



Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation

**EMBARGOED UNTIL
Tuesday, October 13, 2009**

Contact: Judi Shellenberger (315) 730-6353
Greg Koller, PNNL (509) 372-4864

NEW RESEARCH FIELD OF VISUAL AND DATA ANALYTICS EARNS RECOGNITION THROUGH HOMELAND SECURITY AWARD

October 13, 2009 Washington, D.C. – After the tragedy of September 11, it became clear a key element to protecting the United States and its citizens was to better understand the potential threats and those who may want to carry out such a catastrophic disaster. Thus, a new research field of visual and data analytics was developed.

The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation, an independent Federal government agency, selected James J. Thomas, Laboratory Fellow at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL), as this year's recipient of the **\$25,000 Homeland Security Award** for his pioneering leadership in the new science research field of visual analytics. The **Homeland Security Award** is sponsored by AgustaWestland North America, a Foundation partner since 2006.

According to PNNL, "Visual analytics technologies facilitate drawing actionable information from staggering amounts of complex data to thwart terrorist acts, identify vulnerabilities, and prepare for and respond to natural disasters. This technology fundamentally changes how humans interact, analyze, and report and act on information from local law enforcement, local and national health organizations, and national and international intelligence agencies."

In 2004, the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate created the National Visualization and Analytic Center with the mission to "prevent, prepare for, protect from, and respond to threats of any kind," and Thomas was tapped to lead the new Center.

"The Department of Homeland Security has designated the month of October as National Cyber Security Awareness Month, so it is fitting that the Christopher Columbus Foundation and AgustaWestland are honoring Jim Thomas, referred to by colleagues as the "father of visual analytics," said Kimberly Owens, Chair of the Foundation. "Jim has had the rare opportunity to be the leader in developing the new science field of visual analytics. He has been instrumental in crafting collaborative agreements between the U.S., Canada and Germany, and recently the European Union Commissions, United Kingdom and others joined to address the problems of homeland security. Jim has also inspired degree and certificate programs so future generations will carry on the work he has begun," said Owens.

"This award is unique and very special in that it represents recognition of the knowledge workers--intelligence to law enforcement--and the technologies enabling them to protect our freedoms, and allowing us to enjoy our way of life through homeland security," said Thomas. "I want to thank the thousands from government, academia and industry nationally and internationally who have joined me in this cause to develop visual analytics technologies resulting in this award."

- O V E R -

The *Homeland Security Award* Finalists were:

- Thomas Thundat, Ph.D., Corporate Fellow, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oak Ridge, TN, for developing nanomechanical sensors based on cantilever platform, which provides a new approach for directly detecting chemical and biological species with unprecedented sensitivity.
- Cellular Bioengineering, Inc., Honolulu, HI, a venture accelerator of disruptive technologies with biomedical and biodefense applications. In particular, DeconGel 1101™ hydrogel has proven superior efficacy for the binding and encapsulation of many types of surface contaminants, including the decontamination of radiological spills and industrial and nuclear sites.

The Award ceremony will take place on Tuesday, October 13, 2009, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. in the U.S. Capitol Mansfield Room (S-207), in Washington, D.C.

*The Christopher Columbus Fellowship Foundation is an independent Federal government agency established by Congress in 1992 to “encourage and support research, study and labor designed to produce new discoveries in all fields of endeavor for the benefit of mankind.” Governed by a Presidential appointed Board of Trustees, the Foundation has established **Frontiers of Discovery—Work in Progress** and **Discover the Future** programs that recognize “cutting edge” innovations, innovative ideas of America’s youth, and honors teachers. These programs include the **Homeland Security Award, Life Sciences Awards, Christopher Columbus Awards, and the Freida J. Riley Teacher Award.** Website: www.columbusfdn.org.*

***AgustaWestland North America** (AWNA) is the American subsidiary of AgustaWestland, a Finmeccanica company. AWNA is responsible for the Company’s U.S government programs and provides strategic guidance and support to AgustaWestland’s other North American businesses and operations. AgustaWestland’s contributions to the U.S. aerospace industry dates back decades, including pioneering work with Bell Helicopter over 50 years ago and more recent successes like the company’s victory in winning the Marine One presidential helicopter program with its US101 helicopter, in partnership with Lockheed Martin and Bell. From its work in support of U.S. Army aviation assets during the first Gulf war, to its highly touted Homeland Security airborne use of force program in the Coast Guard known as Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON), AgustaWestland North America is committed to providing state-of-the-art vertical lift technology and support to our armed forces and other U.S. government customers such as the Department of Homeland Security. In addition, through the company’s facility in Philadelphia, PA, AgustaWestland manufactures and supports its helicopters, which are in operation all across America, from commercial operators to medevac, and law enforcement organizations as varied as the New Mexico State Police and the New York City and Phoenix Police.*