

**BUSINESS**

# Sadly, terrorism linked to technology sector

By Professor Sidney Morse  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The technology sector, suffering from a weakened economy, saw no signs of improvement on Sept. 11, when America felt the impact of terrorist attacks. The largest firms, Sun Microsystems, Cisco, AT&T and Lucent among them, an-

nounced layoffs contributing to the growing lines of the unemployed. The jobless rate reached 4.9 percent by September, slightly more than 500,000 people. However, with more than 100,000 cuts coming from airlines and aerospace alone, the rate is widely anticipated to travel north of 6 percent, leaving

1.5 to 2 million without jobs. The NASDAQ, where most technology company stocks are traded, has seen about a 20 percent decline in value since Sept. 11, this on top of a previous downturn. But securities reflecting new opportunities are emerging. Intelligence, other high security technology, and defense

firms have seen dramatic rises in recent days.

In the midst of this crisis, President Bush and Congress are aggressively looking to pass a major stimulus package approaching some \$50 to \$60 billion. To the surprise of no one, the President favors tax cuts for individuals and tax breaks for businesses. But once these measures are introduced, what kind of technology landscape will meet them now that the world has dramatically changed? And how will America's urban centers figure into the equation of this new opportunity paradigm?

The head of one of the leading e-commerce facilitators in the country, Mark Resch of CommerceNet, Cupertino, California, says "Recent events have had a profound impact on the freedom of every individual, government, and business in the world. The way we conduct ourselves and our commerce around the world must change. Because of that, electronic commerce is perhaps more important than ever...and can not only pre-

vail in the face of these new constraints, but has the potential to facilitate economic growth when more traditional business methodologies are being restricted and regulated."

E-Commerce makes it possible, Resch suggests, "for people around the world to communicate, transact, and profit beyond borders, irrespective of language, currencies, or cultural differences."

It is not uncommon for certain segments of the economy to discover opportunity in times of tragedy. Security concerns have long been at the heart of doing business in urban centers. Combining this orientation with new e-commerce models may be one area where technology can be effectively applied and be an engine for new job creation.

Marjorie Bynum, director of Workforce Development for the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA) in Arlington, Va., believes we can expect continued tightening by technology firms. One such area will be the significant shrinkage

of computer support positions. However, she sees increasing demand for specialty jobs in information security and government contracting, particularly in light of higher defense spending.

The unfulfilled gap of qualified computer engineers and network specialists will not ease as a result of Sept. 11, but will probably intensify, especially when considering restrictions likely to be placed on foreign visas, previously an important source for such skills. The need for any stimulus package President Bush might sign to include high-tech training for the nation's displaced workers and less skilled is of even more importance than before.

In a recent television interview, Jack Welch, outgoing chairman and CEO of General Electric Corp., and widely regarded as one of the leading business executives in American industry said, "if we do use government programs to stimulate the economy, I hope they are targeted to technology, that's where they can do the most  
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## Yucca

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that "one of the biggest seismic faults runs right through the state." Then there's the reality of radioactive substances. "There's nothing safe about nuclear material," he said. "You're going to make Nevada uninhabitable."

"This crosses every boundary- racial, economic," said Tate, "because if you irradiate somebody, it's going to kill them."

Las Vegas City Councilwoman Lynette Boggs McDonald of Ward Two and Councilman Lawrence Weekly of Ward Five, both African-American, also take a dim view of the project. McDonald says she has always opposed it. Said Weekly, "I have a lot of uneasiness."

Neal, referring to the DOE, said, "Now they've reached the point where they've submitted all the data," and, turning attention to the Oval Office, predicted, "The president will make a decision around March."

Congress and the president are expected to declare Yucca Mountain suitable, and many believe a veto by the state, also expected, would be quickly overridden by the congress. Referring to the president, Neal said, "He'll notify the governor, who'll express his approval or disapproval- but that's all."

Early opposition to the repository came from Nevada's congressional delegation, state legislature, local governing bodies and private sector. Today, opponents include the current Nevada governor and his predecessors, with one notable exception.

Just a couple of months ago, former and one-term republican governor Robert List, now a local attorney with a business and gaming clientle, entered what he called a "long term contract" with the Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI). His decision to join NEI, the nuclear industry lobby, brought cynical

howls from his peers.

Those supporting the repository project emphasize economic advantages associated with it, which, they believe, would make having it in Nevada worthwhile. Potential benefits, they say, include jobs, improvements in transportation, increased funding for schools and more university research projects, mitigation of Nevada's tax burden, even direct federal aid to the state.

List is negotiating "benefits," he says, "that would be acceptable." Taking his prestige as former governor to business and labor groups, he'll recruit like-minded individuals from the private sector, searching for those who support the idea of negotiating, now, for benefits.

Even supporters, however, express some concerns about the repository. Brown, for example, is concerned about the radioactive material, "The shipping of it, the moving of it," she said. "I think they should come up with something as close to failsafe as possible, and I think it should be by rail." To prevent an environmental disaster, she said, "They obviously need to guard against carelessness. If it's guarded and protected properly, we shouldn't be threatened by it."

In fact, Nevadans should see benefits, according to Brown, who says the chamber will be looking for them with great anticipation. "We want to ensure that the businesses we represent and the youth of our community receive some benefits," she said.

Acknowledging the anxiety

about storing nuclear material in view of recent terrorist activity, however, Brown acknowledged, "That does cause concern, I think it does for everyone."

It apparently causes more concern for some than for others, like Weekly, for example, whose concern compels him to reject the project entirely. "Having concerns about how it would be transported, and with the heightened concern about terrorism," said the councilman, "I don't think it's a good idea."

Meanwhile, fatalists notwithstanding, hope springs eternal among the optimistic opposition.

Boggs McDonald recently announced her intent to challenge incumbent U.S. Rep. Shelley Berkley for the congressional seat in Nevada's District One. Voters there will have no problem determining where she stands on this issue.

"I'm not ready to throw in the towel or say, 'I give up.' There are still things we can do to keep it from ever coming to Nevada," she said.

"With adequate leadership from the top down, and that includes the Nevada congressional delegation, this thing can be stopped," said Tate. "There is nothing in this world that can't be stopped by the people with adequate leadership."

This presumes, of course, that the people are concerned about the issue. When asked whether the topic of a nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain comes up very often during his frequent encounters with constituents, Weekly said, "Not at all."


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