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*Two US Government agencies have recently asked the Australian Customs Service for access to some of its Labrador 'detector dog' breeding stock and for assistance to implement Australian Customs canine breeding and development methods.*

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**T**he US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the US Institute for Biological Detection Systems (IBDS) have both turned to Australia because Australian Customs 'detector dog' production model is now widely recognised as the best in the world.

Following recommendations from the White House Gore Commission and the US Congress, the FAA is aiming to use Australian assistance to treble the number of counter-terrorism 'detector dogs' it has available. This is not just to better protect all US air transport participants, but also to assist the US to evolve, through the US Defence Department, an enhanced overall counter-terrorism response capacity.

The IBDS, which is based at Auburn University in Alabama, recently received a US Government charter to provide drug or explosives-detection dogs to the many hundreds of State and local US enforcement agencies.

Due to its successful detector-dog breeding and training program, Australian Customs now has a regular supply of Labrador detector

dogs available for onshore community protection work. In addition, Customs recently provided around 30 of its selectively bred Labradors to other Commonwealth and State agencies for security deployment before and during the Sydney Olympics.

"With Australia's domestic needs now in hand, Australian Customs is in a good position to assist these two offshore agencies. This will contribute to our goal for a global gene bank for quality detector dogs," said Mr John Vandeloo, Team Leader

*Japan Customs Mr Yuzuru Takasaki (on left with Heidi) and Mr Katsuaki Fuse (with Gabby) at Australian Customs Service canine training centre in Canberra.*





*A Customs 'detector dog' on duty at an Australian airport.*



*Australian Customs Labrador, Zac, with (from the left) US Customs Paul Paulson and Gene Hanvey and Australian Customs John Vandelloo.*

of Customs Canine Breeding and Development Centre in Melbourne.

"Two years ago, Australian Customs donated a sub-colony of foundation Labrador breeding stock along with methodology to US Customs to enable them to enhance their detector dog program. Australian Customs is also happy to assist the FAA and IBDS to evolve their community protection roles with detector dogs."

But Mr Vandelloo said that Australian Customs position of world leadership in the breeding and production of community protection Labrador 'detector dogs' did not come easily.

"Initially, we had to organise or undertake quite a lot of research in order to build up a high-quality, reliable program. But we are now in a position to make a significant contribution to both Australian and global community protection," he said.

Mr Vandelloo recently attended an international breeding and working dog symposium in Texas. He was a keynote speaker, attending at the request of the US Defence Department and the FAA. Most US Federal counter-drug and counter-terrorism organisations, dozens of US State, county and local policing fraternities, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, German

Police and the British Ministry of Defence attended the symposium.

"We seem to have evolved a small but strategic canine breeding and training program that has very significant international ramifications," Mr Vandelloo said.

Customs will initiate a project to assist the two US agencies later in 2000. The cost of bloodstock and model training will be met by the respective agencies.

Mr Vandelloo said that the very high regard in which the Australian Customs 'detector dog' program is held has also spread to Japan.

"The Director General of Japan Customs, Mr Hiroyasu Watanabe, recently visited Australia and he expressed a keen interest in our methodology and bloodstock, which he described as 'famous' in Japan. The Director of International Affairs with Japan Customs, Mr Kunio Mikuriya, said he believed the Australian Customs detector dog program was the best in the world."

"Two Japan Customs officers, Mr Yuzuru Takasaki and Mr Katsuaki Fuse were recently trained and teamed with our selectively bred detector dogs at Customs national training facility in Canberra."