near the multiple G-8 venues. Additional surveillance activities including increasing random inspections and perimeter security checks will take place. Town hall meetings with pilots from these airports have also occurred to increase their awareness of security precautions.

Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection (IAIP)

IAIP is supporting the G-8 Summit by ensuring real time connectivity and information sharing among all DHS components and state and local partners. IAIP’s Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC) is DHS’s national-level hub for operational communication and information sharing pertaining to significant events. The HSOC maintains and provides situational awareness on homeland security matters for the Secretary of Homeland Security, the White House Security Council, and the federal community. For this event, HSOC has:

- Coordinated with all elements of DHS and our state and local partners to establish full connectivity among the security elements at the site of the G-8 Summit, and between those elements and HSOC. This will ensure the timely sharing of any threat information, intelligence, and operational information pertinent to the security of the event with all involved elements, and will ensure HSOC provides situational awareness of the event to the Secretary and other senior leaders.
- HSOC is dispatching three officials to the Summit to establish a multi-agency command center to provide 24-hour onsite monitoring of the event. They will be joined by representatives of IAIP’s Office of Information Analysis and Office of Infrastructure Protection, the Science and Technology Directorate, and the Office of Public Affairs to provide in-depth support to the Principal Federal Official assigned for the Summit.
IX. CBP Modifies Procedures Regarding Entry Requirements of Foreign Journalists

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Robert C. Bonner announced that new guidance has been issued to all CBP port directors regarding discretionary authority to permit travel for foreign journalists who attempt to enter the United States with the wrong visa, while reminding those foreign journalists that they should be aware of immigration policies before they depart for the United States.

Representatives of foreign press, radio, television, or other foreign information media have occasionally applied for admission to the United States as non-immigrants with “B-1” business visas, or as business visitors under the Visa Waiver Program. The Immigration and Nationality Act does not allow them to enter in that manner. They are required to enter under an “I” visa that applies to working journalists.

“Customs and Border Protection's priority mission is keeping terrorists from entering this country. We also enforce all laws, including immigration laws at our borders and ports of entry,” said Commissioner Bonner. “While we carry out our mission and enforce our laws, we realize there is a difference between fraud and failure to be informed of the legal requirements for entering the United States. That is why we are giving our port directors leeway when it comes to allowing journalists to enter the U.S. who are clearly no threat to our security.”

Under the new CBP policy, a Port Director may consider a one time discretionary authorization to enter the United States. If that discretion is exercised, the journalist will be advised of the requirement to have a visa in the correct classification for any future trips to the U.S.

“We are an open society,” said Commissioner Bonner, “and we want people to feel welcome here. We want everyone to know the rules before they get here.” Visa requirements can be found on the U.S. Department of State web site at http://travel.state.gov/ireval.html or at http://travel.state.gov/visa;media.htm.

X. USCIS Improves Customer Service by Expanding Online Filing of Immigration Benefits

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced May 26 that it has expanded its electronic filing or E-Filing program. This simple- and friendly-to-use system allows customers to go online to apply for certain immigration benefits.

USCIS has added six of the most commonly used immigration applications online, totaling the available applications on the USCIS website to eight forms. Together, the eight forms account for more than 50 percent of the total volume of benefits applications USCIS receives annually.

“The Department of Homeland Security is committed to improving immigration services while strengthening national security to ensure that our country remains open to those who wish to pursue the American dream,” said Secretary Ridge. “By expanding E-Filing, USCIS will be able to provide immigration information and process benefit applications in a more timely, accurate, and efficient manner.”
Eduardo Aguirre, Director of USCIS said, “We want to make sure that our customers can enjoy the highest standards of service, while securing privacy and national security.”

The six new forms and petitions now available online include: Employment-based petition for non-immigrant Worker (Form I-129); travel documents (Form I-131); employment-based petition for immigrant worker (Form I-140); changing or extending non-immigrant status (Form I-539); temporary protected status (Form I-821); and premium processing (Form I-907).

When USCIS initiated E-Filing last year, it began with the application for Replacement of Permanent Resident Cards (“green cards”) (Form I-90) and for Employment Authorization Documents (Form I-765).

In addition to the new forms, USCIS has made or is making improvements in other areas to the E-Filing program. Customers who file online can establish an E-Filing “account” that includes a unique User ID and Password. Customers will be able to start completing a form, save it, and return to it later for completion at their convenience. Customers will also be able to pay application fees securely by using a credit card, debit card, or the electronic transfer of funds from a checking or savings account.

E-Filing is just one of several Internet-based services that USCIS customers can access. Customers can also visit www.uscis.gov to check the status of a pending application, schedule a date and time to meet with an Immigration Officer using a new initiative called InfoPass, obtain immigration information, and download free forms.

XI. FEMA Responds to Midwest Towns Leveled by Tornadoes

In Bradgate, Iowa, last weekend, no one questioned the potential power of a tornado, when a twister on May 22 leveled the tiny town of 100 people. Houses lay crumpled to their foundations, personal belongings were scattered for blocks, and hundreds of thousands of people were without power.

Many injuries and at least three deaths have been reported as a result of the series of storms that walloped the Midwest in the past week. Violent storms have also struck parts of West Virginia, Nebraska, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania.

FEMA immediately sent a regional debris removal expert to Iowa to offer technical assistance in managing the extensive debris left by the tornado. Both Iowa and Nebraska governors submitted expedited requests for federal assistance. Nebraska’s request was for all types of federal assistance for four counties; Iowa asked for assistance in 14 counties. Both requests were granted on May 25.

“President Bush acted quickly because he knows that people need help now to recover from these devastating storms,” said Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response. “The Department of Homeland Security and FEMA will do all we can to make sure that everyone in need of assistance receives it as fast and efficiently as possible.”

While devastating, this past week’s tornadoes are not uncommon events. Tornado season runs from March through August, although tornadoes can occur at any time of year. Some 1,000 tornadoes develop each year in the United States. According to the National Weather Service, about 42 people are killed by tornadoes each year.
Tornadoes (not hurricanes) produce the most violent winds on earth. Tornado winds can approach speeds of 300 miles per hour. Ranked by a six-step system, small tornadoes are considered an F-0 and range from 40-72 miles per hour. The most violent tornadoes are F-5s, and have winds ranging from 261 to 318 – winds strong enough to lift homes off foundations and carry them for considerable distance.

Since no house, no matter how strong, can withstand such high winds, FEMA advocates the construction of so-called safe rooms in high-risk areas. These specially constructed interior rooms can be built to save lives even if the rest of the house is destroyed. Costs for a safe room (often also used as a closet or bathroom) can range from $2,500 to $6,000.

**XII. FEMA Releases Recommendations for Emergency Response to Incidents Based Partially on 9/11 Events**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) today released a report, “Responding to Incidents of National Consequence,” which includes recommendations for fire and emergency services based on the events of Sept. 11, 2001, and other similar incidents.

The report was developed by the National Fire Programs Division of the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), and includes a prioritized checklist of recommended actions for emergency response agencies and other support information.

“This report is important for those emergency response leaders who coordinate or support local incident management at major or complex emergencies and disasters,” said Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response. “The guidance will help them function efficiently and effectively under the National Incident Management System.”

The report provides guidance to fire departments and emergency services across America to prepare for, respond to, and recover from major multi-jurisdictional local incidents that have national consequences and may involve national resources. The issues and recommendations in the report were identified in various after-action reports and interviews with the leaders of the organizations that responded to, participated in, and managed these events.

The report is based on information gathered about the responses to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorism incidents in New York, Virginia, and Pennsylvania; in fall 2001 the anthrax incident in Boca Raton, Fla.; the 2002 Winter Olympic preparations in the Salt Lake City area; and the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City.


**XIII. U.S. and Mexico Hold Bi-National Oil Spill Response Exercise**
The United States and the Mexican Navy held a bi-national oil spill response exercise in Matamoros, Mexico, on May 26.

The exercise is called MEXUS Gulf 2004. This event marks the third joint exercise since the signing of the agreement of cooperation between the U.S. and Mexico regarding pollution of the marine environment by discharges of hydrocarbons and other hazardous substances, called the MEXUS Plan, in February of 2000.

This year's exercise is being sponsored by Shell Exploration and Production Co. (SEPCo) in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard and Mexican Navy. SEPCo is the deepwater Gulf of Mexico's largest operator and producer of oil and gas. Shell's goal in sponsoring this year's event is to further the cooperation and effectiveness for both governments and industry by addressing the joint response efforts, following a significant impact to the cost shared by both nations.

The exercise will address trans-boundary, socio-economic, and logistical issues that such a pollution incident could bring, and will also examine established response procedures and implementation solutions from previous exercises' lessons learned.

The exercise scenario simulates a 24,000 barrel oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico approximately 200 miles east of South Padre Island, Tex., and approximately 20 miles north of Mexican territorial waters.

Agencies participating in the exercise include: U.S. Coast Guard, Mexican Navy, Texas General Land Office, Department of Interior, Minerals Management Service, U.S. Fish and Wild Life Service, National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, and Mexican Petroleum Company in addition to over 20 other federal, state and local agencies from both countries.

XIV. TSA, Aviation Industry Unveil 'Prepare For Summer Takeoff' Program

*Public can help reduce wait times by using checklist while packing*

The Transportation Security Administration in concert with other U.S. aviation leaders unveiled an aggressive national program for secure and convenient summer air travel as passenger traffic returns to pre-Sept. 11, 2001, levels.

Officials from TSA, airports, and major airlines together devised a strategy designed to help accommodate an anticipated 200 million air travelers nationwide between the Memorial Day and Labor Day weekends.

The Aviation Partnership Support Plan identifies numerous steps each partner can take to smooth the flying experience. Tactics include passenger education to improved techniques at the passenger checkpoint and the deployment of airport and airline personnel to assist travelers.

"I applaud the aviation industry for pulling together to address the expected challenges of this summer's travel season," said Secretary Ridge. "Today as we celebrate significantly improved airport security and a return to previous air traffic levels, we also pledge our continued commitment to a pleasant customer experience."
Officials from this partnership identified passengers' lack of preparedness for the security process as one of the major reasons for back-ups at the checkpoint. TSA screeners continue to intercept over a half a million prohibited items each month, including more than 40 firearms. The result is a more lengthy process at the security checkpoint for every passenger.

"The goal of the Prepare for Summer Takeoff campaign is to eliminate the extra minutes involved in the detection and removal of prohibited items and the need for secondary screening of passengers," said Rear Adm. David M. Stone, USN (Ret.), TSA's Acting Administrator. "We ask all flyers, regardless of their experience, to approach packing with particular care and to prepare for the screening process before going to the airport. Our screeners are up to the challenges before them, and I trust travelers will also do their part. "As true partners we can get the job done more efficiently and effectively."

Additionally, airlines, airports, and TSA will recommend operational enhancements for individual airports. Local teams at each airport will then consider these recommendations and adopt the steps most appropriate for their facility.

Among the recommendations is improved signage and recorded messages to help passengers navigate the airports, TV monitors and staff to prepare passengers for screening, and technological enhancements to expedite X-ray processes. Security will remain at the highest level with implementation of these steps.

Finally, to better position TSA's congressionally mandated maximum of 45,000 screeners, the agency is redeploying additional screeners to the nation's busiest airports.

*Prepare for Summer Takeoff* reminds passengers to:

**Handle prohibited items properly.** Everyone should know that firearms and large knives are prohibited at the passenger checkpoint. But pocketknives, pointed scissors, self-defense sprays, and other potential weapons also are not allowed in the aircraft cabin. Please place these items in checked bags or leave them at home. Go to the [TSA website](http://www.tsa.gov) for a complete list of prohibited items.

**Be prepared for screening.** To maximize efficiency at the security checkpoint be sure that all metal is removed and stowed in your carry-on luggage. A useful tip is to bring along a plastic bag to store keys, loose change, etc., for easy placement in your carry-on. When approaching the checkpoint at most airports, an airline employee or contractor will ask passengers for a boarding pass and a government-issued identification. Please have them out and available throughout screening.

**Be flexible.** Not all trips through the checkpoint will be the exactly same. Remember, screener activities are designed to protect you, your family, and loved ones, it is not meant to be inconvenient.

**Prepare before leaving for the airport.** Travel tips for parents, persons with special needs and the general public, lists of prohibited items and much more can be found on the [TSA website](http://www.tsa.gov). TSA encourages travelers to use the *Prepare for Summer Travel Checklist* provided on the Web site.
XV. Pressing Releases

FEMA PILOTS NEW TRAINING COURSE TO HELP FIRE, EMERGENCY SERVICES OFFICIALS ENHANCE COORDINATION
WASHINGTON, May 21 – Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) announced the offering of a new two-week pilot course that provides partnership opportunities for senior fire executives and their community planning partners. The course is scheduled for August 23 through Sept. 3, 2004, but interested students need to submit applications by June 4, 2004. National Fire Program Specialists at the U.S. Fire Administration developed the new course, “Partnering for Fire Defense and Emergency Services Planning.” In addition to coordination and strategy planning, the course will offer information on interoperability, risk assessment, data collection and analysis, and the interdependence of community services and emergency services on a community. Targeted students include local, regional and state fire and emergency services officers who are responsible for data collection, analysis and planning, as well as local, regional and state community risk planners. Students must complete the FEMA General Admissions application. For complete course information, go to: http://www.usfa.fema.gov/fire-service/nfa/courses/oncampus/nfa_pilot_off_P-507.shtml

CBP OFFICERS SEIZE ALMOST 6,000 POUNDS OF MARIJUANA AT OTAY MESA CARGO FACILITY
WASHINGTON, May 21 – U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at the Otay Mesa border station seized 5,925 pounds of marijuana from a tractor-trailer rig laden with metal patio chairs. CBP officers found 517 wrapped packages of the narcotic valued at $3 million hidden within a secret compartment inside the 48-foot trailer of the California-plated conveyance. Officers became suspicious after a narcotics detector dog alerted to the trailer while the truck was in line awaiting a more intensive inspection with a non-intrusive gamma ray scanner. Inspection with the gamma-ray system confirmed a false front wall behind which officers found the smuggled narcotics. The 30-year-old driver from Tijuana was arrested by special agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and subsequently transported to the Metropolitan Correctional Center for arraignment in federal district court. CBP officers at the Otay Mesa border station have seized over 35,800 pounds of marijuana this fiscal year, which began October 1. Almost 100,000 pounds of marijuana were seized at the cargo facility during fiscal year 2003, a 71 percent increase over the previous fiscal year.

COAST GUARD SEIZES 10,000-POUND CATCH, TERMINATES VOYAGE OF SHRIMP BOAT
WASHINGTON, May 21 – The Coast Guard terminated the voyage of a commercial fishing vessel approximately five miles east of Chandelier Island, Miss., after it was discovered that it had several safety violations, and seized its catch of 10,000 pounds of shrimp due to a lack of federally required marine conservation measures. The Mariachi's voyage was terminated for these safety violations and arrived under Coast Guard escort to Coast Guard Station Pascagoula. The Mariachi's 10,000 pounds of shrimp were sold at a local fish house and the money turned over to the National Marine Fisheries Service because the nets used to catch the shrimp lacked federally-required marine conservation equipment such as Turtle Excluder Devices and Bycatch Reduction Devices. An investigation is currently being conducted by Eighth Coast Guard District Office of Law Enforcement and Coast Guard Marine Safety Office Mobile, Ala.
ICE ARRESTS THREE HAITIAN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS IN FLORIDA
MIAMI, Fla., May 24 – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents in Florida have arrested three Haitians charged as human rights violators in two separate cases. Miami ICE Detention and Removal officers arrested 47-year-old Haitian Michael Fortuna May 24 at a Key West home where he had been hiding. An immigration judge determined April 9, 1999, that Fortuna was a human rights abuser linked to the Front Revolutionaire Pour L’Advancement et Progreed d’Haiti’ (FRAPH) under the command of Emmanuel Constant. The Board of Immigration Appeals upheld the judge’s ruling Sept. 12, 2002. Rather than surrender for removal, Fortuna fled and attempted to hide in South Florida’s Haitian community. ICE fugitive officers tracked Fortuna to Key West, apprehended him, and placed him in detention. In the other case, ICE agents in Orlando arrested Vital Cesear, 51, May 18, and Jones Charles, 33, on May 13. Both arrests stemmed from an ICE investigation in Miami that revealed their involvement in acts of persecution in Haiti. ICE agents in Miami have arrested 61 human rights violators since the inception of ICE’s “No Safe Haven” initiative. Nationwide, ICE’s investigators in the Human Rights Violators Unit and ICE attorneys in the Human Rights Law Division are pursuing more than 200 cases.

ICE CATCHES SIX COCAINE SMUGGLERS, SEIZES $20M IN COCAINE
HOLLYWOOD, Fla., May 27 –U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents seized $20 million in cocaine, arrested six suspected smugglers and seized two fishing boats from the Bahamas off the coast of Hollywood Beach on May 26, following a high-speed chase by ICE boats and a Black Hawk helicopter. Arrested were Carlos Diaz, 42 of Broward County and Bahamian citizens Nigel Grey, 32; Tiko Small, 19; Santero Dhyly, 28; Davero Rolle, 21; and Nemo Cooper, 25. An ICE-CHET (Customs High Endurance Tracker) patrol plane working with the Drug Enforcement Administration was dispatched to search for two suspected drug boats that were reported to have departed from Freeport, Grand Bahamas, and were heading toward South Florida. The plane's aircrew detected and tracked the two boats while serving as an airborne command and control center. The aircrew guided ICE patrol boats and the arresting officers to the smugglers' location off of Hollywood Beach. Those arrested were transported to the Coast Guard station in Dania Beach where ICE agents turned them over to the Drug Enforcement Administration for prosecution.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY ANNOUNCES INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY EVALUATION PROGRAM
WASHINGTON, May 28 – The Department’s Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) and the DHS Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP) announced the application period for $9 million in information technology demonstration projects. This program, the Homeland Security Information Technology Evaluation Program (ITEP), will be collaboratively managed and administered by OCIO and ODP by means of cooperative agreements. Eligible applicants are the State Administrative Agencies (SAAs) in each of the fifty states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, and the United States Virgin Islands. As part of ITEP, the SAA for each state and territory, in collaboration with state CIOs and homeland security directors, may submit up to three applications for candidate projects to ODP. During this review process, highest priority will be given to projects that best demonstrate the novel use of existing “state-of-the-market” information technology to remove one or more significant barriers in homeland security mission critical areas. For a complete list of the selection criteria, please see the cooperative agreement application at www.ojp.usdoj/fundopps.htm. SAAs must submit applications no later than June 30, 2004. DHS will review the applications by July 31, 2004, and make awards no later than Sept.
30, 2004. For a fact sheet or additional information on ITEP, please contact the ODP Helpline at 1-800-368-6498 or via e-mail at askcsd@ojp.usdoj.gov.

XVI. Upcoming Events

May 31 – Secretary Ridge speaks at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C.

June 1 – Secretary Ridge keynotes the 10th annual Tennessee Valley Corridor Summit, “Meeting America’s Newest Challenge,” Knoxville, Tenn.

June 2 – Director of Private Sector Liaison Al Martinez-Fonts addresses in a Bi-National Roundtable: Implications of Major Global Trends for the Canada-United States relationship, Washington, D.C.

Director of the National Cyber Security Division Amit Yoran testifies before the House Government Reform Committee’s Subcommittee on Technology, Washington, D.C.

June 3 – Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Officer Daniel Sutherland participates in a panel at the McGraw-Hill Summit on Civil Liberties and the War on Terrorism, Washington, D.C.

June 4 – Under Secretary for Science and Technology Dr. Charles McQueary speaks at the American Center of Physics, College Park, Md.

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THREAT LEVEL: YELLOW

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