

# STREAMLINING TRADE

## U.S. CUSTOMS GOES HIGH TECH

by Virginia Noordewier

*Customs Modernization Office, U.S. Customs Service*

The U.S. Customs Service is embarking on a modernization effort—the Customs Modernization Program—to improve Customs trade, enforcement and administrative operations. The Customs Modernization Program will bring an enterprise approach to the planning, definition, development and implementation of new business processes and the infrastructure that supports these processes.

The Modernization Program will have a positive impact on almost every aspect of U.S. and international trade and travel, Customs operations and related federal and international government agency

missions and programs. The Modernization effort will impact its many stakeholders on a day-to-day basis.

With the challenges of explosive growth in international trade and travel and ever-increasing law enforcement demands, Customs is relying on technology to enhance operations. Modernization will include the re-engineering of Customs operational processes and the development of new technology infrastructure, computer systems and software applications to support these processes. It will address Customs commercial, enforcement and administrative operations. The first Modernization project is the development of the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE), Customs new high-tech trade system.

Although ACE will be the first significant accomplishment, the Modernization process is much more. The entire Modernization program will span 15 years and will cover each of Customs mission areas: Trade, Enforcement and Administration.

Modernization will update the systems that Customs uses to do business by:

- Reducing maintenance costs
- Maximizing service to other government agencies and to industry
- Allowing greater access by the public
- Using technologies that are interoperable and easy to upgrade.

### CUSTOMS CHOOSES MODERNIZATION PARTNER

On April 27, 2001 the U.S. Customs Service accomplished a major goal—award of the Customs Modernization Prime Integration Contract to the “e-Customs Partnership,” led by IBM Global Services. Key team members include Lockheed Martin Corporation, KPMG Consulting, Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) and Sandler & Travis Trade Advisory Services (STTAS), Inc.

“The selection of our Modernization partner, the Prime Integration Contractor, is a significant achievement for Customs,” says Acting Commissioner Charles Winwood. “We can now begin bringing 21st century business practices to America’s borders.”



Photo courtesy of Gerald L. Nino

U.S. Customs Acting Commissioner Charles Winwood announces the selection of a Customs Modernization prime contractor.

Modernization will deliver new tools and cutting-edge technologies to Customs employees so that they can accomplish mission responsibilities in an environment that is constantly changing. It will also simplify transactions, allowing Customs to interact and communicate more easily with the trade community and other agencies.

“The Prime Integration Contractor will help Customs design, build and implement new information systems,” says S.W. Hall, Jr., Assistant Commissioner for the Office of Information and Technology and Customs Chief Information Officer. “The e-Customs Partnership is a team of top-notch companies and highly-qualified professionals. They have successfully developed and managed large information systems projects similar to Customs Modernization. The team’s business knowledge and technical capabilities, combined with the institutional and operational knowledge of dedicated Customs employees, as well as input from stakeholders like the trade community, is our blueprint for successfully building modernized systems that meet Customs mission needs.”

The team name, “e-Customs Partnership,” conveys a vision of Customs future as a paperless organization that uses electronic means to carry out mission responsibilities. Team members have a long history of working together, assisting customers in transforming their enterprise and employing technology to solve business challenges. The team offers a balance of commercial and government experience that can leverage best practices from both sectors for designing and engineering innovative solutions to Customs challenges. The team also has trade and enforcement experience, which will help them understand and address the complexities of Customs mission and operating environment. Each member of the e-Customs Partnership will play an integral role in ensuring that Modernization goals are achieved.

- IBM Global Services will lead and manage the e-Customs Partnership. IBM is the world’s largest systems integration and infrastructure management firm and will be accountable for achieving Modernization goals and objectives.

- Lockheed Martin Mission Systems (LMMS) will develop and integrate new systems and software. LMMS is certified at Level 5 of the Capability Maturity Model for Software (SW-CMM®) and Level 3 of the Systems Engineering Capability Maturity Model (SE-CMM®). This level of capability reduces risk in delivery of software and systems.

- KPMG Consulting will contribute business transformation, knowledge management and training expertise to the e-Customs Partnership.

- CSC brings its experience in information security and telecommunications to the team. STTAS is the nation’s largest dedicated provider of international trade and customs services and will provide global trade and Customs expertise.

#### TRADE SUPPORT NETWORK PLAYING A ROLE IN ACE DEVELOPMENT

Modernization should benefit everyone. With this goal in mind, Customs has established a subcommittee structure within the Trade Support Network (TSN) to collect user requirements for the Automated Commercial Environment.

The TSN was established in 1994 to be a forum for discussions regarding the redesign of its trade systems. The group’s more than 120 members represent a cross-section of the trade community and include importers, exporters, brokers, carriers, sureties, couriers, software vendors, attorneys and consultants.

Now revitalized, the TSN held its first ACE meeting in May of this year in

Washington, D.C. In addition to the May plenary hearing, the TSN accomplishes its work through subcommittees, which are small working groups comprised of TSN members who discuss specific components of the trade compliance process. The subcommittees are formed on an as-needed basis. Current TSN subcommittees are as follows:

- Account Management
- Entry Revision Project
- Revenue
- Multi-modal Manifest
- Trade Interface
- International Trade Data System
- Business Technology

Each subcommittee is co-chaired by a Customs and Trade representative. The two co-chairs of each subcommittee also serve as the Trade User Requirements Integration Committee.

This summer, the subcommittees will meet periodically to continue working on their recommendations for the first increment of ACE, which will include a foundation for account management, periodic payment processing, fast release of cargo for compliant companies and a single interface for the trade.

TSN recommendations for the first increment of ACE are due to Customs by early fall 2001 so that they may be evaluated and incorporated into the ACE requirements being developed by the e-Customs Partnership. ■

#### For more information on the TSN and how to become a member, please contact

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