

## Border Security Needs Improvement, INS, Customs Tell Panel

### GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS

THE GOVERNMENT'S two top immigration officials told a Senate subcommittee Wednesday that their agencies need more personnel, more advanced technology and better cooperation from the intelligence community to secure the nation's northern border.

Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner James Ziglar and U.S. Customs Service Commissioner Robert Bonner told the Senate Treasury and General Government Appropriations Subcommittee that northern border security was a focus of improvement even before the Sept. 11 attacks.

**Subcommittee Chairman Byron Dorgan**, D-N.D., said he has long believed the northern border is vulnerable. The 4,000-mile border, he said, is "woefully understaffed," adding that orange cones are responsible for protecting much of it.

Bonner said no port of entry should be left insecure. "I want to retire those

orange cones," he said. Every port of entry has been ordered to maintain at least two officers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, he added.

While both commissioners said they are confident the borders are now secure, they said they fear not being able to maintain the security.

Personnel have been transferred from the southern to the northern border since the attacks, and are working 12-hour shifts, they said.

"The fact is we are expending a vast amount of overtime, asking our people to work much longer, harder hours," Bonner said. "I am concerned that the amount of hours will lead to burnout."

Ziglar said there are two key elements in increasing border security: expanded use of technology and cooperation among agencies.

In addition to calling for an increase in INS Border Patrol agents and facilities, Ziglar encouraged expanding access to biometric identification systems, to data

from the multi-agency Advance Passenger Information System and the National Crime Information Center Interstate Identification Index. He said these technologies would help prevent known terrorists and criminals from entering or fleeing the United States.

"We know [additional security] is going to inconvenience some of us," said **Sen. Conrad Burns**, R-Mont. "But it's an inconvenience the American people are willing to accept."

Ziglar and Bonner are receiving daily morning intelligence briefings, and suggested an integration of technology systems to be able to share data with the State Department and the FBI.

"It's not just sharing the information," Bonner added. "It's also having the intelligence to share."

Ziglar added there would also be an effort to minimize inconveniences to frequent, "low-risk travelers" and to reduce the threat to commerce and trade.

— BY STEPHANIE CONNER