



Terrorist Attacks Cast Pall over Industry Events

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News of the alleged terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. cast a long shadow over many industry events throughout the United States, including the Networld InterOp conference, which is going on this week in Atlanta, and the *InformationWeek* conference under way in Las Vegas.

In the wake of the news, show coordinators in Atlanta closed the event down several hours earlier than expected Tuesday afternoon so attendees could catch up on news and check up on friends and loved ones they might have in New York and Washington, D.C.

While afternoon keynote sessions were canceled, conference sessions were set to go on as scheduled. Show organizers broke into the keynote address by Avaya CEO Don Peterson to announce the attack, and closed the show floor early in response to the tragedy. As of Tuesday afternoon, show coordinators had not decided whether the show will reopen on Wednesday.

A number of technology companies participating in the event have said they were evaluating whether or not they would continue their participation the rest of the week. Novell executives, including CEO Jack Messman, were in Atlanta for the show to make a major announcement on the availability of NetWare 6. They, however, found the event quickly overshadowed by news of events elsewhere.

"We already put out news on the newswire this morning, so the news is out on the wire, but certainly the desirability of moving forward with that sort of thing in this climate with this situation is in question," said John Pilmer, a spokesman for Novell, who was at the trade show for the announcement. Pilmer added that Novell is deeply concerned for those in what he called "our global family affected by today's tragedy."

"Today's events affect many employees, especially those traveling on business. The company is currently making every effort to account for all employees and to ensure that those employees who are working away from home are safe and are in the process of making plans to return to their families," he said in a email message to VARBusiness.

On the show floor, word of the attacks came just as exhibitors were setting up their booths. "We went in early to set up the booth, and I plugged in my laptop just to test it out," said John Landwehr, vice president of marketing at Reactive Network Solutions. "I couldn't get into my myYahoo portal, or News.com, or MSNBC. That's when I'd heard what had happened, and I realized that was what was affecting to Internet."

"I was walking in and I was stopped by [Infonetics analyst] Jeff Wilson, who told me what had happened," said Bob Bova, executive vice president at Irvine-based Asita Technologies. "I almost started crying. There were people crying all over the hall."

Cable & Wireless' booth featured images of Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill and quotes such as "To prepare for peace, you must prepare for war." The sayings were quickly covered over with electrical tape.

Attendance after the news was extremely sparse, and what few attendees were on the floor were distracted by the day's events. Video monitors in many booths were tuned to live news coverage of the attacks. The Georgia World Congress Center where the show is being held is next to CNN Center, and the CNN kiosks in the center's lobby were crowded with conference attendees eager for information.

The emphasis of the event moved from talk of technology to "concerns for friends and family," said Steve Wilkins, director of product marketing at Maxtor. "I've heard of people planning to leave early and drive to California or to Colorado. There's not a rental car to be had in this city."

The exodus from the show, combined with the difficulties late-comers may have in getting to Atlanta, have put the remainder of the show in doubt. "No one else is going to get here, and everybody who is here is trying to get out," said Bova.

Others who were in route are now scattered across the country, the result of a nationwide shutdown of the nation's air system. "We had people flying down from Boston, New York and D.C., and we're still waiting to see where they are," Landwehr said.

For companies focused on introducing new products and launching renewed sales and marketing efforts, the attack served as what Bova called "a priority aligner."

"I immediately thought of my wife and son," he said. "We've enjoyed a long time without much bloodshed, where the economy was good and everyone was happy. We can get so wrapped up in business and competition that we forget that in this country, there's an 'us.' People realize there's an 'us' now."

In light of current events, Sun Microsystems has decided to postpone its iForce Partner Summit, which was initially scheduled for Sept. 17-19 in Orlando, according to a Sun spokeswoman.