



New Layer of Protection for Ports: Maritime Safety & Security Teams

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The Unique Problems of Maritime Security. The United States is engaged in a multi-front war against global terrorism both home and abroad. And, unlike a conventional war, the fight against terrorism is a difficult struggle with neither an easy nor quick conclusion. This is particularly true on the maritime front where America faces a variety of threats such as drug smuggling, illegal migration, international organized crime, exploitation of our natural resources, and degradation of our environment. Like terrorism, these threats recognize no borders and can originate from organized groups and individuals operating within or outside the United States. Further adding to the challenges facing the country is the fact that the maritime arena under U.S. jurisdiction is enormous, covering some 3.5 million square miles of ocean area and 98,000 miles of coastline. On these waters, commercial shipping carries more than 95 percent by volume of the U.S. overseas trade. These ships rely on the U.S. Maritime Transportation System, or MTS, which consists of the waterways, ports and their intermodal connections, vessels, vehicles, and system users, as well as federal maritime navigation systems. The objective of the system is the safe, secure, environmentally sound movement of goods, people, and military assets in the most efficient and economically effective manner possible. Each year, the MTS handles more than 2 billion tons of freight, 3 billion tons of oil, more than 134 million ferry passengers, and more than 7 million cruise ship passengers. On the order of 7,500 foreign ships, manned by 200,000 foreign sailors enter U.S. ports every year to offload approximately six million truck-size cargo containers at U.S. ports. Many of these ports also serve as sites for military outloads which means their readiness must be constantly assured. Clearly, the volume of maritime commerce passing through our ports and along internal waterways is crucial to the Nation's economy as is the ability to project power overseas.

The Maritime Security Strategy. To this end, the U.S. Coast Guard developed a Maritime Homeland Security Strategy which supports national level objectives while recognizing the uniqueness of the maritime environment, including the complexity associated with shared use of the oceans and waterways, long-standing international respect for freedom of navigation, and the transitional seams among America's air, land, sea, and subsurface borders. The objectives of the Maritime Security Strategy, in order of priority, are to: Prevent terrorist attacks within, and terrorist exploitation of, the U.S. Maritime Domain; Reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism within the U.S. Maritime Domain; Protect U.S. population centers, critical infrastructure, maritime borders, ports, coastal approaches, and the boundaries and seams between them; Protect the U.S. Maritime Transportation System while preserving the freedom of the maritime domain for legitimate purposes; and, Minimize the damage and recover from attacks that may occur within the U.S. Maritime Domain as either the Lead Federal Agency (LFA) or supporting agency. Homeland security is one of the highest priority missions of the U.S. Coast Guard which, by virtue of its military, maritime, and multi-mission character is ideally

suites to protect U.S. maritime approaches and the MTS by denying their use and exploitation by terrorists as a means to attack U.S. territory, population, and critical infrastructure.

Strategy Implementation. Two of the methods to achieve these objectives include Increased Maritime Domain Awareness and Enhanced Maritime Security Operations. The first, Maritime Domain Awareness or MDA, is considered the effective understanding of anything in the marine environment that could adversely affect America's security, safety, economy, or environment. Given the physical impossibility of patrolling the entire Maritime Domain, building a robust MDA capability can provide national leaders, operational commanders, and maritime stake holders the information, intelligence, and knowledge needed to make operational and policy decisions. Enhancing Maritime Security Operations includes the reality that resources are finite and security forces must be enduring, sustainable, and flexible enough to accommodate both local and regional requirements while remaining able to adjust to changing security levels. The layered defense implemented by the Coast Guard is comprised of a full range of maritime security operations and measures, starting overseas and extending to U.S. shores, ports, and internal waterways with the intent of eliminating terrorist threats as early and as far from U.S. borders as possible, as well as neutralizing those found within our borders. One of the Coast Guard's answers to enhancing Maritime Security Operations was Maritime Safety & Security Teams.

Genesis of Maritime Safety & Security Teams. The genesis of Maritime Safety & Security Teams began following September 11th when terrorists demonstrated the ability to reach out globally and brought to the forefront the need for a greater maritime security posture and a "new normalcy" for Coast Guard mission priorities and capabilities. The Coast Guard's first completely new units created in direct response to the terrorist acts of 9-11, Maritime Safety and Security Teams – or MSSTs – are active duty, multi-mission, and mobile teams with specialized capabilities modeled after Coast Guard expeditionary Port Security Units and Law Enforcement Detachments and were designed to close critical security gaps in the nation's strategic seaports. Representing just one element of the defense posture in U.S. ports, these teams are intended to augment existing Coast Guard units and law enforcement agencies as opposed to working alone. Other elements contributing to the Coast Guard's Homeland Security efforts include greater intelligence collection, new regulations, increased patrols, additional assets, and partnering with other law enforcement agencies and the maritime industry.

Maritime Safety & Security Team Missions. As part of the Department of Homeland Security, the Coast Guard is a unique instrument of national security. Comprised of a personnel complement of active duty, Reserve, civilian, and Auxiliary members, it provides a broad range of services to the American people in times of peace and war. As a military, multi-mission, maritime service, homeland security is not a new mission for the Coast Guard. This mission is however, more visible than it was prior to the tragic events of 9-11 and just as important as it was when the Revenue Marine Service, the forerunner of today's Coast Guard, began protecting U.S. national sovereignty 214 years ago. While MSSTs retain the multi-mission capability inherent throughout the service,

their missions and training are focused on providing waterborne and shoreside antiterrorism protection for strategic shipping, high interest vessels and critical infrastructure. Jointly staffed, they are able to maximize the effectiveness of Port, Waterway, and Coastal Security Operations (PWCS). This includes enforcing security zones, conducting port state control boardings, protecting military outloads and major marine events, augmenting shoreside security at waterfront facilities and participating in port level antiterrorism exercises. In addition to providing enhanced port safety and security and law enforcement capabilities to the port where they are based, these teams can deploy in support of national special security events requiring a Coast Guard presence, aboard cutters or other naval vessels for port security, drug and migrant interdiction, or to support Naval Coastal Warfare requirements during homeland defense in accordance with long standing agreements with the Department of Defense.

Maritime Safety & Security Team Homeports. Based in commercially and/or militarily strategic U. S. ports, eight teams have been established thus far with additional units scheduled for commissioning in Miami, Louisiana, San Diego, Anchorage, and Honolulu. To commemorate the events of September 11th, the designator for each team is preceded by the numerals 911 followed by the team number to serve as a daily reminder of the tragic events that occurred on this day and the importance of the missions team personnel perform.

Team Organization. MSSTs are billeted with a dedicated active duty force of 75 personnel augmented by 33 Reservists, who possess specialized skills, capabilities and expertise to perform a broad range of port security and harbor defense missions. The teams are organized into a command cadre, mobile security teams, and planning and support personnel. Each security team consists of a waterside security section and a Maritime Law Enforcement/Force Protection section that can be deployed nationwide within 12-hours. Additionally, teams are fully mission ready to conduct operations without the need for supplemental training or additional outfitting through all Maritime Security levels and are capable of operating under the threat of chemical, biological, or radiological attack. Prior to commissioning, each team attends four weeks of Initial Standup Training at the Coast Guard's Special Missions Training Center located at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. This training is intended to help the crews of new teams rapidly obtain initial operating capability and includes instruction in command and control, intelligence and planning, advanced boat tactics and anti-terrorism force protection.

Waterside Security. The waterside security section is equipped with armed "Defender Class" Response Boats and staffing to support 24x7 boat operations for extended periods. This section is principally designed to combat external threats and protect military loadouts, enforce security zones – both moving and fixed - defend critical waterside facilities and provide shoreside protection for its own personnel and High Interest Vessels. Security tactics include active patrolling, establishing a deterrence presence, and building awareness of legitimate and suspicious activities in a port.

Shoreside Security. The MLE/Force Protection Section is staffed with qualified Boarding Officers and Boarding Team Members, and includes Marine Science Technicians who provide knowledge in Port State Control and other Marine Safety activities. This cross-section of skill sets enables these personnel to conduct inspections of vessels at sea and provide security of high value assets as well as shoreside critical infrastructure. Equipped with non-intrusive inspection and detection systems, they are able to detect stowaways, WMD agents, and other contraband aboard commercial and recreational vessels. With training in anti-terrorism and force protection tactics, this section is capable of establishing a secure perimeter along waterfront approaches for their own personnel, high value assets, and critical infrastructure. Additionally, they can provide training for other Coast Guard units or augment Coast Guard forces during pulse operations.

Capabilities. MSSTs have been given a number of special capabilities which enhances their ability to deter and prevent terrorist acts. In addition to training in high-speed boat tactics, rules of engagement and advanced weapons handling, some of the tools these teams have include the equipment and training to detect weapons of mass destruction, dedicated dive and canine handling teams to detect surface and sub-surface explosive devices, and the ability to vertically insert a boarding team from a helicopter to a ship at sea. These abilities provide operational commanders a wide variety of options to thwart terrorist attacks and afford them the flexibility to tailor their response to specific threats.

Summation. MSSTs are a new and exciting concept for the Coast Guard but they represent only one part of our homeland security efforts. Using the information, knowledge, and actionable intelligence that constitutes MDA, the Coast Guard, working with our partners in the maritime community is providing security in the Maritime Domain to deter, detect, and defend against traditional and asymmetric attacks. Other initiatives include working closely with foreign governments, international organizations, and industry partners to identify potentially hazardous or clandestine cargo before it is loaded aboard vessels bound for the United States and its territories. In turn, these vessels, cargoes, and people are monitored from the point of embarkation, through intervening ports, to the point of arrival to ensure integrity of the transit, management of maritime traffic, and, if necessary, diversion for inspection and search. The Coast Guard is also exercising its authority to the full extent necessary and leveraging its extensive relationships and partnerships at the international, federal, state, and local levels, as well as engaging industry, non-governmental organizations, commercial firms, and citizens to eliminate threats to the U.S. as early as possible. Should an attack occur, Coast Guard men and woman stand ready to lead or support national and local emergency response teams in the U.S. Maritime Domain.