

# The Edge

April 1997

National Imagery  
and Mapping  
Agency

Guaranteeing the Information Edge



*NIMA Business Day  
a Success  
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## As I see it

I've renewed my vow to get around NIMA more. If for no other reason than to thank you for your dedication and energy. Production remains our hallmark. Programs are making more and more sense and are supported by our many customers. It shouldn't be news to anyone that we still have some sorting to do to align our organization and settle on processes. The first step is defining issues, the next is crafting solutions. We are focused and moving to make NIMA a great place to work. You all deserve nothing less!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Jones".

To meet its goals in its two principal production areas—imagery analysis (IA) and geospatial information (GI)—NIMA has initiated a formal pilot program to explore areas of potential synergy across the new organization.

The early program, according to Rebekah Barrish, a pilot team leader, focused on learning about the new organization, developing a program strategy and defining short-, mid-, and long-term goals.

working in sectors of common concern in touch with one another.

John Westcott is program manager and Jerry Lindsey, executive officer. Westcott, a career imagery analyst, came to DMA from NPIC in 1995 for a rotational assignment and became involved with the NIMA transition.

"I remember the first time I saw cartographers doing extraction on the Digital Production System," Westcott said. "I realized that

## NIMA Pilot Program: Changing the Culture... Building Synergy

by Wells Huff

Short-term goals, she said, include response to time-sensitive events such as military exercises. Midterm goals are addressed by seven projects within the Pilot Program and provide two-way access to information between IA and GI. "The idea," she explained, "is to build a process to mutually leverage off the work of cartographers and imagery analysts to accomplish individual missions."

It is the long-term goals, however, which may ultimately provide the most meaningful benefits to NIMA. Lessons learned from the projects will be used to refine the requirements for programs such as the NIMA Softcopy Program and the U.S. Imagery and Geospatial Information System (USIGS).

### Early Initiatives

The first priority for the three cartographers and three imagery analysts assigned to the Pilot Program was learning about the respective "other side." Team members visited each of the production elements within IA and GI in both the Washington, D.C., area and in St. Louis. During those visits, the team began a task that continues today: initiating cross-cultural exchanges by putting offices and individuals

they were looking at every inch of the ground while doing feature extraction."

Westcott also knew that NPIC analysts had previously been forced to modify their routines because of decreasing resources and changes in the collection process.

"Seeing the way the cartographers do extraction made me wonder if we could devise a way to take advantage of the work being done by hundreds of cartographers every day," he said. "What if they could communicate potential intelligence finds to the imagery analysts?"

### Brainstorming and Pilot Projects

During the snows of last winter, Westcott and his team kept returning to a key question: *how do we merge the functions of imagery analysis with those of cartography?* "We started referring to any efforts to merge those functions as synergy projects or pilot projects."

They put together a list of candidate projects—and that, he said, was the beginning of the Pilot Program.

Asked for examples, Westcott said they can be as simple as access to databases. After all, he said, this is how imagery analysts get access to GI data and how cartographers access intelligence data.

One of the projects, Key Data Systems, is focused on cataloging NIMA databases, identifying candidates for access and putting access mechanisms into place. The project lead, Al Frank, built a plan to deploy JDISS workstations to GI production offices so that cartogra-



Westcott

continued on next page

phers will have easier access to NIMA's intelligence databases.

Meanwhile, he has already overseen the successful deployment of a geospatial information gateway to NIMA Washington Navy Yard. With the arrival of the gateway, imagery analysts not only have access to geospatial data, they receive the support services of the technical representative, Dave Russ.

A second project, Leveraged Discovery, builds from both the data access put into place by the Key Data Systems Project and from Westcott's initial impressions when observing the extraction process.

The goal of the Leveraged Discovery Project is to develop and implement a process that allows cartographers to augment the broad area search function of imagery analysis. The process will start with better access to intelligence for the cartographers and include NIMA College training of cartographers on the IA mission and improved production methods for area coverage.

Cartographer Jim MacLeay heads up the Leveraged Discovery Project.

"Our goal is to look at how we can effectively communicate potential intelligence finds to the appropriate personnel in the imagery analysis unit," he said. "We have an existing mechanism...but we know we need to expand on it." He said they discovered during initial research that information entered by the cartographers into the existing system isn't conveyed to a large portion of the intelligence community, or even to the imagery analysts.

Despite the barriers, MacLeay is optimistic.

"We've got hundreds of cartographers looking at imagery every day. If just 20 percent of those cartographers find just one item of intelligence interest every year, imagine how much better off NIMA will be," he said.

In fact, he noted, numerous items of potential interest have already been found and communicated to IA through informal mechanisms. The potential benefits to GI are equally significant.

"Imagery analysts frequently notice significant changes in infrastructure [roads, railroads, port facilities, and electrical power] as they correlate current imagery to the maps they are using. The imagery analysts can tip off cartographers that a product needs updating."

Other pilot projects include reviewing the production of gridded reference products in both IA and GI, data sharing between the two

on sensitive intelligence issues, surging the work force in times of crisis, using intelligence imagery to create geospatially accurate information and applying geographic information systems to intelligence issues. All projects are designed to bring IA and GI data to the desktop, to share data and, finally, to merge data.



MacLeay

### Long-Term Benefits

As a result of their work, the pilot project leads have found themselves interacting with personnel involved in NIMA's efforts at long-term planning for the organization.

"It was an unexpected turn of events," Westcott said. "But in the process of looking for areas to build synergy, each of the project leaders has developed a set of requirements to put communication or connectivity mechanisms into place. In some cases, those mechanisms have to be built from scratch. But in others, requirements could fit into plans that were already being developed—we could leverage off existing resources rather than reinvent the wheel."

Perhaps the Pilot Program's most significant accomplishment to date has been bridging the culture gap between the imagery analysts and cartographers—getting people in the same room and talking has been the key. Since NIMA is migrating towards a common database structure and softcopy system, the lessons the pilots will teach will be important.

Additionally, because most of the projects support real issues and requirements, it is only natural that analysts and cartographers should contribute to the operations concepts for these programs. ♦

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**Note:** Additional information for this story was supplied by Sharon Alexander and Rebekah Barrish.

# NIMA's Internal Placement Program Lessens Downsizing Impact

by Mark Cheli  
Office of Human Resources

**A** new NIMA program designed to lessen the impact of downsizing is in place. The NIMA Internal Placement Program (IPP) will give DoD civilian employees who are facing displacement priority consideration for other NIMA DoD jobs. Currently, it does not cover CIA-affiliate employees.

When positions are scheduled for abolishment, employees will be eligible to register up to one year prior to the scheduled effective date. NIMA office directors may also request registration for work situations that may trigger a reduction-in-force (RIF) if not resolved.

Patterned after the DoD Priority Placement Program (*see related article*), the IPP will register eligible personnel for positions at their current permanent grades and as many as three grades below their current ones. Employee registration will be voluntary until a RIF notice is actually issued;

then every affected employee will be registered.

The NIMA Internal Placement Program does not supercede the DoD Priority Placement Program (PPP). NIMA is still bound by PPP regulations; however, when a manager fills a

"...managers can reasonably expect an employee placed through the program to walk in and do the job with only minimal orientation..."

vacancy with an IPP candidate from the same commuting area, NIMA is not required to clear the PPP. This is because the DoD placement program allows downsizing agencies to place their own employees in positions in their current commuting area. This avoids additional separations and PPP registrations. In cases where an IPP registrant would be required to relocate to a new commuting area, PPP must first be cleared.

Loyce Lawson, NIMA Staffing Program Manager, explained the rationale for the DoD PPP rule about commuting areas.

"One of the things PPP is supposed to do is hold down permanent change of station costs for DoD," she said. "If an agency wants to move an employee to a new geographic area and there are already DoD employees who have been RIF'ed in that area who can do the job, the agency must take those RIF'ed employees first."

When HR receives a recruit action, it will first check the IPP for candidates and forward candidates' names on a certificate to the manager, who must choose from the list of "matches" or document why the candidates were not considered well qualified. If no matches exist, recruitment action will continue.

Lawson noted that there is a built-in assurance that managers will be receiving names of high-quality employees.

"Employees will be registered only for positions for which they are qualified and will be screened against each matched vacancy to ensure they are well qualified," Lawson said. "In other words, managers can reasonably expect an employee placed through the program to walk in and do the job with only minimal orientation, not extensive on-the-job training."

The program is open only to permanent employees who received at least a "pass" or "fully successful" on their current performance rating of

record and have had no formal disciplinary actions taken against them within one year of registration.

"With this program (IPP), we are telling managers that we will send them well-qualified employees who are meeting satisfactory performance," she said.

Presently, only employees identified by management as affected by the printing and distribution consolidation are eligible for IPP registration. In the future, other groups will be added to or removed from the program as appropriate.

HR advisers in the HR Customer Service Units are available to provide additional information. ●

## The DoD Priority Placement Program

by Mark Cheli, Office of Human Resources

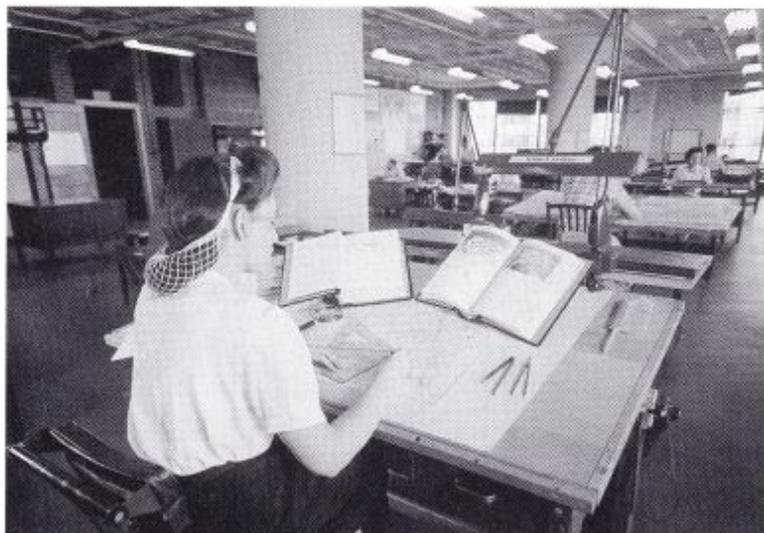
**F**ew people know it by anything except the "stopper list," but the Department of Defense Priority Placement Program has become a government model for placing DoD employees affected by reductions-in-force (RIF) into new positions.

Since its inception in 1962, the Priority Placement Program has provided continued employment to more than 140,000 dedicated and experienced DoD employees who faced possible separation. The program is monitored by the DoD Civilian Assistance and Reemployment (CARE) Office.

"On the management side of this program, the satisfaction rate of gaining supervisors with these employees is very high," said Loyce Lawson, NIMA Staffing Program Manager. "That's because employees are placed in positions only if they are fully qualified to do the work with little or no orientation and have no recent performance or discipline problems."

DoD requires that NIMA "clear" the Priority Placement Program whenever

*continued on page 18*



*Then and Now: In older times (1940s), Allied aeronautical information was compiled and evaluated at the Aeronautical Chart Plant (left). Now, because of rising flood waters, NIMA St. Louis is revisiting its past by moving supplies into the old building (photos below). Note similarities between photo left and bottom photo.*

## Rising Waters Prompt Annex Move

by Don Kusturin

**T**he threat of rising waters due to unusually heavy snows has prompted NIMA St. Louis to retrace its roots to the past. After almost half a century, equipment and supplies at its South Annex location are being moved to the old Globe-Democrat building, which originally was occupied by the Aeronautical Chart Plant, a NIMA predecessor organization.

"A combination of an early rise in the river and predictions from the National Weather Service of flooding... led me to decide to move out of the South Annex earlier than planned, said Army Col. James Stordahl, NIMA St. Louis regional commander. "Virtually all tasks associated with this move, except the interim stop at the Globe building, are required for the move to the Arnold building early next year."

The first items to be moved were supplies—paper and reprostat. The move to the facility was coordinated with the St. Louis Police Department, which offered to block off streets during the move.

More than 100 semitrailers were loaded, some bound for the Globe Annex; others being stored at the Army's Goodfellow Blvd. facility in north St. Louis. Some loads also have gone to the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office to be excessed.

Printing and bindery operations, along with security personnel, are all that remain at the Broadway location.

"We will continue printing at the South Annex," Stordahl said, "until flooding is imminent."

If flooding does not occur, he added, printing will continue until the move to the Arnold facility. ♦



Photo by Jim Stepaniak

*Moving and organizing supplies (above) are Don Morgan (left, foreground) and Everett Shulteis (right). Ralph Wolf is in background in photo below. John Sanders operates fork lift.*



Photo by Jim Stepaniak

# NIMA's U.S. Central Command Liaison Team:

In olden days—before the standup of NIMA—meeting customer needs often resulted in communication problems and duplication between federal agencies, particularly for liaison officers who represented their agencies to military commands.

## Where Customer Needs Are Always First

by Jennifer Lafley

"Before becoming NIMA, we spoke to each other a couple of times a year," said Bruce Boslaugh, a NIMA liaison officer for the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Fla. "Now we share information daily."

The varied backgrounds and expertise liaison team members brought from their former agencies has strengthened their ability to serve the command. Including Boslaugh, formerly of the Defense Intelligence Agency,

the other liaison officers are Mike Pohlers, formerly of DMA; Vincent Dunn, formerly of NPIC; and technical representative, Kelvin Toots, formerly of DMA.

"It was like all the pieces coming together at the same time," said Boslaugh. "We've really learned from each other."

The last thing the NIMA team has to worry about is settling into a rut, because, for them, no day is the same.

"The information we provide is used by pilots, ground troops and everyone in between," Pohlers said. "The vital mission of USCENTCOM is our focus."

CENTCOM is involved in directing and coordinating all U.S. military operations in Southwest Asia, the Middle East and North East Africa. The diverse geographical area includes mountain ranges with elevations more than 24,000 feet, desert areas below sea level and temperatures ranging from below freezing to more than 130° F. This region also includes the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea and a portion of the Indian Ocean.

"We are the point men. We either provide what the customer needs or point them in the right direction," Pohlers said.

If you need imagery support, go to Boslaugh or Dunn," Pohlers said, "mapping to



L to R: Bruce Boslaugh, Mike Pohlers, Vincent Dunn, and Kelvin Toots are NIMA's liaison team for the U.S. Central Command.

me, and Kelvin troubleshoots both on the telephone and going out to the customer.”

While the imagery liaison officers concentrate on collection, foreign disclosure issues and dissemination of products, the mapping officers support the mapping, charting and geospatial needs of the command.

As a technical representative, Toots works with customers when they use NIMA products to input digital data in a format that might be unfamiliar to them.

“We work together in a collegial atmosphere,” said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Eric Petriprin, chief of CENTCOM’s Imagery Branch. “We rely on the liaison officers for a wide range of activities.”

Typically liaison officers serve approximately two to three years and coordinate work through the Customer Support Offices.

“The real benefit of a tour as a liaison officer is that you gain the warfighters’ perspective,” Boslaugh noted. Liaison officers also are ready to be immediately deployed should a situation arise requiring their presence in the field.

Aside from providing the imagery, mapping and geospatial support needed by the command, liaison officers also go out and “sell” NIMA to the customer.

**“The real benefit of a tour as a liaison officer is that you gain the warfighters’ perspective.”**

“We work with customers,” Dunn noted, “to make sure they understand the scope of imagery and geospatial products and information NIMA can provide.” ♦

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*NIMA has approximately 85 liaison and technical representatives currently serving with unified command and services.*

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## NIMA to Debut During Public Service Recognition Week

**N**IMA is preparing to make its debut at Public Service Recognition Week festivities, May 5-11, in Washington, D.C., amidst an anticipated audience of 100,000.

The federal government traditionally sets aside the first full week each May to acknowledge and honor the many valuable contributions federal employees make. The event, where key defense agencies and military departments field displays on the National Mall, is cosponsored by the President’s Council on Management Improvement and the Public Employees Roundtable.

NIMA’s exhibit is a 15- by 20-foot display showcasing the agency’s beginnings, vision, mission and strategic direction, as well as Integrated Products Team activity. NIMA personnel will demonstrate terrain visualization, stereo imagery and geospatial and imagery products.

The opening ceremony on the Mall begins at noon, May 8; Vice President Al Gore will officiate. Exhibits will remain open until 4 p.m. and continue each day from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. through May 11.

NIMA’s exhibit will be located within the DoD exhibits tent between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets and between Jefferson Drive and Maryland Avenue, Washington, DC.

Due to parking constraints, carpooling and the use of Metro are encouraged. Those going by subway should take the Blue/Orange line to the Federal Center SW, exiting at Independence Avenue. ♦

## NIMA Personnel Honored

by Tammi Kiser-Sparks

In a well-attended ceremony at NIMA headquarters March 13, Rear Adm. J. J. Dantone Jr., Director, expressed his thanks and appreciation for the wonderful accomplishments of the men and women of NIMA.

The ceremony recognized the many outstanding contributions of NIMA employees, Dantone said, as he presented 11 awards to employees.

Robert McCanna, NIMA, CFC Committee, presented Dantone with a special mention plaque from the Department of Defense, Combined Federal Campaign for the Agency's contributions to CFC.

Air Force Lt. Col. Ceasar Sharper received the Meritorious Service Medal (first oak leaf cluster), for outstanding service to the U.S. Air Force. Sharper served as Tactical Interim Core Automated Maintenance System and Reliability Maintainability Information System Report System program director and director, Operational Support System, headquarters, Material Group, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio.

Air Force Maj. Bryan Fortson received the Meritorious Service Medal for outstanding service as chief, Information Support Branch, Systems Engineering Division, and as chief, Systems Engineering Division, Launch

Programs Directorate, Space and Missile Systems Center, Air Force Materiel Command, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif. His parents, Charles and Elizabeth Fortson, wife Michele and toddler Melissa attended the ceremony.

Senior Airman Leslie McGinnis received the Air Force Achievement Medal (first oak leaf cluster) for outstanding achievement while assigned to the Applications Flight, 36th Intelligence Squadron, 4870th Intelligence Group, Langley Air Force Base, Va.

James Woodward received a Certificate of Appreciation from the U.S. Central Command, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., for exceptionally meritorious achievement. His wife, Karen, attended the ceremony.

Mark Cheli and Jim Sippel received the NIMA Special Act Award for planning for the inter-Agency transfer of NIMA's hardcopy distribution function to the Defense Logistics Agency.

Meri Ford, Ralph Mayer, Robert McCanna, Wayne Nicholson and Laure Thompson received Leadership Awards from the Combined Federal Campaign of the National Capital Area in recognition of outstanding management of and dedicated service to the CFC.

## NIMA Employees Receive Intelligence Community Awards

Two groups of NIMA employees were among those honored at the Intelligence Community Awards Ceremony held at CIA Headquarters recently.

The awards are given to honor those who provided exceptional service on behalf of the United States Intelligence Community.

The Imagery Analysis Group (formerly PGX) and the Joint Architecture Study Team of the National Reconnaissance Office each received the National Intelligence Unit Citation. This citation is awarded for the collective performance of a unit or group that has resulted in accomplishments of a clearly superior nature and of significant benefit to the intelligence community.

The Imagery Analysis Group (formerly PGX/DIA) was recognized for their unparalleled contribution in providing critical imagery intelligence and support to, and for, the

operational military commander and national decision makers for global military planning and national decision making.

The Joint Imagery Architecture Study Team was recognized for planning and executing a comprehensive study of future overhead imagery constellations that will form the basis for critical decision making.

The Acting Director of Central Intelligence, George Tenet, guest speaker and presenter, emphasized the important roles that families play in the intelligence business.

"What we know here is that our success in the intelligence business absolutely depends on the love and support we receive from our families," he said.

He then went on to "recognize the individuals and teams that represent the best of the intelligence profession."

# Engineers, Architects Redesign Portion of Facility Near Arnold

Construction at the site of the new NIMA facility near Arnold, Mo., has been delayed due to the earth conditions and bedrock profile underlying the site.

The Corps of Engineers and Parsons Main, Inc., the architectural and engineering contractor, working closely with NIMA, have developed a revised design concept which permits work to proceed, incorporates all the work completed so far and uses a different type of foundation for a portion of the building.

The redesign enables NIMA to take advantage of reduced requirements for warehouse space as a result of the planned transfer of hardcopy distribution to DLA. NIMA officials envision a building that is reduced by about 60,000 square feet in overall size and has a lower profile. The overall footprint shrinks from approximately 560 feet by 380 feet to about 420 feet by 380 feet.

Once new plans are completed, the corps and the general contractor will arrive at a new construction completion date, which is expected to be in the spring of 1998. In the meantime, an aggressive

schedule for developing incremental drawings to support continued construction is underway.

The facility as envisioned retains its functional integrity as a state-of-the-art replication and digital dissemination facility, and to better represent the purpose of the facility, it will now be referred to as the Consolidated Digital Dissemination and Replication Facility (CDDRF).

As more information is known about the revised construction schedule, NIMA leadership will keep employees informed. ●



New NIMA facility site near Arnold, MD.

# Officials, Industry Hail Business Opportunity Day as Major Success

by Kathleen Neary



**N**IMA officials are hailing the agency's first Business Opportunity Day as an overwhelming success with a "sold out" crowd pushing well beyond space constraints.

The day-long event, held March 18, afforded NIMA leaders the opportunity to open dialogue with industry and communicate the agency's needs, according to event planners. It also allowed leaders to articulate the future direction of NIMA, as well as upcoming business opportunities.

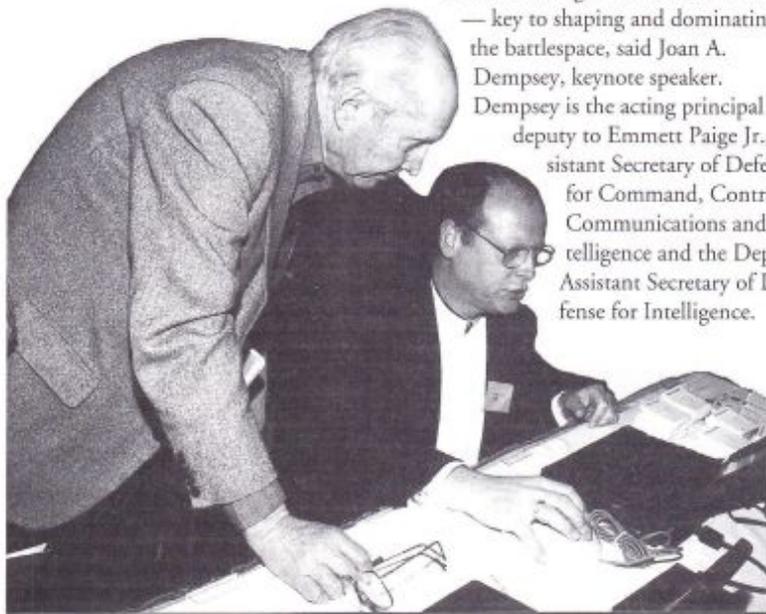
Rear Adm. J.J. Dantone Jr., NIMA Director, told more than 600 in attendance that designing NIMA's outsourcing policy was a complex effort. He added that NIMA's partners in industry were crucial in helping the agency meet its customers' requirements and he was pleased with industry's interest, evidenced by the large turnout.

NIMA is responding to a high military operations tempo and is an essential component to assuring information dominance

— key to shaping and dominating the battlespace, said Joan A.

Dempsey, keynote speaker.

Dempsey is the acting principal deputy to Emmett Paige Jr., Assistant Secretary of Defense for Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence and the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Intelligence.



Personnel and acquisition reform, commercial satellite technology and the information technology revolution are exciting changes occurring in the DoD and Intelligence Community, she told industry representatives. Citing that DoD and IC are becoming purchasers of information technologies rather than developers, Dempsey added that she sees real opportunities for the private sector to work with NIMA and other IC activities in providing support services and supplementing core work. She challenged attendees to reap the day's benefits and to work with NIMA to help the new agency work even better.

For many attending the event, a robust and information-packed agenda provided a solid introduction to the new agency.

"The interest in attending the event was tremendous," said Clay Ancell, Director, Commercial Office, the office coordinating the event. "Registration exceeded our capacity well before the registration deadline."

In addition to an agency introduction, topics briefed and discussed included the role of NIMA's Commercial Office, one of only a few of its kind; initiatives to streamline acquisition; strategies to leverage industry; the Geospatial Information Integrated Product Team; geospatial information commercial partnerships; efforts to move towards a more commercial environment; Systems Engineering and Program Integration; the U.S. Imagery and Geospatial Information System; research, development and laboratory initiatives; Networks and Enterprise Systems; Technology Transfer and Partnership initiatives.

The entire day was video recorded, and tapes will be available for checkout from NIMA facility libraries. Officials encourage employees to view the tape and learn more about the agency, its initiatives, future direction and efforts to develop partnerships with industry. ♦





Photo by Teri Koch

Pat Davidson tries out the new data copier system in Reston.

# New Image Copier Meets Growing Customer Demands

by Jennifer Lafley

As demands for digital imagery continue to grow, NIMA will meet customer requirements for digital tapes more efficiently by using a new copier system recently purchased and installed in Reston's Imagery Library.

"It really has surpassed our expectations," said Dorothea DeHart, lead technical information specialist, Information Services and Training (IS&T). The new copier, called DataMaster, will do multi-copying between Ampex D2C tape drives for specific external customers.

"The new copier is user-friendly and saves time—we can copy tapes more efficiently and not tie-up other production requests," said Martha Baker, technical information specialist. "It significantly improves our ability to meet customers' demands for digital tapes."

The DataMaster was purchased as a result of a cooperative arrangement between the IS&T and Geospatial Information and Services (GI) business units. Discussion between the two began after the Source Services Branch studied current and future requirements and determined that copying capability would not meet GI production needs. DataMaster is a commercial product developed by Autometric, Inc.

"By working together, we identified customer needs and requirements for the next five years," said Sue Riley, a branch chief in GI.

The new copier, still being tested, is a dedicated device intended solely for tape copying. Able to copy two tapes simultaneously, it will free up non-dedicated systems previously

used to copy tapes. By doing that, Riley noted, it will help NIMA meet the needs of both external and internal customers.

Bruce DiGiovanni, GI, who played an instrumental role in obtaining the system, said it will give NIMA "the fastest current methodologies." Another plus, he added, is that the new system is modular in design and expandable.

According to Brenda Meyer, a source manager for GI, the old system was tied to the Data Services segment and caused production delays because of conflicting demands. "Because the new DataMaster is a stand-alone system, we eliminated the conflict."

Computer assistants Loretta Bush and Patricia Davidson said the Data Master has eliminated the problem of having to share a system with other users.

"In the past, this caused numerous delays and problems with equipment breakdown," Bush said. "Other users would interrupt our job process, and this would result in corrupted tapes."

The new system also is a one-stop shop, allowing assignments to be completed in one area, a real change from library personnel having to visit a number of areas to complete an assignment.

"We can complete an entire assignment and ship it out in one day," Bush explained. "Under the old system, it could take days to complete an assignment. The turnaround time has been reduced from days to hours!"

It works with many different image and tape formats. Along with copying tapes, it has the ability to display, chip and expand compressed imagery. Since the system is based on standard, commercially available parts it can be easily upgraded if needs change. ●

*April is National Cancer Month. The following article highlights the causes and prevention of cancers caused by smoking and the consumption of alcohol.*

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## What Can **YOU** do to Help Prevent Cancer?

**A**ll cancers caused by cigarette smoking and heavy use of alcohol could be prevented completely according to the American Cancer Society (ACS). ACS estimates that of 560,000 cancer deaths expected to occur in the U.S. in 1997, some 174,000 are expected to be caused by tobacco use, and an additional 19,000 deaths will be related to excessive alcohol use, frequently in combination with tobacco use.

Scientific evidence suggests that up to one-third of the 560,000 cancer deaths this year will be related to nutrition. Many dietary factors can affect cancer risk: types of foods, food preparation methods, portion sizes, food variety, and overall caloric balance. Cancer risk can be reduced by an overall dietary pattern that includes a high proportion of plant foods (fruits, vegetables, grains, and beans), limited amounts of meat, dairy, and other high-fat foods, and a balance of caloric intake and physical activity.

Many of the 900,000 skin cancers expected to be diagnosed in 1997 could have been prevented by protection from the sun's rays. Screening examinations, conducted regularly by a health care professional, can result in detection of cancers of the breast, tongue, colon,

rectum, cervix, prostate, testis, and melanoma at earlier stages, when treatment is more likely to be successful. Self examinations for cancers of the breast, testis, and skin may also result in earlier detection of tumors at earlier stages.

More than half of all new cancer cases occur in the nine screening-accessible cancer sites listed above. The relative survival rate for these cancers is about 80 percent. The ACS believes if all Americans participated in regular cancer screenings, this rate could increase to more than 95 percent.



In most agencies, a visit from the Inspector General's office would be about as welcome as a tax audit. However, a new system being tested by the IG office may take that stigma away from the process.

Several years ago the IG redesigned the older, more traditional compliance form of inspections and developed a new process called the Quality Assistance Visit (QAV). It was designed to promote quality, efficiency and economy within the agency's organizations.

## IG Tests QAV Pilot Program

by Don Kusturin

After dealing with changes associated with reorganization and re-engineering efforts and the standup of NIMA, the IG needed a way to stabilize responsibility of core functions and processes.

"We were not getting a clear enough picture through a geographic or departmental look at the organization, so we decided to look at processes," said NIMA St. Louis IG, Air Force Lt. Col. Bert Varady.

The newly re-engineered QAV process is designed to provide a better way to determine efficiency, effectiveness and customer support. Material Management has been selected as the subject of the IG's pilot QAV program.

"It crosses all geographic and business unit boundaries and affects all employees," Varady said. "It also has some effect on people outside the agency."

This process review will include gathering information from not only the process owner but employees, customers and even suppliers. Tailored questionnaires will be sent to each part of the process to determine strengths or weaknesses in the process.

Employees will be able to make comments on their perception of the process to find improvements. Customers are also given questionnaires to find out why they are, or are not, satisfied and how they would like to see the service change. And suppliers would be contacted to determine how they were brought into the process and how changes to some of their activities would allow them to better serve NIMA. All questionnaires are returned directly to the IG office.

"The main goal is to determine if the entire process is being conducted efficiently and effectively," Varady said.

Another plus he pointed out was that the process owner will not have to generate a lengthy report. A list of deliverables will be provided by the Inspector General. The process owner fills out the questionnaire and gathers requested information and data.

All questionnaires center around the Malcolm Baldrige Award Criteria. The IG office will take the returned questionnaires along with the additional information and form them into a final report after an on-site validation visit.

"We'll take the data and look at the areas needed," Varady said. "We can't look at all areas. We don't have enough time or people to look at every subset."

For example, if a process claims 100 percent customer satisfaction, the IG office may call the customers to confirm that.

The Inspector General's office has divided deficiencies into two categories: Findings, those that have a significant impact on the mission; and Observations, those that may not have a direct impact on the mission but need improving to enhance mission support.

The process owner will be provided a list of all deficiencies, but the IG will track only the Findings. Six months later, the process owner will be required to do a self audit and inform the IG how they are addressing their deficiencies.

Six months after the self-audit, the IG will conduct an on-sight, mini-audit centering on the original findings and the corrective actions taken.

"We will return to ensure the problems are being fixed," Varady said.

The QAV also includes special interest items that require oversight review apart from the Baldrige Award Criteria items. They include items identified by either the IG, the Director, or the Department of Defense.

Since this is a pilot review of the new QAV process, Material Management will track the time it takes them to prepare for the visit. That information will be provided back to the Inspector General to determine if the new QAV process is efficient and effective, and if this is the future of NIMA's process evaluation.

**"It crosses all geographic and business unit boundaries..."**

# Out to Africa

## Cartographer Trades in Computer for Great Outdoors

by Jennifer Lafley

Robert Ackerman, a Bethesda cartographer, spent his last three vacations working. But in so doing, he traded in his computer and cubicle and opted for the great outdoors—of Africa.

As a missionary volunteer, Ackerman worked on agricultural projects, built fences, roofs and drilled for water.

"I have a real sense of accomplishment after these trips, knowing I have helped make the lives of others easier," he said.

The trips also fulfill his sense of adventure.

"As a cartographer, I've always been interested in exploring new areas," he said. But just being a tourist wasn't enough, Ackerman wanted to get to know the people and learn about the culture.

"Where else can you see an election where 1,000 people line up behind the candidate of their choice," he said, explaining a visit to a village on election day. "First they lined up behind four candidates. This was then narrowed down to the two with the longest lines, and then again for the winner."

His first two trips—spent doing agricultural projects in Sierra Leone and Ghana—lasted 10 days. The shorter trips served to whet his interest to stay longer.

"It is a complete change from here, not just in work, but in the way the Africans view life," he said. "They appreciate each day as it is instead of always looking toward and planning the future."

Last summer, Ackerman traveled as part of Lifewater, a Christian group that works to improve the drinking water in developing countries. His first stop was in Lusaka, Zambia, where he stayed with a German missionary family that ran a church and school.

"I expected to sit down to a native diet of primarily vegetables," he noted, "but instead, our evening meals were German, complete with sauerkraut." He was also able to bypass the more typical accommodations of missionaries—sleeping in a tent and swatting mosquitoes. "I had all the comforts of home."

During the day, he and another volunteer loaded drilling equipment into an old German army truck and drove to the site where they drilled for water and instructed local villagers on the process.



Robert Ackerman teaches villagers how to drill for water.

After a few attempts, they hit water in Chazanga, an impoverished area.

"The excitement was contagious and everyone was ready to celebrate. The women dressed in colorful skirts and danced," said Ackerman.

After spending three weeks in Zambia, he traveled to Zimbabwe to work on another project. This time, in addition to instructing volunteers on drilling, he helped put a roof on a school and assisted children in preparing for state examinations. Again he avoided sleeping in a tent. This time, he was a guest in the seven-bedroom home of a wealthy businessman.

"I have no complaints about accommodations," said Ackerman with a smile.

Last summer's trip wasn't all work. Ackerman went on a safari and spent a long weekend at Victoria Falls and Hwange National Park.

This summer the NIMA cartographer plans to stay closer to home but still have an adventure. He plans to hike to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. And sometime in the future, he would like to do missionary work in South America for a summer.

"These trips have been a wonderful experience for me," he said. "It's given me the opportunity to travel and to help others." ♦

it fills a DoD vacancy, whether through external hiring, competitive promotion or reassignment. Based on its work with national security issues, the agency recently obtained approval from the deputy assistant secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel Policy, to exempt NIMA positions in the GS-132, Intelligence Series, and GS-134, Intelligence Aid and Clerk Series, as well as a small number of administrative positions which directly support such operations in specific locations.

"For other positions, however, we are bound by the provisions of this program," Lawson said. "About three percent of all the vacancies filled through the NIMA Career Inventory System since NIMA stand-up were

filled with Priority Placement Program registrants. The number is low in part because of the specialized nature of many NIMA positions."

Although the Philadelphia site closure is still a year away, NIMA successfully obtained approval from DoD to register employees early, in February, because the entire facility will close. Nearly 50 Philadelphia employees are currently registered in the Priority Placement Program and will be considered for all DoD jobs for which they are registered.

"The printing and distribution consolidation will affect many employees," Lawson said. "But they can be assured that both NIMA and DoD placement programs are designed to give them priority rights to vacant DoD positions." She added: "NIMA's predecessor organizations have been very effective in placing many employees during closure activities."

Priority Placement Program has been and continues to be an important tool in helping to transition employees facing separation into new DoD jobs. ♦

## Desktop Collaboration Conference Coming in May

by Sharon Alexander

The Second Annual Desktop Collaboration Conference and Exposition will be held May 7 and 8 at the MITRETEK offices, Hayes Building, McLean, Va.

Entitled "Is This Technology Ready for Prime Time?," the exposition is sponsored by NIMA's Applications and Methods Division (SRM) and MITRETEK. The purpose is to address pertinent collaborative computing issues, provide real-world feedback and share lessons learned.

The Exploitation with Collaborative Interoperable Technology (EXCITE), within the Applications and Methods Division, is chairing the conference under the auspices of Intelink's Collaboration Working Group, which NIMA chairs.

Collaborative computing includes video and audio conferencing, shared whiteboards and applications, electronic mail, chat lines, bulletins and several other forms of communicating involving computers. The information exchanged during demonstrations, briefings and discussions allows users to capitalize on others' successes while avoiding mistakes and duplication of effort. A second result of the exchange is that vendors can use the information to make a product that better meets users' needs.

More than 300 people participated in the first interoperability collaboration conference

held in April 1996 and more than 800 in another conference series in October 1996, according to Collaboration Working Group Chairman Kim Walls, of SRM. The focus of these conferences was existing DoD and Intelligence Community-wide initiatives; vendor progress toward standards and interoperability for products and social and human factors—namely usability, ownership, management issues and control—in collaborative computing.

A major outcome of the 1997 conference will be creation of a collaborative computing database that includes a list of government projects and points of contact. The database will be located on the JIVA homepage on Intelink at URL <http://delphi.dia.ic.gov/proj/jiva/JIVA-hp.html>.

Project evaluations, CWG notes, related briefings and other useful information are maintained on the Internet and on Intelink. The Internet address is [http://www.dtic.mil/iebc\\_cctwg/](http://www.dtic.mil/iebc_cctwg/); the Intelink address is <http://www.est.wny.nima.ic.gov/imo/cwg/>.

At the May conference and in the future, the CWG would like to have broader representation in the group from DoD and address a broad range of issues to help implement collaboration technology smartly within the DoD and Intelligence Communities. The group is accepting recommendations and suggestions for topics and issues on the Internet at [cwg@dtic.mil](mailto:cwg@dtic.mil).

The registration fee is \$25 for DoD/government personnel and \$35 for all others. The deadline is April 30 and the form can be completed online at <http://www.nsbcc.org/colsp97/conf.html>; agenda updates also are available at this address.

For more information, contact Marla Slahetka of the National Small Business Council (NSBC) on (301) 596-0770 extension 216. NSBC is helping organize the conference by working with private industry, managing all the logistics, handling registration and sponsoring the Internet website. The hours are 7:45 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily for the conference, with exhibits open only on May 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. ♦



# HR Info 'Up' on Lotus Notes Bulletin Board

The HR Washington Customer Service Unit (CSU) is now posting the NIMA Weekly Vacancy Announcements list and HRInfo Releases on the Lotus Notes NIMA Bulletin Board. To view the information, affiliates with access to Lotus Notes should click the NIMA Bulletin Board icon, locate the Human Resources section and scroll to the most recent HR notices at the bottom of the list.

"Getting HR information up on the bulletin board means affiliates will now find it easier to regularly access human resources guidance," said Bev Borich, Human Resources policy division chief and affiliate program manager. "We are committed to providing all employees with information on vacancies, current HR programs and plans for a new NIMA HR System."

When should affiliates look for the vacancy list on the bulletin board? Usually on Wednesday mornings—here's why. Early each week, HR's Central Operations Center in St. Louis sends NIMA's Weekly Vacancy Announcement e-mail to users of NIMA's Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU) network, including staff members of the HR Washington CSU. After receiving the e-mail, the staff downloads the vacancy list from the SBU, performs virus checks, then uploads the information to the Human Resources section of the Lotus Notes NIMA Bulletin Board.

The HR Washington CSU also posts HRInfo Releases on topics such as: NIMA Internal Placement Program (IPP), Design Input for a New NIMA Human Resources System and NIMA Asian Pacific American Program: Call for Participation.

## More Electronic Access to HR Information

NIMA "All Sources" and "DoD-Wide" vacancies can be viewed on OPM's USAJOBS Internet site (<http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/>) — click Current Job Openings.

NIMA Weekly Vacancy Announcements are posted on HR's homepage at (<http://hr.nima.mil/>) — click Job Opportunities. Recent *HRInfo Releases* can be located by clicking What's News - the Explorer.

"All Sources" vacancies are listed in CIA's Agency Vacancy Notice System, so all CIA employees can review these weekly.

**Note:** For DoD or CIA affiliate employees without access to SBU or Lotus Notes, HR's Central Operations Center faxes copies of the weekly announcement to CIA affiliates at several locations where POCs then alert on-site employees. Business Unit managers, supervisors and administrative staffs also are printing hard copies of the weekly vacancy listing e-mail, posting them, and sending them to hard-to-reach personnel. Hard copies of the listing can also be viewed at on-site HR CSU offices. ♦



Borich

"We are committed to providing all employees with information on vacancies, current HR programs and plans for a new NIMA HR system."



## Area Codes Become Part of Local Dialing for Telephone Users in Maryland

Fingers that used to do the walking in Maryland will have to do some extra hopping now that the state is switching to 10-digit dialing for local calls starting May 1. The change will require NIMA employees who work in the state to dial three extra digits when dialing local Maryland numbers outside the agency.

Employees won't have to do anything different if they are making interagency calls within the Washington metropolitan area, according to Phil Pradier, a telecommunications specialist, NIMA Bethesda. "However, when making local phone calls from NIMA's Maryland sites to non-government locations, you'll have to add the area code to the seven digits."

The move is part of Bell Atlantic's effort to increase the number of phone numbers available in Maryland, according to a Bell Atlantic news release.

Since more people than ever are using fax machines, cellular phones, pagers, computer modems and other telecommunications devices, Maryland is running out of phone numbers in the existing area codes the release stated. To

create more phone numbers, two new area codes will be introduced in the same areas as the 301 and 410 codes.

Therefore, area codes will become a part of the local telephone number, beginning May 1.

The new 443 area code will be working in the same area as the 410 code and a new 240 area code will be introduced in the same area as the 301 code. This will happen in late 1997 when phone numbers in the existing codes are depleted. Since two new area codes will be introduced within the same boundaries as the existing codes, all local calls will require 10-digit dialing—the area code plus the seven-digit number.

To further assist customers in the transition, Bell Atlantic is urging everyone to reprogram their fax machines, speed dialers, computer modems, Private Branch Exchange equipment, burglar alarms and other communications equipment now to dial the 10-digit phone numbers.

Optional phone services like Speed Calling and Call Forwarding also will need to be programmed for 10-digit dialing, and from now on, customers should always include their area codes when giving out their telephone number.

Maryland residents can get more information on the dialing change by checking the customer guide section of the new Bell Atlantic phone books, calling Bell Atlantic's toll-free information number (1-888-427-3223) or visiting Bell Atlantic's new Internet Web site: <http://www.bellatlantic.com/areacode>. ♦



## **NIMA HR Guide Distributed Agency Wide**

by Tim May  
Office of Human Resources

A new human resources information product has been distributed to all employees throughout the agency. Known simply as the NIMA HR Guide, it graphically summarizes many personnel processes normally found only in operating guidance documents.

"Our intent was to create a single guide that responds to the needs of the entire NIMA work force with concise, specific information about topics of interest to both employees and managers," said Regina Millard, Director, Office of Human Resources. "It also will help our customers quickly determine whom to call and how to obtain HR services."

A sampling of topics in the 22-page guide includes: *How Managers Fill NIMA Positions* (page 1), *How Employees Apply for NIMA Positions* (page 2), *NIMA Career Inventory System* (page 3), *Official Personnel Folder Review* (page 7), *Awards* (pages 9-11), *Benefits* (pages 12-13), *Leave* (pages 14-15), *Performance Appraisals* (page 16), and *Administrative Grievance Procedure* (page 21).

Millard said that HR recently distributed the guide to all managers and supervisors a reprint of the *NIMA Human Resources Operating Guidance Documents*, which provides the current operating framework for NIMA's human resources programs. HR encourages managers and supervisors to provide employee access to these documents.

The NIMA HR Guide, distributed to all employees, is consistent with the operating guidance documents and provides quick-reference access to NIMA's human resource programs.

"The guide illustrates to managers, supervisors and employees how HR procedures work with and for them," Millard noted. "And we're confident this product will help our customers do business with us."

The NIMA HR Guide also may be found on the HR Intranet website (<http://hr.nima.mil/>). ♦

## **JOCAS II: Coming to NIMA Soon!**

JOCAS II is coming to NIMA soon and the Comptroller Office's Cost and Finance Division (CMC) has been busy

preparing for it. CMC has been working with the Defense Finance and Accounting Service, Denver Center (DFAS-DE), to ensure a successful installation and implementation.

"The Job Order Cost Accounting System II is the standard Air Force cost accounting system designed to work with other standard Air Force accounting, contracts, payroll and supply systems," said Diane Henry, team leader for JOCAS II and member of the Comptroller's Cost and Finance Division. "Since NIMA uses the other standard Air Force systems, JOCAS II was a logical selection."

According to Henry, the system will track costs through the use of Job Order Numbers (JONs) assigned to NIMA's products and activities. This will allow managers to determine the costs to produce products, and perform services, costs associated with a process, costs associated with information, and costs identified to specific customers.

There are two primary reasons for the change to JOCAS II, said Ed Greaving, who will oversee the day-to-day operations of the new system.

"First, we've got a mandate from Congress to know what it costs to make something," he said. "And more importantly, we need to know what it costs to make something." He added that JOCAS II will allow the agency to accomplish this.

The system also can be used to accumulate information needed for payroll purposes to DCPS.

The system will be installed on a computer system at NIMA St. Louis in early May. Training for the timekeepers and certifiers will be provided by DFAS after the installation.

The system will be phased in throughout NIMA according to a schedule. The goal is to have NIMA using JOCAS II for cost accounting and time and attendance collection by the beginning of fiscal year 1998.

Watch for a more comprehensive article in *The Edge*. For further information, contact Diane Henry, CMC, DSN 235-8483; or Ed Greaving, CMC, DSN 693-4789. ♦

## **Invitation to Membership**

Former employees of the Defense Mapping Agency, its direct support activities and their predecessor organizations, who are anticipating retirement are invited to join the Defense Mapping and Charting Alumni Association (DMCAA).

Annual dues are \$3 per year or \$30 lifetime membership. For further information, call Mickey Lohr, president, at 703-759-4811, or Charles Leslie, treasurer, 703-560-0152. ♦

## **Asbestos Abatement Projects Safe, Officials Say**

The Environmental Safety Group at NIMA Bethesda wants to relieve employee concerns about asbestos abatement projects.

All asbestos abatement projects at the Bethesda complex, say officials, are managed with the utmost care and professionalism. The goal with any asbestos project is to make sure that proper precautions are taken before, during and after the abatement project is completed so that all employees working adjacent to the project are protected.

To do this:

- All asbestos removal work is done during off hours (the hours when most of the work force does not occupy the buildings).
- Only certified asbestos abatement contractors are used.
- All personnel who work with asbestos removal projects are trained and certified.
- All asbestos vinyl floor tile removal started and completed at Bethesda exceeds all state and federal guidelines for vinyl asbestos floor tile removal.
- All ceiling tile in the complex containing asbestos has been removed.
- Asbestos abatement signs posted on the outside of buildings as you enter are not posted to alarm you, but are there because they are required by law to make you aware that asbestos abatement projects are taking place within the building over a given period of time.

Anyone with questions or concerns about an asbestos abatement project, should call the Environmental Safety Group at 227-5581. ♦

## NIMA Undergoes Organizational Changes

Rear Admiral J.J. Dantone, NIMA director, has approved two organizational realignments, both involving the Corporate Affairs Directorate. The Financial Resource Office (FR) was dissolved effective March 28, and its two divisions became separate offices in the Directorate of Corporate Affairs. The new Comptroller Office (CM) is led by Cindy Bogner and the new Imagery and Geospatial Community Affairs Office (CF) is headed by Tom Coghlan.

The Geospatial Community Affairs Office will coordinate and integrate imagery and geospatial community activities as well develop and maintain the functional architecture, strategic plan and investment plan for these two communities. Additional details are provided in a memo dated March 19 from the director to all employees.

Networks and Enterprise Systems (formerly SN, now CN) has moved from

the Systems and Technology Directorate to the Corporate Affairs Directorate. Tom Carosio continues as office director. ♦

## New NIMA Suggestion Program

The Plans, Programs and Analysis Office (PA) of the Corporate Affairs Directorate is developing a new NIMA suggestion program. New ideas are recognized as essential ingredients in our agency's continuous improvement efforts and critical aspects in developing our new corporate culture. The goal of the program is to provide effective conduits for submitting, processing, implementing and recognizing employee ideas.

To begin capturing employee ideas, a NIMA suggestion line has been established. By calling 1-888-NEW-NIMA (1-888-639-6462), employees may make a suggestion for improving NIMA or submit ideas regarding the structure, operation, or even a name for the new suggestion program.

The 1-888 suggestion line will be operational for the remainder of the month of April. It will be one of a series of pilots used to determine what works and what doesn't as PA continues efforts to finalize an effective suggestion program for NIMA. ♦

## NIMA Business Plan Approved, Distributed

The NIMA Business Plan has been approved, printed and is being distributed. Copies were dispatched to each branch agency-wide in March, and senior leaders are looking for feedback from employees through the management chain.

Copies of the Business Plan also were given to attendees at NIMA's Business Opportunity Day, held at the Defense Logistics Agency Headquarters Facility, Fort Belvoir, Va., March 18 (see story, page 12), and feedback from industry also is anticipated. Additional information about the plan and the process leading up to it will be included in the next issue of The Edge.

To request additional copies, contact Dick Beck at 703-275-5784 or DSN 235-5784. ♦



## On the Move



Photo by Tom Borch  
Hledik

**Army Maj. Stephen Hledik**, part of the corps of Royal Australian Engineers, is serving a two-year tour of duty with the Agency. He replaced Australian

Army Maj. Owen Moss.

Assigned to Source Management, Hledik is a 13-year veteran, serving his first overseas assignment and visiting the United States for the first time. His academic background is principally in the areas of geographic information systems, satellite positioning and remote sensing. His military experience is in mapping and topographic engineering and providing topographic support in combat zones.

**Laura B. Snow** is the new director of Congressional and Public Liaison (CP), Corporate Affairs Directorate. She assumed the responsibilities of this position March 30. Snow previously served as deputy comptroller, CA.

**Patrick D. Warfle** was selected for the Defense Intelligence Senior Executive

Service (DISES) position of deputy director, Plans, Programs and Analysis Office, Corporate Affairs Directorate. He assumed the position April 6.

**Frederick L. Faithful** was selected to fill the DISES position of chief, Studies and Analysis Division, Plans, Programs and Analysis Office, Corporate Affairs Directorate. He assumed the position April 6.



Ward

**Curtis B. Ward** fills the DISES position of director, Geospatial Information and Services Office (GI), Operations Directorate. He previously served as acting director.

**Paul R. Weise** fills the DISES position of deputy associate director, Production Department A, Data Generation Division, GI, Operations Directorate. He assumed the position April 6.

## In Memoriam



**John Hicks**, the second director of the former National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC), died on Mar. 29 at his home in McLean, Va.; he was 74. He served a total of ten years with NPIC, including his tenure as director from 1973 until 1978. NPIC was one of the organizations that formed NIMA.

Hick's career with the CIA spanned 28 years, from 1952 until his retirement in 1980. He was awarded the Certificate of Merit for his work during the Cuban missile crisis, the CIA Intelligence Medal of Merit, the National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal and the CIA Distinguished Service Medal.

# Hale-Bopp is Here!

by John Iler

**I**t was the famed science fiction author Isaac Asimov who declared: "How bright and beautiful a comet is as it flies past our planet—providing it does fly past it."

Much of NIMA's imagery and geospatial technologies are designed to look down at the Earth, but until May, agency employees may want to join the rest of the world in looking up at the most extraordinary comet to fly past our planet in more than a hundred years.

And flying past it is—at 100,000 mph.

With only a diameter of 25 miles, the Hale-Bopp comet has created a sensation worldwide. In Beijing, sky-gazers in China and eastern Russia last month witnessed a rare event: a full solar eclipse and the blazing celestial wanderer. According to a report in Associated Press, tens of thousands of people throughout northern China and Siberia watched the sky go dark and felt freezing temperatures drop further as the sun became a giant black hole ringed by a necklace of fire.

The report says the eclipse coincided with the arrival of the comet, which extended its glittering tail towards the northwest across the darkened sky.

But even without an eclipse, Hale-Bopp is holding its own as a showstopper, easily upstaging Kahoutek in 1973, Haley's famed comet in 1986 and even last year's Hyakutake. Sky & Telescope Magazine reported Hale-Bopp is the "brightest visitor to pass inside Earth's orbit since the great comet seen by Tycho Brahe in 1577."

Though it may be inside Earth's orbit, Hale-Bopp's brightness isn't caused by proximity, but rather, its size. According to the Washington Post, the comet is 13 times as far away as Hyakutake was and, at its closest point to Earth (last month), it was 122 million miles away—30 million miles more distant than the sun. And though the comet's core is relatively small, what most people see as its head, or coma, is actually ice and stardust vaporized from the core by the sun and blown by solar winds away from the sun.

"Comets essentially are dirty snowballs," explained Dr. Bill Wooden, in the Office of the Chief Scientist, NIMA's Westfield Facility. "As

they approach the sun, the ice and gas vaporize and trail away from the sun."

The blue part of the trail is gas, he said; the white is ice and dust. The tail can be tens of millions of miles long and when the Earth passes through the orbit of comets such as Haley's, particles enter the atmosphere and appear as shooting stars.

Wooden has been comet watching since Kahoutek, which he called "a dud." Then he witnessed Haley's famous fizz.

"Haley's looked like a fuzzy ball," he said, "but that was because of its approach. Had it come in from a different direction and a different angle, it might have turned out quite differently."

As for Hale-Bopp, he said, "It's quite impressive for a comet."

Hale-Bopp, like most comets, gets its name from its discoverers, Alan Hale, of the Southwest Institute for Space Research, New Mexico; and Thomas Bopp, an Arizona

concrete worker. Each discovered the comet independently on July 22, 1995.

Until late last month, the best time to view the comet in the United States was in the early morning hours before sunrise. But until the first part of May, the comet is visible in the northwest part of the sky during evening hours. Wooden got his Ph.D. in astronomy from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland. He said Hale-Bopp is clearly visible in the evenings, even with city lights.

It is a heavenly sight and is worth seeing. But if you don't catch it this time, be patient. Astronomers say Hale-Bopp is scheduled to return in about 4,200 years. ♦



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+2 realize a dream

4 a Great way to  
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