By Dr G Sreekumar Menon

WE got the wonderful opportunity to see the world famous Niagara Falls. It is the collective name for three waterfalls that straddle the international border between the U.S. State of New York and the Canadian province of Ontario.

It was a treat to see the gorgeous Niagara from the U.S. side and from the Canadian side. The Peace Bridge is the international bridge between United States and Canada, with Customs Plazas at both ends of the bridge. Our itinerary had included visits to both the Customs formations, however the Boston Bombing took place then, and, the U.S. Customs could not accommodate our visit as scheduled. However, that did not deter this writer from gleaning information about the U.S. Customs.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is the largest uniformed, federal law enforcement agency in the country. CBP's priority mission is keeping terrorist and their weapons out of the United States. CBP is also responsible for securing the border and facilitating lawful international trade and travel while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws and regulations. This includes ensuring that all persons and cargo enter the United

States legally and safely through official ports of entry (OPEs), preventing the illegal entry of persons and contraband into the United States, promoting the safe and efficient flow of commerce into the United States and enforcing trade and tariff laws and regulations.

CBP protects approximately 7,000 miles of land borders and 95,000 miles of coastal shoreline. There are 327 officially designated ports of entry and an additional 14 pre-clearance locations in Canada, Ireland and the Caribbean. CBP assess all passengers flying into the U.S. for terrorist risk via Joint Terrorism Task Force and systems such as Advance Passenger Information System (APIS), United States Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology US-VISIT and the Student and Exchange Visitor System SEVIS. CBP also works with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to screen high risk imported food shipments in order to prevent bio-terrorism/agro-terrorism.

CBP has a workforce of over 58,000 employees, including officers and agents, agriculture specialists, aircraft pilots, trade specialists, mission support staff and canine enforcement officers and agents. More than 21,180 CBP officers inspect and examine passengers and cargo at over 300 ports of entry. Over 2,200 CBP Agriculture Specialists work to curtail the spread of harmful pests and plant and animal diseases.

Over 21,370 Border Patrol Agents protect and patrol 1,900 miles (3,100 kms) of border with Mexico and 5,000 miles (8,000 kms) of border with Canada. Nearly 1,050 Air and Marine Interdiction Agents prevent people, weapons, narcotics and conveyance from illegal entry by air and water. Nearly 2,500 employees in CBP revenue positions collect over $ 30 billion annually in entry duties and taxes through the enforcement of trade and tariff laws. These collections provide the second largest revenue for the U.S. Government. In addition, these employees fulfill the agency's trade mission by appraising and classifying imported merchandise.

CBP assesses risk in air, land and sea environments at each point in the travel continuum – long before a traveler arrives at a POE. Before an international flight departs for the United States from the foreign point of origin, commercial airlines transmit passenger and crew manifest information to CBP's National Targeting Center (NTC) reviews traveler information to identify travelers who would be determined inadmissible upon arrival.

CBP Resources

Mobile Surveillance Capability vehicles.

CBP has low-flying aircraft detection and tracking systems, maritime surveillance and data integration/data fusion capabilities, cargo supply chain security and border surveillance tools e.g. unattended ground sensors/stripwires, camera poles, and wide area surveillance, to assist its work.

CBP also employs a variety of resources in the air and maritime domains, 269 aircraft (including fixed wing, rotary and unmanned aircraft systems) and 293 patrol and interdiction vessels.

Interceptor Boats

U.S. Customs unmanned drones

U.S. Customs Border Patrol's P-3 Airborne Early Warning (AEW) aircraft.
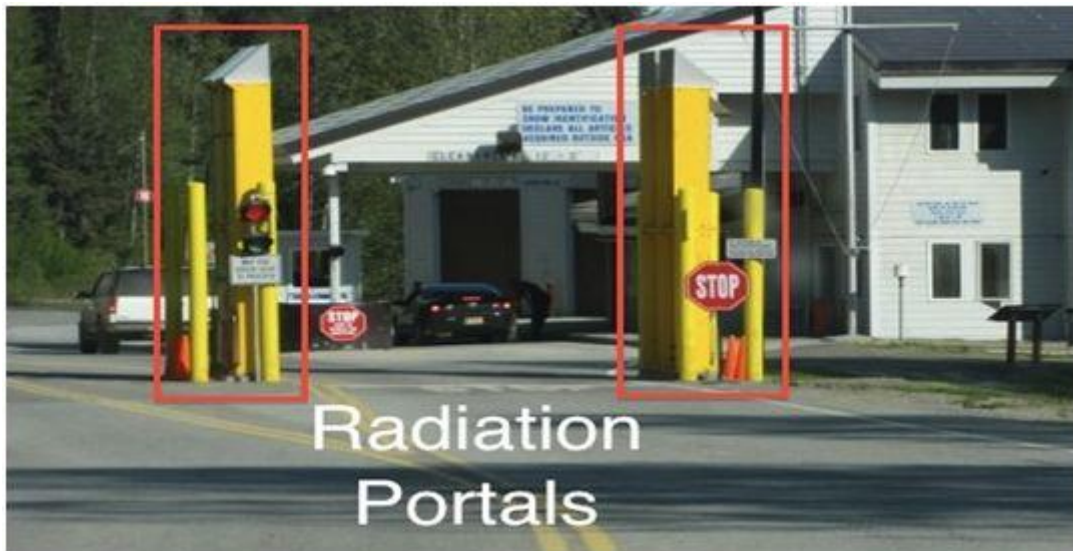
U.S. Customs UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

U.S. Customs deploys over 1,354 Radiation Portal Monitors at Ports of Entry to prevent terrorists from attempting to smuggle radiological materials used in nuclear and radiological dispersal devices.
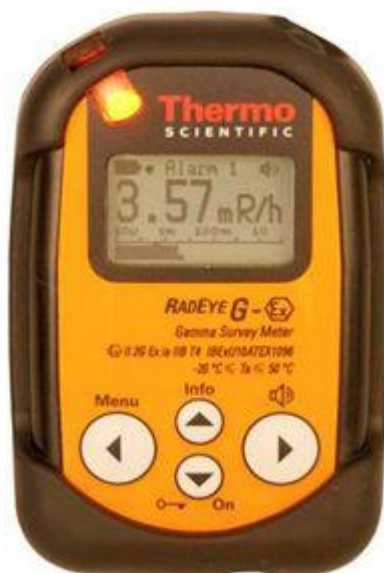

Chronicle / Mark Costantini

Most of the officers also carry portable radiation monitors especially at airports to detect passengers who may bring radioactive materials unauthorized. Officers at the airports usually have hand held portable radiation monitors.

The standard issue weapon for U.S. CBP officers is the Heckler & Koch P2000.

Another weapon prescribed is the chambered in .40 Smith & Wesson.

CBP Officers are also armed with expandable batons

The CBP Canine Enforcement Program has the largest number of working dogs of any U.S. federal law enforcement agency. K-9 teams are assigned to 73 commercial ports, and 74 Border Patrol stations throughout the nation.

Don't you think the U.S. Customs is awesome!

CBP officers in action!

We crossed into the Canadian border to complete the last leg of our training with the Canadian Customs.

(to be continued...)

Editor – Read –

Part I of Mid Career Training Program (MCTP) 2013

Part II of Mid Career Training Program (MCTP) 2013

(About the author – The author is Commissioner (Appeals), Customs and Central Excise, Goa and the views expressed are strictly personal.)