FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH

Counterterror Think Tank

The Department of Homeland Security awards its first Center of Excellence grant to USC, to study economic consequences of terrorism.

USC MADE NATIONAL headlines in November when the U.S. Department of Homeland Security announced Troy had been chosen as the site for the first Homeland Security Center of Excellence.

Over the next three years, the newly created USC Homeland Security Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events is expected to receive $12 million for the study of risk analysis related to the economic consequences of terrorist threats and events.

The new center addresses both the targets and means of terrorism, with emphasis on protecting the nation's critical infrastructure systems such as electrical power, transportation and telecommunications. It is also slated to develop tools for planning responses to emergencies, so as to minimize the threat to human lives in the event of an attack.

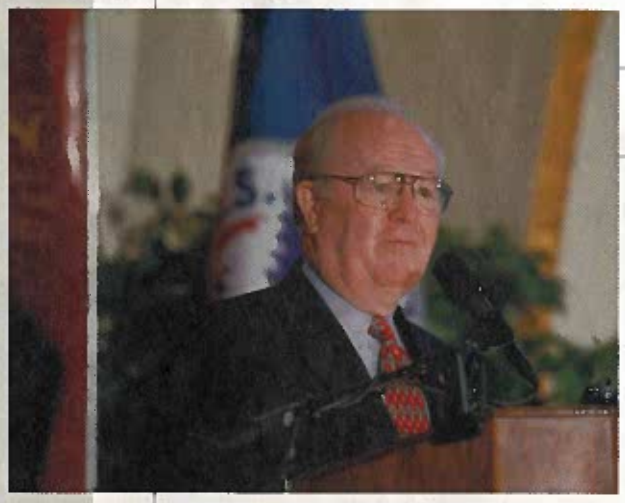
"Secretary Tom Ridge and I are delighted that the University of Southern California is partnering with the department in our efforts to ensure domestic security," said DHS Under Secretary for Science and Technology Charles McQueary at a standing-room-only press conference in USC's Town & Gown .

"We are confident that the cooperative efforts of the first homeland Security Center of Excellence will greatly enhance our ability to combat terrorism by empowering the best scientific minds at our nation's universities to tackle the challenges we face."

INDUSTRIAL AND SYSTEMS engineer Randolph Hall and public policy professor Detlof von Winterfeldt will head the new center. Hall is an expert in transportation, logistics, engineering and mathematical modeling; von Winterfeldt is an expert in risk and decision analysis, particularly in their application to the environment, technology and weapons of mass destruction.

Hall and von Winterfeldt have assembled a team of experts from across the country, in partnership with other researchers from New York University; the University of Wisconsin, Madison; UC Berkeley; and MIT. Also joining them are colleagues from USC's schools of Engineering and of Policy, Planning, and Development, as well as other USC faculty specializing in infectious disease, preventive medicine, psychology and economics. Two existing units in USC's engineering school – the NSF-funded Integrated Media Systems Center and the primarily DARPA-funded Information Sciences Institute – will also contribute expertise in advanced computer modeling and cybersecurity.

The $12 million center emphasizes protecting the nation's critical infrastructure systems.



DHS Undersecretary for Science and Technology Charles McQueary announcing the new Homeland Security Center at a press conference at USC.

"We are very excited about welcoming this first Homeland Security Center of Excellence to USC," said USC president Steven B. Sample at the announcement. "It is a perfect fit for our strengths in engineering and policy research, as well as our focus on interdisciplinary research and national service."

THE DEPARTMENT OF Homeland Security reviewed more than 70 proposals to establish the first HS Center. One of USC's attractions was its considerable strength in earthquake-related science. "Because of our location in California, we've developed a number of tools for conducting structural analysis of buildings," says Hall. The university also has done extensive research on air pollution, an important factor in determining the impact of chemical and biological attacks.

Existing major, federally funded centers were also a factor in USC's selection. The university is already home to the NSF- and U.S. Geological Survey-funded Southern California Earthquake Center and the U.S. Army-USC Institute for Creative Technologies.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology division serves as the primary research and development arm of the department, utilizing the nation's scientific and technological resources to protect the homeland.

– Usha Sutliff

FAR WEST OF THE BELTWAY

USC Becomes a Center for Centers

The announcement by the Department of Homeland Security that USC would become its first HS Center of Excellence came on the heels of another major federally funded center given to USC: the National Science Foundation-funded **Biomimetic MicroElectronic Systems** center, one of four prestigious Engineering Research Centers established in 2003 (see opposite page). This grant gave USC another distinction, as one of only four universities nationwide with two ERCs running simultaneously (the other is the **Integrated Media Systems Center** in the School of Engineering), and the only California school to ever host two ERCs. Other notable federally funded centers at USC include engineering's **Information Sciences Institute** and the USC College-based **Southern California Earthquake Center**. In addition, the **Institute for Creative Technologies**, funded by the U.S. Army, brings together experts in cinema, computer science and multimedia to create immersive training videos for the military. ●