



RSL ENHANCES NEW YORK'S COUNTER TERRORISM OPERATIONS

The National Nuclear Security Administration's Remote Sensing Laboratory (RSL) at Nellis Air Force Base has given a lift to the Big Apple's terror-fighting capabilities.

RSL recently retrofitted two new high-tech speedboats, two vans and several portable backpacks with radiation detection equipment for the New York Police Department (NYPD) Counter Terrorism Division. The detection equipment formerly called the Tactical Radiological Acquisition and Characterization System or simply TRACS, will augment the Division's radiological threat detection capabilities.

"These are unique radiation detection packages that are designed to combat illicit radiation sources," says Craig Marianno, an RSL scientist who worked on the project. "We've already used this equipment, but we modified existing systems to fit the New York City Police Department's mission." First responders and Counter Terrorism units have also used similar equipment through the U.S. Department of Energy's Radiological Assistant Program (RAP).

This is not the first time RSL has worked with the City of New York. The lab stepped up to assist with radiological detection efforts following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

This time, NYPD Counter Terrorism Division asked the DOE directly to assist in a larger-scale effort to enhance security in the New York City metropolitan area. DOE answered the call. RSL performed a wide-area aerial radiological survey in 2005 that stretched from the Burroughs of New York City to parts of New Jersey. As a follow on to the aerial survey, NYPD Counter Terrorism was also interested in the unique radiation detection equipment that RSL design and builds. "Funds for both projects were approved through a U.S. Department of Homeland Security grant initiative," Marianno says.

The Nuclear Instrumentation Section of the Radiation Emergency Response Department completed the high-tech detection equipment project. All systems were designed to be easy to use and capable of withstanding extreme stress that comes with rough usage. All of the systems were designed so that their readings can be viewed live time via the Internet.

The NYPD Counter Terrorism Division unit put the boats, vans and backpacks to use during several high-profile events; among them the Fourth of July fireworks display over New York Harbor and the recent Major League Baseball All-Star Game at Yankee Stadium, Marianno says. "They'll be looking for radiation during high-profile events, such as the Thanksgiving Day

Parade and the Times Square New Year's Eve celebrations. The TRACS system is designed to detect neutron and gamma radiation. It is capable of identifying what type of gamma emitting nuclide might be in a specific area.”

Alycia Keller, National Security Technology's project manager for TRACS, applauded the total team effort it took in acquiring and completing the TRACS detection equipment. She says the RSL engineers stepped up on numerous occasions to satisfactorily meet the needs of this project for the NYPD Counter Terrorism unit.

This is the first time RSL-Nellis has been involved in a project that provides equipment and technical support directly to the NYC Police. Since 9/11, New York City has been the focus for new initiatives in the prevention of radiological terrorism. “I think I can speak for everyone that has been involved in this project. It has been a true honor for RSL to work with the men and women of the NYPD Counter Terrorism Division by increasing our role in homeland security initiatives to the City of New York and the security of the United States.” Keller says.

Rhonda Hopkins, the Radiological Emergency Response Department manager adds, “The initial feedback from NYPD was that our equipment performed so well that it made all others look prehistoric. It is a pleasure to hear that all the team's hard work paid off. We look forward to a long-term relationship with NYPD.”

