



For Immediate Release
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eBizITPA Initiates Regional Collaboration on Border Security Surveillance

Friday, Oct 8, 2004 -- The Center for eBusiness & Advanced IT (eBizITPA) announced that it is coordinating a research initiative to increase surveillance on the Great Lakes that will uniquely combine expertise from Penn State Erie and Mercyhurst College. The initial project will involve technology research by Penn State Erie's Center for Navigation, Communication and Information Systems (CNCIS) led by Dr. Robert Gray into the capacity of existing radar equipment to track vessel movement on Lake Erie. The results will be paired with analysis by the Mercyhurst College Institute for Intelligence Studies (MCIIS) led by Mr. Robert Heibel on information requirements for border control, vessel identification and rescue, emergency management and agency coordination and response.

Through the efforts of Senator Jane Earll, eBizITPA has received a \$50,000 seed grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development to begin Phase 1 of the project, which ultimately could lead to an "information correlation center" in Erie that could serve as a data integration point for remote monitoring of surface movement on all or part of the Great Lakes.

"One of the goals for Erie County coming out of the Bosworth study on the future of the region was to take advantage of the emerging regional logistics and information technology cluster. This project not only does that, but also shows the benefits of collaboration with our area colleges and universities, using them to impart specific knowledge and conduct research. I am quite happy to have obtained this grant, as I am confident in the abilities of the participants to deliver a quality product that may very well be used for national security purposes," Senator Earll said.

Phase 1 will demonstrate the potential for monitoring surface movement using commercially available radar sensor and tracking technology combined with existing or emerging information software, while gathering the larger scale system requirements and feasibility from relevant stakeholders such as the U.S. Coast Guard, Directorate of Border and Transportation Security and regional emergency management agencies. Subsequent work would establish the feasibility of gathering relevant data and also developing an information center in this region.

According to eBizITPA President Susan Breon, "In the wake of 9/11, the U.S. and Canada have taken significant measures to further secure our borders; however, the Great Lakes border remains a significant weak spot. On the opportunity side, this represents a manageable area for developing and testing advances in surveillance and information distribution systems and related shipping lane safety. We are attempting to combine regional expertise in technology and information systems with that of intelligence analysis to address

both the challenge and the opportunity. It is a prime example of how we can potentially leverage our regional resources in important new ways.”

Dr. Gray and his research team will first simulate testing and then place commercial radar equipment on an existing tower and measure its capacity to track vessel movement under a variety of conditions. This will include:

- Quantifying vehicle tracking for 5 mi, 10 mi and 15 mi radius
- Tracking vessels which vary in size, shape and material composition
- Creating a tracking database; perform statistical analysis of data
- Validating usefulness in USCG search & rescue, homeland security & vessel intercept
- Developing hardware, software and intelligence requirements for next phases

Concurrently, Mr. Heibel and his team will identify key data requirements and capabilities to gather and disseminate information among relevant agencies. The results will enable the partners to define a project and propose a specific roadmap as well as identify public and private funding sources for additional research.

According to Breon, “If we can demonstrate both the concept and our capability to collaborate to perform this type of research, we believe we can attract federal funds to continue developing the project and potentially establish a center. We have talked with regional and national officials from several key departments who have expressed interest in the project as well as confidence in both Penn State and Mercyhurst expertise and have encouraged us to complete the initial concept test.

Dr. Gray said that the testing will begin within the next few months and could take up to a year to complete, depending upon results and weather conditions. Mr. Heibel expects to have his initial research completed within several months.

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The Center for eBusiness and Advanced IT (eBizITPA) is a statewide Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority initiative designed to help Pennsylvania enterprises understand and use information technology and e-business tools to be more competitive. It is headquartered in Erie, PA and located on the Internet at www.ebizitPA.org.

The Center for Navigation, Communication, and Information Systems (CNCIS) is part of Penn State Pennsylvania Transportation Institute and located at Penn State Erie’s School of Engineering and Engineering Technology. It serves to support design, integration and field testing in the areas of navigation and precision positioning, wireless communication, tagging and tracking, information/intelligence, surveillance and data mining.

Mercyhurst College Institute for Intelligence Studies (MCIIS) is nonprofit entity that has become an academic leader in the tailoring of timely open- source information products. Since 1995, it has completed several analytical projects with federal and state agencies and major international corporations. MCIIS also provides tailored, intelligence-related training to public and private sector clients. It recently completed a contract with the Department of Homeland Security to develop advanced analytical training for its intelligence research specialists and is generating training case studies with the Central Intelligence Agency University for the U.S. Department of Justice and the intelligence community.