

Plugging the holes

States play large role in border security

BY CHAD FOSTER

More than 500 million people are admitted into the U.S. each year through land, sea and air, according to *Securing the Homeland, Strengthening the Nation*, President George W. Bush, March 2002. It is not surprising that the flow of people and goods across our borders helps push and steer our economy forward. However, those same borders can also serve as a conduit for terrorists, weapons of mass destruction, illegal immigrants, contraband and other unlawful commodities.

In March 2002, President George W. Bush published *Securing the Homeland, Strengthening the Nation*, his strategy and focus for the FY2003 homeland security budget. Four specific policy initiatives were deemed so urgent and so important that they required immediate attention through additional funding:

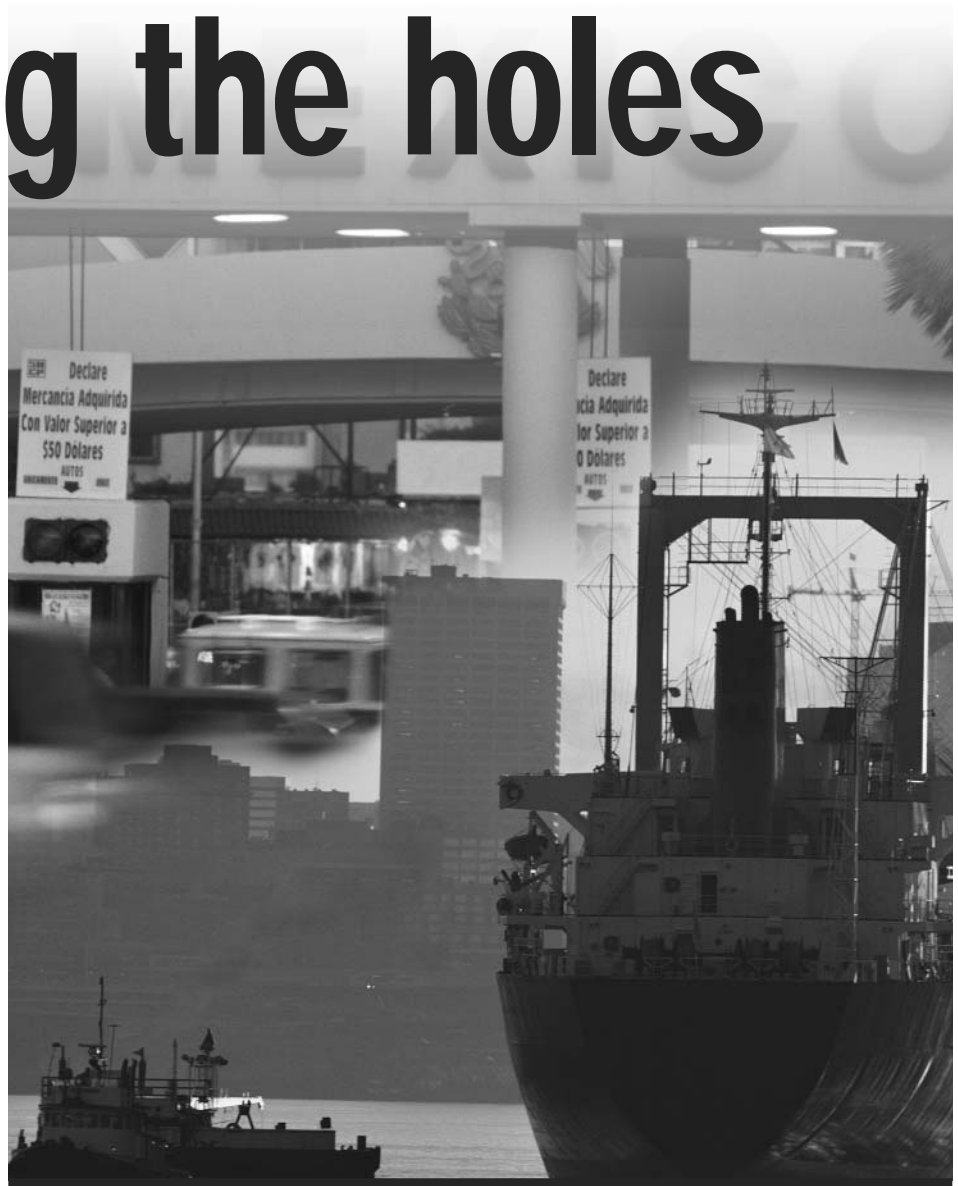
- Securing America's borders
- Supporting first responders
- Defending against bioterrorism
- Using 21st Century technology to secure the Homeland

President Bush also announced in June 2002 a plan to combine federal agencies with border security responsibilities into a proposed Department of Homeland Security.

While many federal agencies are responsible for the security of our nation's borders, state and local jurisdictions play a critical supporting and, in many cases, lead role. States are forging and fostering inter-governmental and international partnerships to identify threats, share ideas and develop multilateral solutions.

State partnerships

The Mexico-U.S. border is notorious for drug trafficking and the movement of legal and illegal immigrants. This 2,000-mile



Ports are a major focus of heightened border security efforts in the United States. 361 U.S. ports handle 95 percent of the country's overseas trade, according to the American Association of Port Authorities.

stretch of border presents law enforcement, drug enforcement and customs agencies with many complex security issues. Southern border states have opened dialogues with neighboring, cross-border states in an attempt to identify security issues and to develop multilateral solutions.

California Gov. Gray Davis traveled to Mexico City in Dec. 2001 and signed a Memorandum of Understanding with his counterpart in Mexico, Baja California Gov. Eugenio Elorduy Walther. This agreement promotes and expands cooperation in many fields to include ports of border entry, infrastructure and public safety.

Likewise, the country's northern border

with Canada stretches over 4,000 miles and contains more than 100 crossing points. In response to the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, border states are collaborating and cooperating with Canadian provinces to collectively develop and implement security solutions.

One specific example is New York's ongoing dialogue with its Canadian neighbor, Ontario. Gov. George E. Pataki met with Ontario Premier Mike Harris on Oct. 16, 2001 to discuss issues of mutual concern, including cross-border trade and increased border security.

Another example of partnerships to address border security is the International

Mobility and Trade Corridor program between Washington state and British Columbia. The partnership was formed over five years ago to address international commerce issues but has recently served as a medium to discuss border security and trade issues since Sept. 11.

Regional partnerships

Another way states are playing a critical border security role is through regional partnerships. The Council of State Governments (CSG) held a forum, Border Legislative Initiative (BLI), in March 2002 for both Mexican and U.S. state lawmakers. This forum is the start of an ongoing policy dialogue between states sharing similar security concerns. The forum also addressed other border issues such as commerce, environment and quality of life.

The Northwest states have also entered into partnerships to address security con-



State legislators from the U.S. and Mexico gather for an unprecedented forum to discuss enhanced border security in the wake of Sept. 11th.

cerns. The region relies heavily on trade with Canada as a critical source of revenue. At least one in four Washington state jobs is linked to international trade, and Canada and the U.S. are the largest trading partners in the world.

A Northwest Freight Conference was held in Oct. 2001 in Seatac, Washington for members of both public and private interest groups. The purpose of the conference was to address security concerns following

Sept. 11, 2001, to highlight successful freight partnerships that have made the Northwest a national model, and to establish priorities for freight mobility and security investments.

The Northwest region was selected by the Federal Highway Administration as an area where agencies craft new public-private partnerships, intergovernmental cooperation and technology to deal with freight problems. Examples include the

CSG Forum looks at border security vs. trade

In the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, governments on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border have stepped up security at ports of entry. One drawback of enhanced security however, appears to be increased waits and reduced border crossings to the detriment of trade and tourism. That's according to public and private sector representatives from the U.S. and Mexico who briefed state legislators from both nations at the inaugural forum of CSG's Border Legislative Initiative (BLI).

The March 18-19 forum in San Diego attracted participants from nine of the 10 U.S.-Mexico border states. Lawmakers from Arizona, California, New Mexico and Texas joined with their counterparts from Baja California, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Sonora and Tamaulipas for this unprecedented gathering of border legislative officials. California Assemblywoman Charlene Zettel chaired the briefing convened by CSG's Southern Border Committee. Texas Sen. Jeff Wentworth is vice chair of that committee.

Maquiladora industry and Border Trade Alliance spokespersons told legis-

lators that heightened security measures have slowed border crossings and disrupted economic activity along the U.S.-Mexico border. Jaime Gonzalez Luna, representative of the Maquiladora Industry Association of Baja California, reported that despite efforts by U.S. Customs officials to keep border waits to a minimum, passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles and pedestrians all experienced increased border delays since Sept. 11.

Jayson Ahern, Director of the southern California Customs Service, told participants that the solution to border delays lies in advanced technology, modernized ports of entry and more law enforcement personnel.

The War on Terrorism along the southern border also has helped to crack down on illegal drug transportation, said Jorge Villalobos of the Mexican Attorney General's office in Los Angeles. Other Mexican officials, however, are worried that the increased use of Mexican military and police checkpoints actually created a sense of insecurity among local residents.

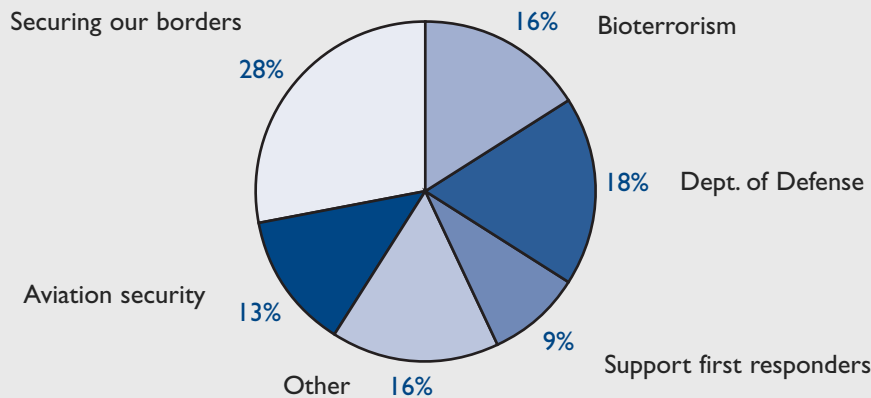
Legislators heard from speaker

Carlos Borunda, vice chair of the Foreign Affairs committee in the Mexican Congress, who said the U.S. and Mexico have built a solid commercial relationship framed by the North American Free Trade Agreement. Federal officials have set the ground rules, he said, but state legislators are closest to the realities faced by the border region.

The Border Legislative Initiative (BLI) is an effort by CSG-WEST and its Southern regional partner, the Southern Legislative Conference (SLC), to establish ongoing policy dialogue among state legislators on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. BLI will give legislators a forum to share ideas about the many challenges and opportunities along the U.S.-Mexico border. The initiative is made possible by a grant from the U.S. Agency for International Development to The Council of State Governments.

— *Edgar Ruiz is the Southern Border Program Manager for CSG-WEST. For more information about the Border Legislative Initiative, contact Edgar Ruiz at (916) 553-4423 or eruiz@csg.org.*

Homeland Security Strategy Distribution of FY2003 Budget



Source: *Securing the Homeland, Strengthening the Nation*, President George W. Bush, March 2002.

FAST Corridor partnership to improve freight movement through the central Puget Sound region, the Regional Freight Mobility Roundtable, and work by the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board.

Intergovernmental partnerships

In addition to lateral partnerships, states are forging intergovernmental partnerships to secure the nation's borders. In March 2002, New Hampshire Gov. Jeanne Shaheen announced the Operation Safe Commerce initiative to improve border security while keeping free trade flowing. State officials have been working with fed-

eral officials to make New Hampshire a test site for the Operation Safe Commerce prototype, a new approach to border security. Federal partners include the Coast Guard, the U.S. Customs Service, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Border Patrol, the U.S. Marshal in New Hampshire, and the U.S. Attorneys in Vermont and New Hampshire. A public-private partnership was formed with The Volpe National Transportation Systems Center in Cambridge, Massachusetts to test the Operation Safe Commerce prototype.

On a larger scope, the attacks on Sept. 11 prompted the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation on Border Security and Regional Migration Issues on Dec. 3, 2001 between Canadian and American officials. This accord strengthens Project Northstar, an initiative to improve communication and coordination between American and Canadian law enforcement agencies. This memorandum also called for the expansion of Integrated Border Enforcement Teams and multi-agency law enforcement groups, consisting of Canadian and American representatives at federal, state and local levels.

Ports

Border security assessments following Sept. 11 revealed significant vulnerabilities along America's water borders, specifically at seaports. A total of 361 U.S. ports with 3,700 terminals handle 95 percent of this country's overseas trade, support the mobilization and deployment of U.S. Armed Forces, and are departure points for mil-

lions of cruise passengers. Of the more than two billion tons of freight, the majority of the cargo is shipped in containers from ships onto trucks and railcars and immediately sent out on our highways and rail systems. Vulnerability assessments found that only 2 percent of those containers are ever checked by Customs or law enforcement. With the expectations that maritime trade will double by the year 2020, port security will grow increasingly important, according to the American Association of Port Authorities, Nov. 21, 2001.

Public port authorities and state and local government agencies are playing an increased role in the security of these critical ports. Partnerships between federal, state and local authorities are required to sustain a heightened level of security at ports.

The Port and Maritime Security Act (federal legislation introduced in 2001) will establish port security task forces, law enforcement subcommittees and local port security committees. The law enforcement subcommittees are comprised of federal, state, and local government law enforcement agencies to address port security issues, including resource commitments and law enforcement sensitive matters.

Local port security committees consist of representatives from the port authority, labor organizations, the private sector, law enforcement, and from the federal, state and local governments. The purpose of these committees is to plan and coordinate port security activities, make recommendations for the port security evaluations, review security plans annually and conduct field security exercises at least once every three years.

Leading and supporting roles

State and local agencies play a critical role in securing our nation's borders despite the lead role of the federal government. States and regions are taking a proactive lead in building intergovernmental and international ties to identify threats, share ideas and develop multilateral solutions. These ties will help combat terrorism in the 21st century. ★

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Securing ports

The U.S. Department of Transportation recently awarded \$92.3 million in grants to 51 ports located throughout the nation to enhance security. The grants will fund enhanced facility and operational security, security assessments, and "proof-of-concept" projects, which will explore the use of new technology, such as electronic seals, vessel tracking and electronic notification of vessel arrivals, to improve maritime security.

Source: *U.S. Dept. of Transportation*, June 17, 2002.