

Customs and Border Protection
Laredo Field Office
Eagle Pass, TX Port of Entry
PPQ Promising Practices Award
Submission Form

Nominee:

Eagle Pass Anti-Terrorism Contraband Enforcement Team
U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Eagle Pass, Texas
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Contact Person: Robert Cagle, CBP Chief Supervisor

Team Members:

Robert Cagle, Chief, Tactical Operations (Group Leader)
Ronald Winburn, Assistant Port Director, Tactical Operations
Dr. Frank Schneider, Agriculture Specialist, A-TCET
Jose Salazar, CBP Officer, A-TCET
Rodolfo Chacon, CBP Officer, A-TCET
Raul Silva, CBP Officer, A-TCET
Adam Biscaino, CBP Officer, A-TCET
David Vasquez, CBP Officer, A-TCET
Adolfo Nava, CBP Officer, A-TCET
Jose Samaniego, CBP Officer, A-TCET
Norma Ramirez, CBP Officer, A-TCET
Vincent Villalobos, CBP Officer, A-TCET
Manuel Garza, CBP Officer, A-TCET

Summary:

Management at the Eagle Pass Port of Entry wished to increase the number of agricultural actions and increase overall officer awareness on the potential agricultural pest risks entering the United States through the port. One port process that was identified as having the most potential for an immediate impact on the entry of agricultural pests through the port of entry, especially through the passenger and vehicle processing areas was the ports Anti-Terrorism Contraband Enforcement Team (A-TCET). The A-TCET, which is comprised of the ports top enforcement officers are highly trained and motivated and usually lead the port in enforcement actions involving narcotics and immigration violations. Port management believed by adding an Agriculture Specialist to the team, that the A-TCET would be able to focus more on potential agricultural threats. Other ports were contacted to see if there was a model that could be replicated but no other port

had an Agricultural Specialist on their enforcement teams. Guidance and approval was sought and given by the Laredo Field Office.

On October 1, 2007, Agricultural Specialist, Dr. Frank Schneider became the newest member of the Eagle Pass A-TCET. Dr. Schneider volunteered for the position and was selected because of his work ethic and his vast knowledge of the agricultural processes at the port. Dr. Schneider's presence had an immediate impact on the team. The first team enforcement action for FY 2008 involved over a kilogram of prohibited pork product being seized and a \$300.00 penalty being collected. This was significant because during FY07, the A-TCET only had two agriculture referrals that resulted in seizure and penalties. Dr. Schneider has trained his teammates extensively on agricultural pest risks and has even made sure that they have collection envelopes, vials and other supplies needed to collect and identify pests. Dr. Schneider has sat beside his teammates and showed them plant diseases and insects under a microscope. Once the members of the A-TCET understood the risks associated with allowing the entry of agricultural pests and had an understanding of what to look for during their routine targeting, they bought into the concept. The results have been phenomenal.

So far during FY 2008, the A-TCET has had 56 enforcement actions involving agriculture violations, submitted an average of 25 reportable pests for identification per month and has 1,400 interceptions of quarantine material. Dr. Schneider leads all Agriculture Specialist at the port in the number of agriculture penalties issued and the number of reportable pests intercepted. This is a result of focused teamwork.

The A-TCET has helped plan and participated in several special agriculture focused operations during the fiscal year. The A-TCET works with other Agriculture Specialist and the force multiplier effect has been a definite benefit for all involved.

The Eagle Pass Port of Entry has become the working model for the inclusion of Agriculture Specialist's on special enforcement teams. Several ports have inquired about the effectiveness and feasibility of including an Ag Specialist on the A-TCET and are astonished when they hear the results. Some ports have already made plans to include an Ag Specialist on their enforcement teams based on the results achieved in Eagle Pass.

Impact:

The inclusion of an Agriculture Specialist on the A-TCET has had a significant impact on the ports enforcement posture. CBP officers on the A-TCET are more excited about finding agriculture pests because they now have a vested interest in the agriculture program. Agriculture Specialist assigned to Passenger Processing have seen the positive results that Dr. Schneider has achieved by making his teammates aware of potential pest risks and they are starting to interact more with the CBP officers on their shifts so they can have the same success as Dr. Schneider. The numbers are impressive, the A-TCET has had a 2700% increase in their number of agriculture violations and Dr. Schneider has had a 273% increase in the number of agriculture violations as compared to FY 2007.

The port has more that doubled the number of agricultural penalties and have already surpassed the number of reportable pests detected in all of FY 2007.

This practice could easily be adopted in all environments in which CBP operates. There are a few issues such as officer safety that has to be addressed but with the appropriate framework these issues can be easily resolved.

The Eagle Pass A-TCET has been expanding its program into the cargo and rail environments and several enforcement operations are in the planning stage so that the agricultural pest risk can be more effectively addressed in these areas. The port also wants to incorporate an Agriculture Specialist into the Eagle Pass Tactical Analysis Unit so that agricultural trends, concealment methods and potential targets can be identified and shared within the entire port.

The port has learned that the inclusion of an Agriculture Specialist increases the ports enforcement posture and several objectives can be obtained by combining our resources.

Mission:

The addition of an Agriculture Specialist to the Eagle Pass A-TCET has significantly enhanced the Plant Protection and Quarantine's mission of safeguarding America's agriculture and natural resources from the risks associated with the entry, establishment, or spread of animal and plant pests and noxious weeds to ensure an abundant, high-quality, and varied food supply. The focused awareness of agricultural threats by CBP officers greatly assists Agriculture Specialist with their duties and responsibilities. The unity of all officers working together with a common goal will be a greatly benefit the mission of safeguarding our homeland against all threats.

Conclusion:

As previously stated, the addition of an Agriculture Specialist to the Eagle Pass A-TCET has greatly enhanced the ports enforcement posture as a whole. The A-TCET has the flexibility and mobility to move around in all the port environments to address all threats. Dr. Schneider has represented the agriculture program well and deserves recognition for the efforts that he has made training his teammates in the detection and identification of pests and stressing to them the importance of protecting the United States against these pest risks but even he will tell you that it has truly been a team effort.