

## Far Out: U.S. Celebrates 40 Years in Temporary Export System

**W**here were you when **Neil Armstrong** first set foot on the moon, or Jimi Hendrix wailed at Woodstock? More to the point, where were you when the first “merchandise passport” was issued in the United States?



Forty years ago, hemlines were higher, and so were the barriers facing those wishing to take goods abroad temporarily, whether for trade shows, product demonstrations or as professional equipment. Duties, taxes, temporary import bonds – *what a bummer, man!*

But on May 8, 1969, Lester D. Johnson, the U.S. commissioner of customs, approved an undertaking by USCIB to serve as the issuing and guaranteeing association for the ATA Carnet, a novel system set up by the International Chamber of Commerce and the Customs Cooperation Council (now the World Customs Organization) to permit the temporary movement of various types of goods without duties or taxes.

*Far out!* By June 30 of that year, as the Apollo 11 astronauts readied for their historic moon landing the following month, the ATA Carnet system was fully up and running, receiving foreign-issued Carnets and issuing Carnets for American companies. (“ATA” is a combination of the French and English abbreviations for “temporary admission.”)

Forty years and hundreds of thousands of Carnets later, growth of the system administered by USCIB continues to keep pace with global commerce. In 2008, some 15,700 Carnets were issued by USCIB and its service providers, Roanoke Trade Services and the Corporation for International Business – the highest number ever.

The range of goods taken abroad under Carnet runs the gamut from jewelry to jet airplanes, from heavy construction equipment to the instruments and equipment taken on tour by the rock band Bon Jovi.

The network has grown and changed over the years, now encompassing some 80 countries and customs territories (see *related stories*) that have signed the conventions governing Carnets, the latest being the new republic of Montenegro. USCIB plans a number of *groovy* events to mark the anniversary during the course of 2009.

A system that began with paper applications has migrated to online software and most recently to the Web. The latest improvements speed the process considerably, enabling many users to get their Carnets processed at the last minute.

More than a few must be thinking, “*Right on, USCIB!*” ■

## ...While China Marks a Decade

**I**n November, business representatives from around the world gathered in Beijing to mark China’s 10 years in the ATA Carnet system. USCIB President and CEO **Peter M. Robinson** led a delegation of American business experts to the meeting. USCIB was instrumental in helping to open up the world’s most populous country to Carnets in the 1990s. Over 7,000 Carnets have been issued for U.S. goods to enter China since its entry into the system.

China now ranks 12th among 65 countries in the ATA System, with over 3,200 Carnets issued in 2007 for goods valued at \$73 million (U.S.), an increase of 35 percent over 2006. That number should grow significantly as the result of this year’s Beijing Olympics, for which China temporarily expanded the scope of goods admissible under Carnets to include professional equipment.

Following 10 years of negotiations, Chinese customs authorities implemented the ATA Carnet system in March 1998 and appointed the China Chamber of International Commerce/China Center for the Promotion of International Trade (CCOIC/CCPIT) as the ATA Carnet national guaranteeing organization. ■



L-R: Yang Huazhang (CCPIT), Cynthia Duncan (USCIB), Peter Robinson (USCIB), Song Lee Ju (Singapore International Chamber of Commerce), Peter Bishop (London Chamber of Commerce & Industry), Hao Chongfu (Chinese Customs Control & Inspection)

### Montenegro Joins Carnet System

The European nation of Montenegro began accepting ATA Carnets in December, waiving duties and taxes on a variety of goods entering the country temporarily. “Montenegro’s decision to accept Carnets further solidifies their use in southeastern Europe,” according to **Cynthia Duncan**, USCIB’s senior vice president for Carnet operations. “Among the nations of former Yugoslavia, only Bosnia and Kosovo remain outside the system.”

Ms. Duncan said Montenegrin industries of interest to U.S. importers and exporters included synthetic cloth and industrial textiles, footwear, lumber, telecommunications equipment, steel mill products, and photographic and optical equipment. Since gaining independence in 2006, Montenegro has embarked on an economic reform and privatization drive that has led to strong economic growth, which exceeded seven percent last year. The country is also a candidate for membership in the European Union.