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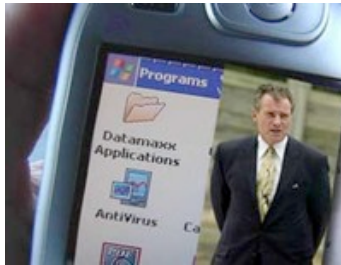
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**Revolving Door at the Air Marshal Service**

June 20, 2006 9:50 AM

**Rhonda Schwartz and Avni Patel Report:**



Federal air marshals tell ABCNews an expensive hand-held communication system has not lived up to its promise but that their former director has still benefited.

The system, part of a multi-million dollar contract with the Datamaxx company, was pushed for by the former director of the Federal Air Marshal Service, Thomas Quinn. He went to work as a paid consultant for the company weeks after he left the government earlier this year.

Under Quinn, the Federal Air Marshal Service paid Datamaxx more than \$22 million for a system of personal digital assistants, or PDAs, that was supposed to allow air marshals to document suspicious behavior and communicate with the ground during emergency situations.

Air marshals say that what they got was little more than a paperweight. "They were represented as something that was going to help us identify terrorists, but there's just no way that it was going to work that way," said Don Strange, a former FAMS Special Agent-in-Charge in Atlanta.

Air marshals who tried to use them during a recent incident on a Dallas-Newark flight said they were "worthless," according to marshals who thought the devices were supposed to provide communication between marshals in the air. A FAMS official said the devices do not currently feature that capability.

A House Judiciary Committee report released two weeks ago found that an "overwhelming majority" of air marshals interviewed said the PDAs were "inoperable and consistently failed to perform their intended functions."

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Federal Air Marshal Service

Homeland Security

Hurricane Katrina

Millionaire Sex Scandal

NSA: Wiretapping

Osama bin Laden

Payola

Speaker of the House

Terror

U.K. Airline Terror Plot

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#### MONTHLY ARCHIVES

September 2006

August 2006

July 2006

June 2006

May 2006

April 2006

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Datamaxx referred questions related to operational issues to the Federal Air Marshal Service.

FAMS spokesman Conan Bruce said that the agency upgraded the device through Datamaxx last October and that the current PDA "performs its intended functions and operates well."

Quinn resigned on February 3 of this year. Within weeks, he was promoting Datamaxx's products at a homeland security trade show in Washington, D.C.

[A spokeswoman for the Transportation Security Administration, which oversees the Federal Air Marshal Service, said that Quinn had cleared his current work with Datamaxx through the agency's ethics office.](#)

Government watchdogs say Quinn's employment with Datamaxx raises ethical questions. "There is absolutely an appearance that this is payback for his irrational exuberance for this contractor and its products," said Keith Ashdown of Taxpayers for Common Sense, a group that monitors government contracting.

Just before leaving office, Quinn promoted the Datamaxx's software in **an article he wrote for a law enforcement newsletter**. Quinn's article is prominently featured on the company's website.

"It looks like Mr. Quinn is using his office, which he just left to give a seal of approval on this company's product," said Jennifer Porter Gore of the Project on Government Oversight. "Let's just say this doesn't pass the smell test."

Quinn did not returned phone calls requesting comment for this story.



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June 20, 2006 in Federal Air Marshal Service | [Permalink](#) | [User Comments \(30\)](#)

#### User Comments

*We knew something underhanded was up from the beginning. Why do you push a piece of junk despite its uselessness for the task at hand? Why did we have countless man hours of training on a device that was never used?*

*It is interesting that most of the ex-USSS people brag only of their hustles and hook-ups and not of the bad guys they put away or good they have done helping people as a PUBLIC SERVANT. Maybe the government should consider rotating Secret Service personnel through law enforcement jobs during their career to minimize the immorality and scams that seem to infest their ranks after a career scamming around the politics.*

*Just a thought.*

*I had informants with more honor than a lot of the ex-SS*