Interfacing Port Facility Technology to Fight Terrorism

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With the current emphasis being place upon security in public, and private locations, and especially within our port environments, we naturally must view such potential threats as detrimental to our national security. Traditionally, ports may be private enterprises, however since the majority of foreign products enter our country via ports it falls under the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that these ports are safe for cargo and personnel. All measures must be taken to guarantee that no WMD enter the port areas. Since 2001 we have made great strides in improving our security policies, and our response to those threats, and as a result our ports have been mandated to enhance their response to possible terrorism. Technology has played a major role in preparing the ports for these possible scenarios as port security personnel, and local police agencies become better equipped with modern state of the art security tools.

President Bush signed into law in 2003, a directive which established the guidelines for meeting our nation's ability to prevent, and to respond to domestic threats from terrorism within the American Continent. This directive's primary purpose was to strengthen America's security while enhancing our abilities to deal appropriately with domestic terrorist activities. This process is best achieved by establishing one central incident management system. This left the responsibility for national preparedness coordination to the Secretary of Homeland Security. The secretary was tasked with coordinating between other departments, and agencies in the area of security, and safety. The ultimate goal of the HSPD series of directives was to coordinate varied disciplines under a unified approach in order to effectively fight the threat of terrorism, and this would include the maritime sector as well. With this push to integrate homeland security, and private enterprises federal guidelines provided the maritime industry policy to enable effective integrate.

Every organization, and agency should have a viable means by which to continue their mission, and achieve their intended goals should some unforeseen circumstances leave them without a leader. The Continuity of Operations Plan was designed specifically to allow a port to continue its day to day operations during emergency conditions. All efforts must be taken to ensure that any emergency situation which occurs at the port can sustain its normal operational activities in an orderly manner. Homeland Security has provided all agencies with guidelines necessary to develop, and implement such a plan. Included in the recommendations are:

* Necessary plans to ensure continued operations for essential functions.

* Critical delegations of authority so key decisions are not delayed.

* Orders of succession so that personnel are aware of their leadership ladder when the prime leader is incapacitated.

* Alternate operating facility should relocation become necessary.

* Redundancy of communications systems should the prime become inoperable.

* Ability to access vital records, and databases when required.

….and an assortment of other policies, and plans needed in anticipation of emergency conditions.

Situational awareness, and situational readiness are important aspect of the Port FSP. From a security point of view, it is vital that any potential threat, or risk to the security of the port be rapidly identified, and dealt with. The FSP must represent a flexible system whereas it mitigates threats on a continual basis. To accomplish this, situational awareness must be practiced on a daily basis. Port Security Managers must be aware of any possible threat by following proper situational awareness, and readiness principles.

Situational awareness is the ability of the port security to acquire information in support of valid decision making. This data can usually come from a variety of sources thus providing security managers with dynamic information needed to solve security related problems. It has been said that "situational awareness ia the act of knowing what is going on around you." The second concept of value then is that of situational readiness. This is expressed as the means by which one is prepared for unexpected events. Emergency operations, and response plans readily fall under this definition. Preparedness should include issues such as bomb threats, preplanned response for approaching hurricanes or other weather phenomenon and of course the usual terrorist threats. While serving in the military these two concepts were so important that often times your life could depend upon them

Technology is our friend, and it could readily be the light which preserves our way of life from those that would do evil towards our country. Technology can be discovered in all aspects of port operation from safety to security. Proper use of technology can reduce the need for security personnel, and to assist in monitor various locations within the port environment. Various means by which technology benefits the security of ports is by use in access controls, alarms systems, CCTV monitoring of critical locations, and x-ray examination of cargo, and personnel. In order for port authorities to have the most accurate, and reliable information available technology must be up to kept updated and current. This is readily seen with the advances in technology that ISIS has been obtaining. We as American's must provide our facilities with superior technology to fight these terrorist aggressions.