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CHDS Holds Annual Conference

Center for Homeland Defense and Security

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CHDS Holds Annual Conference

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The Center for Homeland Defense and Security held its Annual Conference Feb. 4-5 at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif.

The two-day conference featured panel discussions, topical seminars, and keynote speakers. More than 200 of the CHDS master's degree and Executive Leaders Program alumni, partners, sponsors, and faculty participated in the event.

The CHDS Annual Conference brings together top homeland security and defense officials from across the nation to address contemporary homeland security issues. As a result of participation, attendees gain a better understanding of the development, and evolution of the homeland security discipline while focusing on the challenges local, state, and federal leaders face in this rapidly changing field.

This year's theme, "Overcoming Obstacles to Homeland Security Implementation," focused on finding multi-discipline approaches to real-world homeland security issues. Participants attended topical seminars addressing these topics:

- Allocating Resources in Homeland Security: Shifting from Fear-Based to Risk-Based Planning
- The Obstacles, Challenges and Way Ahead in Reaching Vulnerable Populations
- Employee and Personal Preparedness: Establishing a Culture of Preparedness
- Politics vs. Merit: The Challenges of the Political Appointees and Professional Practitioners in Homeland Security
- The Essential Homeland Security Policy Items For a New Administration

Keynote speakers presented on a variety of topics and included:

Dr. James Breckenridge, CHDS professor and Associate Director of the Stanford Center for Interdisciplinary Policy, Research, and Education on Terrorism. Dr. Breckenridge presented the results of his groundbreaking survey, "American Perceptions of Homeland Security". He recently surveyed over 400 people nationwide regarding the attitudes and perceptions Americans have toward

homeland security.

Assistant Special Agent in Charge Piro currently in charge of the international Terrorism Branch for the Washington Field Office. Piro is responsible for leading the interrogation of Saddam Hussein after his capture. Piro provided insightful details about the FBI's interrogation strategies, interview challenges, and work with the Iraqi prosecutors who tried and convicted Saddam Hussein.

Peter Simpson, Chief of Counterterrorism for the London Fire Brigade. He was the lead UK CBRN terrorism advisor to the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, developing the Greek national strategy and operational response and in 2006 successfully mapped and negotiated a ten country agreement on regional crisis management and CT security planning for the Cricket World Cup. His presentation, "Counter Terrorism Operations Global or Local?" explored pre-planned counter terrorism operations, consequence management response, and the importance of multi-agency partnerships and cooperation in response to homeland defense.

George
Piro,
Assistant
Special
Agent In
Charge, FBI
discusses
the
interrogation
of Saddam
Hussein.

"The Conference was beneficial due to the interaction and networking among the various cohorts. Alumni members bring a wealth of knowledge and experience from the multiple disciplines and agencies that they represent. Conversing with alumni provides you with an understanding of where you currently stand within your jurisdiction as it pertains to homeland security issues and concepts. That alone was truly educational," said Lt. Al Ponenti, T.E.A.M.S. Unit Head for the New Jersey State Police, Special Operations Section.

"The alumni meeting is an excellent opportunity to reconnect with students from your own cohort. Additionally, it provides the forum in which you can meet and network with other students who, through an electronic environment share similar or opposing interests resulting in some excellent discussions and learning," said Linda Scott, Manager of the Bioterrorism Systems Development and Operations Section for the Michigan Department of Community Health, Office of Public Health Preparedness. "Choosing a favorite topic was difficult but I would have to say the preliminary study results presented by Dr. Breckenridge. As a public health professional, issues of communication not only emergency

preparedness and response partners is critical, but also the communication with our communities. This study will provide important and useful information for our state program and provided me an opportunity to discuss this in detail with Dr. Breckenridge. These meetings always offer a great deal of information that comes back to Michigan and the many homeland security initiatives."

The CHDS Alumni Association opened the second day of the conference with their annual business meeting. The Alumni Association is a national network and think tank made up of CHDS alumni. The Association grows by more than 150 master's degree and Executive Leadership Program graduates each year. The members lead and drive the policies, strategies, and organizations that support the nation's homeland security system.

Kevin
Eack,
Inspector
with Illinois
State
Police was
elected as
the CHDS
Alumni
Association
President.

The Association announced the appointment of its newest officers:

- President Kevin Eack an Inspector and Senior Terrorism Advisor, Office of Counter Terrorism for the Illinois State Police
- Vice President Sara Fisher an Emergency Response and Security Manager for the California Administrative Office of the Courts
- Secretary Lai Sun Yee, currently serving as a CHDS Distinguished Fellow
- Treasurer Mike Petrie the Director of Emergency Management and Security at the Laguna Honda Hospital

The new leadership will be instrumental in developing new partnerships, initiating networking opportunities, and enhancing recruitment strategies.

"It was an exciting conference. The level of energy and level of interest by the membership in becoming involved in the future of the organization was very encouraging," said Insp. Kevin D. Eack, Senior Terrorism Advisor, Office of Counter Terrorism for the Illinois State Police. "The opportunity to lead the association is a tremendous privilege."

"I was greatly impressed with the quality and depth of the speakers at this year's CHDS Alumni Conference. The subjects addressed were not only timely and relevant, but spanned the continuum from national security and the global war on terror to homeland security and insights into comparative approaches to domestic counterterrorism and emergency response

operations. Please convey my gratitude for a very informative and worthwhile event to the outgoing Alumni Association leadership and the conference organizing committee," said John Paczkowski, Director, Emergency Management and Security, The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and CHDS Distinguished Fellow.

"The CHDS Alumni Annual Conference was a terrific time to network with so many NPS classmates who returned, including a cross section of masters program and executive program alumni. The spirit of camaraderie was especially high, considering the interdepartmental and interagency nature of the alumni body. Local, state and national views were well represented. Between the well-chosen speakers and the interactive workshop sessions, the conference was well worth the investment of time each of us made for it," said Adjutant General Charles G. Rodriguez, Texas Military Forces.

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