

## Robert Siebert

by David Silverberg  
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Director, Homeland Security and Intelligence, Hewlett-Packard

National service is in the DNA of Hewlett-Packard (HP), a company that goes way back to the origins of modern computing. HP was founded in 1938 in a Palo Alto, Calif., garage by Bill Hewlett and David Packard—who flipped a coin to determine which of their names would come first in the company title. Hewlett served in the US Army from 1941 to 1947, while Packard ran the company. In 1969, it was Packard's turn to serve, this time as deputy secretary of Defense, which he did until 1972.

Throughout its history, especially as it developed modern computing, HP provided support and technology to the US intelligence community, helping the United States sustain its position in the world, especially during the dangerous years of the Cold War.

Today, HP is serving the nation again, still in intelligence, but now also in homeland security.

Point man

The man leading the latest HP effort is Robert Siebert, the company's director of federal sales in homeland security and intelligence. The son of a US Marine and a civil servant, with close relatives who are firefighters and law enforcement officers, Siebert brings special understanding of the homeland security community's needs to his job. "We're dedicated to the mission of providing the right solution sets for our customers," he said.

Siebert is a rare Washington, DC, native, his father having served in the DC police department after his term in the Marine Corps. He began his career in information technology from an oddly oblique angle: He gained his bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Maryland in 1978.

"As I was doing research at the University of Maryland, I did a lot of statistical analysis," he recalled. "I got proficient in writing code and found I had an aptitude for programming."

When he left school, he didn't go in the direction of psychology. Rather, in 1981 he was snapped up by the Digital Equipment Corp., which hired him immediately upon interviewing him. From there he worked for various IT companies before landing at HP.

But those jobs also involved government support. His very first job as an IT engineer involved writing Cobol programming for the Department of the Treasury. He worked for the White House under President Ronald Reagan and also provided support for the

Foreign Agriculture Service, the Postal Service and the 1990 Census.

Through the 1980s, Siebert was a digital road warrior, promoting the paperless office and digital storage.

#### Commitment to security

On Sept. 11, 2001, Siebert was about to visit a customer when news came of the terrorist attacks.

"I remember vividly coming into the conference room where a number of employees were watching events unfold. For the next six months, we just put our heads down and did whatever it took to support our customers," he related.

Since then, HP and Siebert have continued to support the homeland security mission from the federal level to the states and localities. HP software supports 90 percent of the country's 911 systems. The company is providing tools that query law enforcement databases, assist firefighters with geographic information systems and command and control, and allow emergency medical services to wirelessly transmit and receive data. At the ports and the border, HP is delivering management systems, customs information systems, border security systems and identification tools. When it comes to emergencies, HP is providing models and simulations for disaster management and response and finding ways to get officials the real time intelligence they need.

Additionally, HP continues its work in intelligence, adding to the country's capabilities in ways that can't be discussed. One of the great challenges today, Siebert pointed out, is that, unlike the days of the Cold War when the target was clear, obvious and focused, today targets are dispersed, data is diffuse and the job of pulling it all together is far more challenging than in the past.

But HP will keep trying. "A lot of people don't realize how socially conscious HP is, both in terms of the environmental impact and in terms of social causes and the betterment of the global community," Siebert revealed. Further, he said, "HP is very serious about the work it does with the federal government. Mark Hurd [HP's chief executive officer] is personally involved in a number of government opportunities and spends quite a bit of time in the Washington area. He's very serious in terms of future investments as it relates to the federal business and personal involvement from an HP perspective." HST