The past three years to build lasting ties. The relationships and good will built through the State Partnership Program have been invaluable to U.S. military leaders and State Department officials as they sought to establish basing rights in the region to fight the war against terrorism.

“We help America in these countries by being there every day,” said Col. Mark Kalber, director of international affairs for the National Guard Bureau. “The key to the State Partnership Program is the citizen-soldier concept. By involving National Guard units, we can demonstrate through example the proper role of the military in a democratic society. National Guardsmen also bring their civil skills to the table, ensuring that the partnerships forged extend beyond pure military exchanges.”

While the primary goal of the program is to foster military-to-military ties, it has spawned a wide range of broader contacts between participating states and international partners. Each participating state forms a team of 15 to 20 civilian leaders to participate in exchanges and build broad relationships. The activities of these leaders vary; some states hold exchanges of legislators and other officials, while others include community leaders such as medical professionals to foster cooperation on specific assistance programs.

Montana’s partnership with Kyrgyzstan has acquired a new strategic importance since Sept. 11. National Guardsmen and civic leaders in Montana have worked since 1996 to build lasting ties with this former Soviet republic. The program has legislative analyst for the Montana Legislature and a recent exchange participant. “Though there are vast differences between both partners, we both share a frontier history and the challenges of meeting the needs of a largely rural population.”

Before Sept. 11, many Americans would have had a hard time understanding how these partnerships are in their immediate interest. Today as American soldiers, diplomats and law-enforcement officers fan out across the globe, it is clear the investments by Montana and dozens of other states in building lasting partnerships with countries in distant corners of the world have contributed substantially to the good will and common interest necessary to sustain the war on terrorism.

**Future implications**

States are adjusting to the new challenges of an insecure world. State international programs, like all facets of American life, have been directly affected by the tragic events of Sept. 11. State leaders have responded quickly to this challenge and are working to restructure their international programs and to develop new partnerships abroad. Despite new security challenges and budget constraints, it is clear the successes of state international programs, including the jobs they create for American citizens and the ties they forge with future allies, are more vital now than ever.

Promoting trade

The State International Development Organizations is the only national organization focused exclusively on state international trade development. SIDO helps create U.S. jobs by helping sell American products abroad. State international trade agencies are leaders in helping U.S. businesses access export markets and attract investment from abroad. Located in their states, international trade staff members provide export guidance to small- and medium-size businesses.

SIDO is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, affiliated with The Council of State Governments and made up of international trade directors and other professionals from state and related organizations across the country. Through its CSG partnership, SIDO members contribute expertise, information and resources to promote state international trade programs. SIDO also is a forum for bringing together a broader audience.


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The Midwest and Canada are partners in more than trade.

**BY ILENE K. GROSSMAN**

Trade between the United States and Canada exceeds $1 billion a day and supports more than 2 million jobs in each country. The economic importance of this relationship can readily be seen in the Midwest, where Canada is the largest trading partner of nearly every state in the region. The United States is the leading market for each of Canada’s 13 provinces and territories.

The economic ties between Canada and the United States prompted the Midwestern Legislative Conference to create the Midwest-Canada Relations Committee in 1991. It quickly became apparent that state and provincial legislators had much in common beyond trade. Despite differences between legislative processes in the states and provinces, public policy challenges such as education reform and health care funding are of great importance to officials on both sides of the border.

The benefits of working cooperatively and sharing information were underscored in 2000, when the province of Saskatchewan became an affiliate member of the MLC, and in 2001, when Ontario affiliated. The Midwest is not alone in acknowledging such ties. Quebec was the first province to affiliate with CSG through the Eastern Regional Conference, when the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have joined the ERC. CSG-WEST also is affiliated with two Canadian provinces, Alberta and British Columbia.

Shared interests

The Midwest-Canada Relations Committee has legislative members from

**The ties that bind**

Tracks coming into the United States were backed up for hours in Windsor, Ontario, two days after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., as tighter security checks slowed down border crossings between the two countries. Photo by The Windsor Star.

**Montana Guardsmen conducted a combat lifesaving seminar in Kyrgyzstan.**

**Chris Whatley is director of international programs in CSG’s Washington, D.C., office.**
New Canadian-American border agreement signed

American and Canadian officials signed an important new border and security agreement in early December. U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft; Canadian Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness MacAulay; and Canadian Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Elinor Caplan signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on Dec. 3.

The accord was signed on the same day Ashcroft announced that 600 Army and National Guard troops were being assigned to assist inspectors at border crossings and to conduct helicopter patrols along the border. The new agreement addresses a number of common immigration and border security concerns and strengthens cooperative efforts between the two nations. It calls for the establishment of the Border Enforcement Teams, multi-agency law enforcement groups, and increases participation in the teams from Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

The agreement also bolsters Project Northstar, a program to improve communication and enhance coordination between U.S. and Canadian law-enforcement agencies. Both countries will discuss the addition of a Canadian presence to the U.S. Foreign Terrorist Tracking Task Force, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police will be given access to the FBI’s digital-fingerprint database, the first time access will be granted to another country’s police force.

The Memorandum of Cooperation also implements a number of immigration procedures aimed at preventing terrorists from entering either country. To stem unlawful migration between Canada and the United States, the two nations agreed to review their visitor visa policies and develop joint-visa requirements. They will establish joint units to analyze passenger information at major international airports in both countries. Both nations also will increase the number of immigration control officers posted overseas to better identify people who should not be admitted to either country.

Later in December, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister John Manley and Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge signed a declaration for the creation of a Smart Border for the 21st Century. The accord further refines the cooperative agreement signed on Dec. 3, and outlines a plan for identifying and addressing security risks. Both countries also will adopt a series of measures to expedite the legitimate flow of people and goods across the border, including processing cross, rail and marine cargo at facilities away from the border.

Some concerns about loss of sovereignty, especially relating to the establishment of joint visa standards, have arisen since the accord was signed. Both nations hope the measures they agreed to will help them better coordinate security efforts and ultimately restore confidence about border control.
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tee, with financial support from the government of Canada, has organized a series of "conversations" to look at new ways to manage the border. Delegations include four to six legislators who attend caucus and committee meetings and floor sessions with the lawmakers they follow. In most cases, legislators have been able to shadow people from more than one political party, giving them a feel for what it is like to be in both the majority and the minority. The exchanges also have provided an important opportunity for legislators from the Midwest and the neighboring provinces to build professional and personal relationships.

Border security and trade

The committee expects to focus its attention during the current biennium on energy, air-quality, transportation and water issues, but it is the 5,500-mile shared border between the two countries that is garnering the most public attention. Since Sept. 11, security procedures have been tightened for people and goods, but only 600 border-patrol and immigration officials are regularly posted at the northern border, while the U.S.-Mexico border has 9,000 agents. Immediately after the terrorist attacks, delays at major border crossings, as well as delays at the site where the cargo with a high-tech tracking system but without some of the inspections to the site where the goods are loaded (and then monitoring the cargo with a high-tech tracking system) may offer many of the same protections as the current border-control system but without some of the backups. These modernization efforts are essential to continuing the strong economic relationship the two countries already have established.

Bene K. Grossman is assistant director of The Council of State Governments’ Midwest Office.