

## Virtual Tiny Town: New virtual training programme for Secret Service agents



**Mariluz Puente Balsells**

Professor of Civil and Military Intelligence  
Director of the Masters in Forensic Sciences and in Graphology  
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

The United States Secret Service is a federal police agency created in 1865 with its headquarters in Washington, the original function of which was to combat money counterfeiting; this was later extended to the protection of US Presidents, former presidents and their families, and any national or foreign VIPs visiting the country, and to provide security at large-scale national events. It is currently also responsible for criminal investigations (investigations into financial, IT and identity document fraud, etc.).

In their protection duties, agents must draw up security plans for important dignitaries during their journeys, such as arriving at and departing from airports; accommodation in hotels and/or private/public residences; attending mass events in leisure, academic, political, or economic venues, etc; and likewise encompassing their urban and interurban itineraries.



Foto: United States Secret Service

To date, and for almost 40 years, the Tiny Town training programme has been used to train new agents. This consisted of scale models of buildings, routes and vehicles, but as of the spring of 2011, the Secret Service has implemented a virtual platform called Virtual Tiny Town, which via 3D models allows various spaces to be simulated by computer, with the purpose of creating and testing security plans. This technology from the Department of Homeland Security and the Science and Technology Directorate updates and improves upon the old programme, since it represents a shift from a static board-based training system to dynamic, interactive training with 3D models (videogame).

The new virtual training program consists of three cabins with capacity for groups of four students, a large monitor located on the wall and a touch screen that allows the agents to interact with various scenarios, for example: chemical, biological or radiological attacks, suicide bombings, armed assaults, etc.).



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*January, 2012: the third edition*

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2008-2009, studies in criminalistics (Forensic Sciences) at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, will conform to the Bologna agreement and will now offer ECTS credits (*European Credit Transfer System*), thus complying with the new European university-studies framework.

The heads of the programme are Francisco Viñals Carrera, Mariluz Puente Balsells and Manuel Ballbé. The courses will be taught by an outstanding team of academics and professionals, including experts from Spanish public-security forces and from medical and educational institutions.

Supervised by the Spanish Institutional Board of Professors and Directors of Forensic-Sciences Laboratories and the *Coordinació de Criminalistes i Pèrits Judicials de les Escoles de Pràctica Jurídica, Doctorat i Postgrau de Catalunya* (Coordinating Committee of Criminalists and Judicial Expert Analysts of the Schools for Forensic, Doctorate and Graduate Studies of Catalonia)

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