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Police Chiefs View Security

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SAN ANTONIO, Sept. 24 —Perhaps nowhere else outside of Army bases is there such a Texas-sized display of modern hardware designed to protect, detect, snoop, ferret out, observe, survey, threaten, frighten, incapacitate, paralyze, disable and just plain kill.

The 190 commercial exhibitors who fought for the chance to buy space at this 80th annual conference of the International Association of Chiefs of Police brought with them enough

sophisticated mechanical aids to fill a large exhibition hall.

The grim efficiency projected by handguns, automatic rifles, specially equipped helicopters, chemical sprays, newer and more powerful search lights and quicker-draw holsters doesn't really do justice, however, to the 5,000 generally jovial, mostly middle-aged delegates.

About half are police chiefs, the organization said, and the remainder lower-level police personnel or people in police-related work, like criminology.

The moods sometimes mix with jarring results. A Kodak display pairs slides of grisly murder scenes, including closeups of dismembered bodies, with shots of seminude models.

"That's to get the attention of those who wander off," wisecracked the display operator.

In between exhibits, workshops on auto theft and seminars on organized international crime, the conference resembles a pro football reunion 15 years after.

More than half the men seem taller and more powerfully-built than average, with graying (or balding) heads and the kind of protruding belly that comes when once-active men no longer feel the need to keep themselves in top shape.

They've been squiring their party-dressed wives through an endless round of evening hospitality, laughing uproariously at ethnic jokes (mostly Irish and Italian), and poking fun at the intense politicking of several candidates for the job of IACP sixth vice presi-

dent. (The job is designed to lead almost automatically in six years to IACP president.)

By contrast, the exhibit hall seems more tuned to the continuous Sperry Univac film titled in dripping, blood-red letters, "Evil Walks Among Us."

A brochure on the film, passed out by hostesses in hot pants who clicked along the concrete floor in white, high-heeled boots, notes:

"See how crime stalks the streets of our cities and towns... how decay haunts our communities... slowing growth, impeding public safety..."

Nearby is the booth of the Varo Co., which bills itself as the "world's largest producer of night vision equipment for the Army."

For between \$1,000 and \$1,500, a police department can purchase Varo's flashlight-sized light amplifying tube. Its combination of fiber optics and electron multipliers will let you see by starlight, or the glow from downtown streets, the details you would normally see in daylight.

The Tandy Corp. proudly showed off a new holster with a quick-release safety strap. The strap has a phony snap designed to fool would-be gun snatchers into thinking they can grab the gun of an unwary officer. All they wind up doing is tugging on the officer's belt.

Sitting in the middle of the Armour of America exhibit was a damaged bullet-proof vest with a sign above it in arrestingly bold letters: "How to take a .30-caliber AP (armor piercing shell) in the gut and live to tell about it."

Other exhibits covered a broad range—jail bars, of cut-resistant steel, flame-retarding fabric for uniforms, bigger and brighter emergency lights for a stronger sinking feeling when you see them in your mirror, and a \$57,000, two-passenger, floodlight-equipped helicopter.

Unlike many gatherings these days, this lacked the sweet smell of marijuana. There was a drug education kit, however, with buttons reading:

"Speed Kills — Don't Meth Around," "Acid Heads Are Hollow," "Shrink Your Brain Without Surgery, Shoot Preparation 'H,'" "Get Really Stoned, Drink Wet Cement," "Flower Children & Pot & Blooming Idiots," and "Keep A Stiff Upper Lip — Sniff Glue."

A sign read: "If you don't like the police, next time you need help, call a hippie."

There was no display of bugging devices, for example, or wiretaps. But there were several for continuously recording incoming and outgoing telephone calls.

Two booths seemed to attract a continuous flow of interested delegates. One was the Colt firearms display, which included hunting rifles and automatic rifles manufactured for the army.

The other was set up by a six-month-old company producing the Nebulizer, a combination flashlight-chemical sprayer that former stock salesman Arthur Carracino invented after his wife saw a man killed by a policeman's gun.

The Nebulizer is shaped like a gun, but it has a flashlight head where the barrel would be and a tiny nozzle underneath.

A three-position thumb switch pulls down once for the flashlight beam, a little further for a blindingly-bright beam and all the way down to shoot one of several disabling chemical sprays.

"I say 'now you can feel safe without a gun,'" said Carracino.

Devices