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Local comment

If you seek a site for homeland security technology, look to Michigan

By LESLIE A. TOUMA

With hundreds of thousands of people and tons of cargo moving across the nation every day by rail, air, highway and mass transit, a key challenge in securing America's borders is identifying technological solutions that makes transportation safe while also enabling the free movement of people and commerce.



Leslie Touma

The Michigan Security Network (MiSN), a nonprofit organization focused on the growing field of homeland security, is working to connect Michigan-based companies, research universities and research and design facilities with state and federal government entities charged with homeland defense.

The best way to revitalize Michigan's economy is to build on our strengths. Our location, a technical talent pool, research corridors, strategic assets and capacity, major international border and innovation expertise give Michigan an abundant advantage over all other states in providing an ideal testing location for the homeland security market.

MiSN is making that case to

high-level officials at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Department of Defense at the MiSN-Northern Border Security Conference this week at the Dearborn Hyatt Regency.

Based on comprehensive market analysis, MiSN is working to establish a Northern Border Security Test Bed (NBSTB) in Michigan to bring together world-class facilities, technologies and experts with the goal of identifying new technological solutions designed to safeguard our common borders.

MICHIGAN PROVIDES AN IDEAL RANGE OF CONDITIONS THAT ACCURATELY REPLICATE THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS IN WHICH SECURITY SOLUTIONS MUST PERFORM.

The U.S.-Canada border is the longest one in the world. Michigan, with its 700 miles of shared border space, serves as the nation's principal gateway for international trade with Canada — including the largest commercial border crossing in the country — making it uniquely qualified to be a national leader in the homeland security market.

Michigan provides an ideal range of conditions that accurately replicate the different physical environments in which security solutions must perform.

Critical to this mission are having the tools to communicate under any and all circumstances and having a facility that can both perform "controlled environment" testing and replicate real-world operating conditions. Thus, it stands to reason that a test bed in close proximity to one of the most difficult, highly trafficked border areas would be an ideal environment to deploy new surveillance assets, sensors and tactical infrastructure.

With MiSN as the point organization, locating an NBSTB in Michigan would provide the Department of Homeland Security, as well as other operational end users, a real-world environment in which to train, research, develop, test and evaluate the latest in security measures.

The \$113-billion global homeland security market is a solid growth market — with \$60 billion expected to be spent among private industry — and Michigan is best positioned to become the nation's homeland security leader.

■ LESLIE TOUMA IS THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF THE MICHIGAN SECURITY NETWORK.