

MARKETWATCH

PORTS

Maritime security goes well beyond the perimeter

BY MARTHA ENTWISTLE

A port security leader's responsibility, by definition, is to take care of the security operations in the port proper. However, if you think that securing a port stops at the perimeter of the facility, "you've got some stinkin' thinkin' going on," said Eric Holdeman, director of security for the Port of Tacoma. "Security inside the fence is the easiest task we have," he added.

Not that that task is easy. Hordes of people and products pass through a port like the Port of Tacoma daily, making security inside ports a complex and dynamic business. However, Holdeman seemed to sum up the sentiments of several port security experts consulted by *Security Director News* for this story. Port security professionals' work, they say, regularly extends well beyond the fence. Collaborating and sharing internal plans with other ports is commonplace and increasingly more important, as is working with local law enforcement, government entities and neighboring private sector businesses.

JOINT VENTURE

Ports are "interdependent with other elements of society — critical infrastructure, electricity, rail, water systems ... if any of those functions shut down, we could be shut down just as easily as in a terrorist attack. The key," he said, "to have the relationships in place before an event." The Port of Tacoma is involved with several cooperative ventures in its region. He cited three "regional efforts [which while they require added hours and manpower] give the port the opportunity to work outside the fence." Those efforts include: IBIRD, the Interagency Biological Restoration Demonstration, a joint venture that began 18 months ago and is designed to improve disaster recovery plans from a biological attack; the Urban Area Security Initiative where it worked with the ports of Seattle and Everett; and a Radiation Response Plan that tests for radiation detection.

Holdeman said that collaboration among regional ports is something that the federal government looks kindly upon when it is awarding grant money.

He points out that with the economic recession, ports, like other businesses, pinch pennies, so even though there may be matching grant money available for physical security systems in ports, "it must be a value-added security measure, not just what we call 'toys for boys,'" Holdeman said. "We want proven technology that's on the leading, not bleeding edge."

This is consistent with what Misty Stein, senior director of critical infrastructure for security integrator Adesta has seen in her work with the maritime industry. Ports are looking for systems that not only monitor theft, but that "add to the operational program [by helping them deal with issues] for example monitoring

for work-related injuries, which can help drive down insurance costs."

In addition to advising and collaborating, ports in the Northwest have "shared emergency preparedness plans with each other and done response training in operational centers so we can back each other up," said Rod Hilden, chief security officer for the Port of Seattle.

Hilden said his port has also worked extensively on security with local businesses.

To comply with the Maritime Security Act a few years ago, businesses within a 17-mile area along the

coast of had to come up with a physical security plan, though many of these businesses did not have full-time security leaders. Hilden helped put together a facilities security officers group, which met monthly, and "took a leadership role in ... helping [many of these businesses] by recommending a consistent approach to physical security, not by manufacturer, [of physical security products] but by technology."

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

So cooperation is big, but so is competition. To keep the freight coming in, ports must demonstrate that they can consistently get cargo safely and quickly through the port and on its way to the market, whether that's 30 miles or 3,000 miles away from the port.

Hilden noted that cargo that comes to Seattle

is discretionary. "It could just as easily go to Los Angeles or Long Beach [in California, which combined are the largest ports in the country]."

He cited the recent example of cargo enroute to Vancouver that was rerouted to Seattle because of a pending truck driver strike there. "That's how these logistics companies earn their money by keeping track of what route will get [the cargo to its destination] the fastest and knowing the percentage of on-time arrival."

ON TIME

Timely arrival is important because cargo recipients no longer maintain warehouses of stock due to economic cutbacks. Thus, cargo is frequently "critical to other processes [and if it's delayed] it can have tremendous economic consequences," Hilden said.

What about cargo theft? How big of a problem is it? Henri Nolin, head of the ASIS Transportation Council, said, "Every time the economy dips, the theft rate goes up." Although in this recessionary go-round, the volume of cargo shipped overall is down, so the number of thefts may not skyrocket, but the percentage of theft is much higher, he said.

Experts say cargo theft is less of a problem in certain areas (the Northwest specifically) and does not typically happen within the perimeter of the port. "There's more potential for it to happen outside of the marine terminal and throughout the supply chain," said Mike O'Brien, security officer for the Port of Oakland, Calif. TWIC has helped make ports more secure, but it has also spawned a newer business in some ports where a TWIC-freight company will pick up cargo for other companies. This isn't necessarily a problem, but means that there may be more times when that cargo is not in

motion, and cargo that's not in motion, experts say, is vulnerable to theft.

Ken Huerta, detective sergeant for the Los Angeles Port Police, serves on the Cargo Theft Interdiction program, a multi-jurisdictional task force comprised of the L.A. Port Police, the California Highway Patrol, city of Vernon Police Department, U.S. Customs & Immigration, and as needed the Los Angeles and Long Beach Police Departments.

Huerta said cargo theft has "gone way beyond" the normal rise in theft typically seen during a recession. "The people we're arresting don't have criminal records, they're people who were laid off six months ago or more and have become desperate," he said.

He called cargo theft "a crime of opportunity" and said that electronics businesses, which ship into the area are prime targets because the goods are easy to resell.

FIFTH ELEMENT

Port security directors are working with other ports, and the private and public sectors to ensure security beyond the perimeter of the ports. There's the port proper, and there's one more area to be concerned with, said Seattle's Hilden, the water.

He believes that one of the biggest upcoming public policy challenges will involve figuring out how to "better detect any anomalies or movement around the big ships" especially in busy harbors like Seattle where there are passenger ferries, commercial fishing, pleasure boats and tourist boats coexist. He believes that ultimately "we'll have to have defined waterways and control over them," kind of like air traffic control for the water. **SDN**



Cargo entering the Port of Tacoma, Wash.

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