

“Small Town” Homeland Security

(NAPSA)—When you hear the phrase “Homeland Security,” you often think of protection for big cities, large airports and railways, as well as major sporting events. You don’t normally think of small towns and rural farmlands. But these less populated areas are just as susceptible to the presence of terrorist activity. Experts say that terrorists prefer rural areas to better isolate themselves from the public when conducting training and congregating. Terrorist leaders realize that rural communities are less able to uncover and monitor their activities due to limited budgets for manpower and surveillance equipment.

Federal and state law enforcement officials are aware of the need to uncover and break up these “breeding grounds” for terrorist cells. A key initiative unveiled this year by the Department of Homeland Security is CEDAP. CEDAP is the Commercial Equipment Direct Assistance Program. The program allows smaller communities having limited financial resources to apply for and obtain select technologies that will enhance their homeland security capabilities.

One of the most important nighttime surveillance technologies being introduced in rural communities is the use of thermal imaging cameras. Thermal imaging cameras “see” heat. The varying heat levels given off by road surfaces, vegetation, trees, buildings, animals and humans allow officers to clearly see and monitor their surroundings in complete darkness.

Thermal imaging cameras have



Noptic Night Vision Camera mounted to patrol car spotlight.

become more affordable as well as more sophisticated and effective. High-resolution, long-range devices can now be acquired for under \$4,000. One of the newest breakthroughs in thermal imaging cameras is a device that is mounted onto a vehicle’s existing spotlight. The compact size and mounting location allow officers to conduct continual night vision surveillance while being parked or driving at highway speeds. Departments can now monitor numerous square miles of territory at night by viewing the thermal images on an onboard video screen or laptop. The camera, being mounted and aligned with the spotlight, allows officers to use their spotlight both timely and tactically.

Along with the development and availability of high-tech devices, large cities as well as small towns and rural areas depend upon the vigilance of its citizens in identifying suspect activity.