

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

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U.S. SECRET SERVICE FORMS FOUR NEW TASK FORCES

**Electronic crimes partnerships bring together law enforcement,
academia and private sector**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The United States Secret Service has announced the formation of four new Electronic Crimes Task Forces, a successful public-private partnership aimed at fighting high-tech computer-based crimes. The new task forces will open in Dallas, Houston, Cleveland and Columbia, South Carolina, and join an existing network of nine other nationwide operations.

“Our goal is to keep our community and nation safe against various forms of electronic crimes and terrorist attacks against the critical infrastructure and financial payment systems,” said Secret Service Director Ralph Basham. “These task forces are about sharing information and resources in an effort to enhance our strengths and minimize our weakness against those that would do us harm.”

With the passage in October 2001 of the USA PATRIOT Act, a direct response to the September 11th terrorist attacks, the U.S. Secret Service was authorized to establish a nationwide network of electronic crimes task forces, based on the agency’s highly successful New York City model. The task force approach developed by the Secret Service has generated unprecedented partnerships among federal, state and local law enforcement, the private sector, and academia. These partnerships – based in New York City, Los Angeles, Miami, Charlotte, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Boston, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. – have experienced remarkable success in detecting and suppressing computer-based crime.

“The partnering methods and techniques successfully utilized by the task force against cyber-criminals are unprecedented in the law enforcement arena,” Director Basham said. “The Secret Service has taken a truly collaborative approach and applied it to fighting high-tech crimes.”

While the Secret Service leads this innovative effort, the agency believes in partnerships versus membership, where there is a strong emphasis on prevention and education, in addition to traditional law enforcement measures. The task force provides a productive framework and collaborative crime-fighting environment in which the resources of its participants can be combined to effectively and efficiently make a significant impact on electronic crimes. Other law enforcement agencies bring additional criminal enforcement jurisdiction and resources to the task force while representatives from private industry, such as telecommunications providers, bring a wealth of technical expertise.

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The types of investigations handled by the task forces encompass a wide range of computer-based criminal activity. Examples include e-commerce frauds, intellectual property violations, identity crimes, telecommunications fraud, and a wide variety of computer intrusion crimes that affect a variety of infrastructures.

Well known for protecting the nation's leaders, the U.S. Secret Service is also responsible for protecting America's financial infrastructure. Technology and the rapid growth of the Internet have eliminated the traditional borders of financial crimes and provided new opportunities for those who engage in fraud to threaten the nation's financial systems. These new technologies have been exploited by an expanding criminal element that conducts a host of sophisticated financial crimes.

Telecommunications and finance systems are prime targets for the hacker or cyber-terrorist intent on causing damage to the economy of the United States. With the task force approach, the Secret Service and its law enforcement partners at the federal, state and local level, work closely with members of these industries and the academic community to share information and identify weaknesses.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For questions concerning this release, please contact the United States Secret Service Office of Government and Public Affairs at 202-406-5708 or one of the following field offices:

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