

The mother of invention

BY TODD MATTHEWS

TO WASHINGTON STATE'S WEST, THERE IS WATER: THE GLEAMING SHEET OF THE STRAIT OF GEORGIA, WHERE A CROOKED LINE VISIBLE ONLY ON MAPS SEPARATES THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES FROM THE DISTANT AND SHADED BUMP OF CANADIAN VANCOUVER ISLAND. To the north, there is land: The steel and glass tips of downtown Vancouver buildings poke above the rolling hillside town of White Rock, British Columbia. And to the east, a porous border stretches 427 miles and climbs steeply over the rugged North Cascades before dipping down into the wheat fields of the Palouse.

For the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Washington state's water and land boundaries have not only required more than one agency to protect the state but they have also forced local homeland security authorities to be innovative. As a result, whether in technology or organization, Washington state has been leading the way in key aspects of US homeland security.

Port security

Some Washington innovations are technological.

In May 2007, DHS officials and Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.) announced that the port of Tacoma had been selected as the first site in the United States to scan and detect intermodal cargo for radiological materials. While American ports had been scanning cargo offloaded from ships and onto trucks, at the time there was no means for scanning cargo loaded onto trains.

That changed when Tacoma's port, which ships more than 70 percent of its total import cargo by rail, was used as a screening test bed. The program resulted in two new technologies: crane-monitored detection systems and a radiation monitor sufficiently large to accommodate straddle carriers. A prototype of the straddle carrier drive-through, which is being developed in-house by the Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO), will be tested later this year.

"We'll have to evaluate from the suite of existing technologies what is the most appropriate technology to deploy," Julian Hill, DNDO's assistant director of engineering and



Michele James, director of field operations in Seattle, Wash., visits the Peace Arch border crossing in nearby Blaine, a key US-Canadian crossing point.

evaluation, told *Homeland Security Today*. "But the Port of Tacoma's test facility will remain for other emerging technologies."

Enhanced licenses

For the average Washington state resident, most innovations have gone unnoticed except for one—the Enhanced Driver License (EDL). The license was born out of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. Washington was the first state to introduce the EDL, a beefed up identification card that serves as both a passport and driver's license or photo identification.

The idea was formed three years ago when Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire (D) and British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell discussed facilitating border crossings in anticipation of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

EDL criteria was worked out between DoL and DHS, with DHS requiring background checks on state employees issuing the EDLs and training the employees in fraud detection. DoL wanted EDLs available to all Washington residents, not just US-born citi-

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zens, as DHS originally desired. Both agreed the licenses should take advantage of radio frequency identification (RFID) technology. Rapid verification of EDL data proved one of the biggest technical hurdles.

With \$8 million in initial federal funding (and a subsequent \$3 million), Washington rolled out a pilot program for EDLs in January 2008. For an additional \$15, Washington residents may apply in person for a special license. Those applicants are interviewed by staff and provide proof of US citizenship, identity and Washington state residence. The resulting license contains an RFID chip with a unique identification number and all the information gathered during the screening process and interview.

The technology allows screeners to read cards at up to 10 feet from the scanner, retrieve data, check against a CBP database and verify identity with biometrics in less than a second.

By late April, approximately 50,000 people had enrolled in the program, and a record 1,700 EDLs were issued in a single week. Washington officials are now advising officials in Vermont, New York and Michigan on their own EDL programs.

Getting reorganized

Other Washington state innovations are organizational.

In 2004, CBP created the Bellingham Air and Marine Branch, the first of its kind in the United States.

In Bellingham, a city just north of Seattle, four airplanes and two helicopters spend 2,100 hours in the air annually patrolling the state's border, as well as the area near Vancouver Island and the San Juan Islands. They conduct regularly scheduled patrols, respond to federal and tribal requests and plan intelligence-gathering missions.

Two Cessna Citations and a C-12 aircraft have been modified with airborne radar and forward-looking infrared cameras. A Cessna 206 also provides support for local and state operations. The workhorses of the fleet are the helicopters: a UH-60 Black Hawk Utility model and an AS-350 A-Star model. The branch employs 37 CBP personnel and 15 mechanics. The branch supports other agencies in larger surveillance operations, mostly related to drug-trafficking busts. **HST**

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