

BEN-GURION UNIVERSITY of the Negev Tackles Cyber-Crime

BY TAMMY BLECK



A Homeland Security Symposium was recently held in Los Angeles, California, a gathering of some of the top minds in the field of cyber research, warfare and homeland security. A presentation, one might assume, would be presented by the FBI, CIA or a government agency. One would be wrong.

This symposium was sponsored by American Associates presenting Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Some of BGU's top professors were present and a key note was given by Steve Pomerantz, a 27-year veteran in counter-terrorism and former Assistant Director for the FBI. Mr. Pomerantz delivered a powerful presentation that left the audience terrified and comforted all at once. It would be hard to expect anything less from an expert in counter-terrorism and criminal justice who currently serves as the Director of Counter Terrorism Programs at the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), and as Vice President of the Institute for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, a nonprofit international organization located in Washington, D.C.

The panel discussions were hosted by BGU's Dr. Isaac Maya, Ph.D., P.E., Director of Research for the National Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events, Professor Amos Drory, Vice President of External Affairs at BGU, Professor Bracha Shapira, the chair of BGU's Department of Information Systems Engineering and member of the Homeland Security Institute, Professor Dan Blumberg, BGU's Deputy Vice President and Dean for research/development

and Director of the Homeland Security Institute. Also on the panel was Professor Gabby Sarusi, the newest member of BGU's Homeland Security Institute and the Ilse Katz Institute for Nano scale Science and Technology. Each spoke about the groundbreaking technologies that BGU is working to refine.

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev stands apart from the collegiate crowd in a very big way. While the studies offered at BGU are exceptionally diverse, the students are exposed and encouraged to take on real world problems, threats and their solutions. You could go so far as to say they are being educated in the field of protecting and saving Israel, its allies, and the world. No small task.

It is no secret that Israel is among the world's leaders in technical innovation, homeland security and medical advances. Making the world a better and safer place is part of the curriculum at BGU. That means tackling one of the greatest threats of our time: cyber-crime.

Professor Bloomberg stated, "The Homeland Security Institute at BGU is very unique. It focuses on basic science questions that lead eventually to cutting edge technologies that can help protect Israel's civil society and its allies in a democratic world. Nowadays, borders are a virtual thing. Most of our future wars will be fought on our computer networks." It is no surprise that BGU offers Israel's first graduate program in Cyber Security.

United States Defense Secretary Leon Panetta warns us that "the United States is facing the possibility of a cyber-Pearl Harbor. A cyber-attack could be as destructive as the terrorist attack on 9/11. It could virtually paralyze the nation. The internet is the battlefield of the future, where adversaries can seek to do harm

to our country, to our economy and to our citizens."

If you don't fear cyber-crime, you should. As a nation, we face a daily barrage of foreign attack attempts to dismantle our nation's power grid, transportation systems, financial networks, flight controls, military maneuvers, contaminate the water supply in our major cities, and infiltrate government data. Clearly, we are engaged in a war without borders.

Reality is scary. BGU's biotechnology, nanotechnology, robotics with brains and counter terrorism studies are just a slice of what we need to invest in to secure the future of our homeland, our country and our children.

The faculty and students of BGU face daunting realities head-on. Crisis training programs, robotics competitions, hyperspectral imaging labs, a computerized target detection laboratory, cyber-security incubators, and ground penetrating radar are not things of science fiction; they are just a few of the offerings that BGU's 5 campuses and over 20,000 students have brought to the forefront.

It is clear that BGU is that exceptional place where education and research are combined with the pioneering spirit of Zionism. A winning combination that cannot be disputed. We could all use more hope these days, and BGU offers it up with distinction.

Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has undeniably contributed to the strength of Israel. Giving our support to those programs that support the safety and survival of Israel is indisputably vital. Without that support, the future is a lot more tenuous.

If education, innovation, and research is the question, then Ben-Gurion University of the Negev is the answer.

To learn more about Ben-Gurion University of the Negev go to www.aabgu.org

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