Gary Arlen. (Jan. 23, 2004). Las Vegas war games, incl. Leader Technologies. Washington Technology.

Las Vegas war games

By **Gary Arlen**

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How timely that the "Terrorex 04 Threat Simulation Exercise" ? believed to be the largest-ever interagency anti-terrorism drill ? was run in Las Vegas earlier this month. Las Vegas was one of the anticipated targets during the latest Code Orange alert around New Year's Day.During Terrorex 04, more than 120,000 electronics executives, including CEOs from Microsoft, Intel, Hewlett-Packard, Dell, Verizon and Sprint, were in town for the Consumer Electronics Show, an awesome ? and happily, unscathed ? target.

The Terrorex 04 exercise scheduling was simply a coincidence. It had been set up months earlier as the centerpiece of the third annual Government Convention on Emerging Technologies (loosely associated with CES), which this year was co-hosted by the Department of Homeland Security and an array of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.Almost all of the 750 conference attendees took part in the two-day role-playing project, which ended with the "capture" of several faux-terrorists in a "takedown" at the posh Bellagio Hotel, all coordinated with that hotel's security staff. "Many of the participants did not necessarily enjoy being put into

crisis and chaos," said Carl Solomon of Boeing Co.'s Advanced Information Systems, Annapolis Junction, Md., and a coordinator of Terrorex 04.

"Our intent was to force them to build relationships and understand what it's like to be in a role that is not their standard role."Solomon said part of creating the crisis "was not giving them all the tools they wanted ? not making it easy for them to use all the technology.

We created this additional crisis dynamic."Despite the suggestion that the exercise held back on technology tools, the "Incident Command Center," a meeting room at the Riviera Hotel, was packed with computers, software and communications inputs.

There the teams coordinated their responses to a synthesized attack on a nuclear reactor and other terrorist assaults. Groove Networks provided collaborative software used across the project, while Leader Technologies supplied teleconferencing and alert-dissemination capabilities. Sparta Inc. handled integration of the command center, while Boeing oversaw the entire setup. To get things started, more than 100 cell phones went off almost simultaneously during a conference session, alerting key participants that an airplane had struck a nuclear reactor ? the initial scripted scenario. The conference participants split into teams or took assignments ranging from news reporters to top government. In the command center, "officials," actually a blend of real-life local, state and federal officials, viewed computer-generated maps and video feeds from dozens of sources and tracked intelligence information. Real-time monitoring cameras fed images from Washington streets and major local venues. Everyone was able to interconnect with appropriate contacts ostensibly around the country, although actually just down the hotel corridor in other meeting room clusters. During the exercise, many participants reverted to non-tech behaviors."

They chose not to use the technology we provided, because it was easier for them to go to conventional ways," Solomon said. "For example, we had video conference technology across all the simulation locations, but just as in real life, [the participants] chose to go find" the appropriate source in person. The exercise included some terrifying twists. There was a simulated bomb factory in a hotel suite. By interrogating the "terrorists" there, participants tracked down that site and stopped some of the attacks by combining information from federal, state and local offices, Solomon said. The unclassified exercise, structured as an information-sharing project, demonstrated that the "only way to succeed was to combine federal and state agencies," Solomon said. It was intended to encourage officials to "step outside familiar boxes to see how they can use" the tools and connections, he said.

CONVENTION SHOWCASES HIGH-TECH INTELLIGENCE TOOLS
The mock terrorism drill was a lively and memorable component of the Emerging Technologies convention, but the event delved into other intelligence and information technology issues of local, state and federal agencies.

About 25 percent larger than the 2003 convention, this year's program showcased expanding tools for gathering and analyzing intelligence ? not surprising, because about one-sixth of the exhibitors have received funding from In-Q-Tel, the Central Intelligence Agency's venture capital fund.

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Among the most visible tools were automated language translation software and image processing software; many of the latter services were to geographic mapping software used to synthesize troop movements.

For example, Erdas Imagine, a unit of Leica Geosystems, demonstrated a geospatial tool box that enables users to modify real-time imaging data to track airborne or ground movements. One of the prototype scenes was a "fly-around" of the Gettysburg, Pa., civil-war battlefield. A Leica representative slyly acknowledged that it could be used for any battleground scenario, an unveiled hint at its military implementations. (http://www.gis.leica-geosystems.com)

Language Weaver, a Los Angeles firm, typified the automated translation technologies on display. Its translation software, now available to convert Arabic, Hindi and Somali and soon Chinese into English, uses a statistical method for machine translation, adapting techniques from cryptography and applying learning algorithms to translate automatically. The company claims its software can handle full translation of previously unseen text. (http://www.languageweaver.com)

Also exhibited were text processing software solutions to handle the "volume problem," as a manager at Mohomine described it. Like other tools at the exhibit, the Mohomine software uses pattern recognition features to process unstructured text. The company claims its latest updates can "handle anything that can be put into Unicode." (www.mohomine.com)
Inxight Software takes the process a step further. It is upgrading its SmartDiscovery software to allow government agencies and enterprises to gather, analyze and share information from documents written in multiple languages in disparate databases. (http://www.inxight.com)

Between the advanced intelligence tools of the exhibit hall and the all-to-real Terrorex exercise elsewhere in the hotel, this was one government-oriented conference that rivaled the whiz-bang entertainment gizmos at the far larger CES surrounding it during that surreal Las Vegas week.

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