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Election issue

Kim Petersen, a contributing editor here and a nationally recognized expert on maritime security, has some scary things to say about the state of port security. He is a hired security consultant to the Florida Ports Council and for many, if not most, of the port states in the Caribbean Basin.

Petersen agrees with other experts who are warning that U.S. ports remain vulnerable to terrorist attacks because the nation lacks a comprehensive transport-security plan and enough funding to protect maritime facilities.

Petersen could not identify the ports, but he warns that most of the ports in the Caribbean are going through the motions of port security with little serious effort. He warns that empty containers in the ports are the biggest threats as terrorists are prevented from attempting to use containers at larger, more secure ports.

"No strategic analysis has been done that relates the level of risk to resources that have been allocated," former Navy Secretary John Lehman, a member of the commission that reviewed the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, recently told a House hearing.

There is "serious underfunding" of port security and the Coast Guard, which has primary responsibility for the task, Lehman warned.

Ports have received \$516 million in transportation-security funds from the federal government, 10 percent of what's available, former U.S. Coast Guard Commander Stephen Flynn told a House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee panel in Washington. Aviation gets 90 percent of the rest of funding earmarked for security needs, he said.

U.S. ports annually process goods valued at an estimated \$800 billion, according to the World Shipping Council, a Washington-based trade group. The importance of ports to the economy cannot be underestimated.

The experts are warning of a looming economic crisis, but the elected officials at the local level run the ports, not state or federal officials, so there is not enough power to impact the members of Congress. Port security needs to be a major issue in the upcoming elections. And each of us must demand that our elected officials promise to heed the warnings of the experts and fund the programs where the need is greatest and the risks most high.



Rick Eyerdam



Terror eyes

Ports and containers
remain in terrorists' sights

By Kim E. Petersen

From a dark and well-guarded cave in southern Afghanistan, some of the world's most dangerous men convened over several days in 2002. Each of the attendees was nondescript, middle-aged and looked not so much like terrorists as they did merchants or scholars or clerics, which, in fact, had been their professions prior to becoming mass murderers. At the seat reserved for the person of greatest importance sat Osama bin Laden. As their leader, he would announce several days later the collective's findings – or fatwa – that it was a moral and spiritual imperative for al-Qaida to obtain weapons of mass

destruction for use in its jihad against the enemies of Islam – the United States in particular.

The report of this meeting and other evidence collected by Western intelligence services, including the CIA, has since concluded that al-Qaida is expending significant resources to identify and procure chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear materials that could be converted into a super killing device – a weapon of mass destruction.

The White House, still reeling from the over 3,000 Americans murdered by al-Qaida in 2001, ordered an immediate strategic vulnerability assessment.

The findings were not surprising: A consensus opinion was that a potential vector for a WMD attack would be by way of an intermodal container carried by a ship from a foreign country and delivered to a U.S. port.

A May 2002 study by the Brookings Institute sought to apply an accountant's metrics as to the impact of a weapons-of-mass-destruction attack against a U.S. port and came up with \$1 trillion. Remarkably, even the discovery of an undetonated WMD in a U.S. seaport would probably result in at least a 12-day closure and costs of up to \$58 billion, according to a Booz, Allen and Hamilton report.

With over 8 million cargo containers arriving at U.S. ports each year, what steps are being taken by the government and industry to reduce our risk of an attack?

A General Accounting Office study found the likelihood of a terrorist using a container to export a nuclear device is low, primarily due to the difficulty of obtaining both the components and the expertise necessary to

"...Even the discovery of an undetonated WMD in a U.S. seaport would probably result in at least a 12-day closure and costs of up to \$58 billion..."

— *Booz, Allen and Hamilton*

manufacture a workable device. However, research performed by the Center for Technology and National Security Policy at the National Defense University concluded that an ocean container is ideally suited to deliver a WMD, such as a radiological dirty bomb. Also, a container could be used as a vehicle for introducing biological pathogens, such as anthrax or small pox, into a high-density population area. And a reefer container designed to sustain produce in a harmless gas could be modified to seal in a deadly gas, set free when opened.

Part of the challenge in coping with container security is the vulnerability of each box throughout the supply-chain route. In the overseas portion of container delivery, there are numerous, fundamental vulnerabilities that could facilitate the introduction of a WMD into a U.S.-bound container, such as:

1. The container is loaded at a foreign warehouse. Foreign warehouses and industrial sites rarely have adequate physical-security programs, such as fencing, lighting, access controls or even security guards, to safeguard against a sophisticated threat. In most cases guards and other employees do not receive background checks prior to being hired. Visitor controls are loose or nonexistent. Security seals are easily forged or bypassed altogether because of the inherently poor security design of the container door-locking mechanism.

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Security, organization, equipment faulted in Customs survey

The U.S. is no safer today after three years of antiterrorism spending and a substantial governmental reorganization, according to 44 percent of the front-line Border Patrol and U.S. Customs officers surveyed at the end of July.

According to the report, issued Aug. 23, "Most front-line, border-protection personnel do not believe they have been given the tools to fight terrorism."

The report said, "A clear majority, 64 percent, said they are just somewhat or not really satisfied with the tools, training and support they need to be effective at stopping potential terrorists from entering the country and at protecting the country from terrorist threats."

The report said, "Clearly front-line border protection personnel believe we can and must do more to protect our borders. A slim majority feel that the country has made some progress in securing the homeland since the Sept. 11 attacks of three years ago, but a surprisingly large 44 percent of these front-line personnel say we are no safer today."

- Customs and Border Protection staff are largely dispirited and working without the necessary leadership nor the proper equipment and are unhappy with the restructuring of their agencies.
- Most of the 250 Customs front-line officers believe the Department of Homeland Security could be doing a better job defending the country against terrorists.
- Thirty one percent believe the morale in their agency is very low among their fellow officers, while 60 percent reported low morale.

Those are the other results from a telephone survey of 500 front-line, border-protection personnel conducted in late July and early August by Hart Research for the National Border Patrol Council and National Homeland Security Council employee organizations.

Of those questioned, 40 percent said they were dissatisfied with the strategies, equipment, deployment, availability of modern technology, supervisors and support from the DHS in Washington.

Asked the question: "How satisfied are you that you have been given the tools, training and support you need to be effective in stopping potential terrorists and protecting the country from terrorist threats," 64 percent expressed dissatisfaction divided almost evenly with 29 percent just somewhat satisfied and 35 percent not really satisfied. Of the 34 percent that said they were fairly satisfied, 16 percent said they were very satisfied.

Agents from the formerly independent agencies of Customs, the Border Patrol and the Food and Drug Administration have

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2. The container is moved by truck to the port. Once a warehouse has loaded a container onto a truck, control is usually lost. In fact, while the container is en route to the port, neither the warehouse nor the trucking company typically knows where it is or what's happening to it. The truck driver may elect to take any of several routes, making the container susceptible to intrusion by the driver or others.

3. The container is received and stored by the port. The container arrives at the port where it is checked in by port staff, many of whom have not had criminal background checks. Being a foreign port, it may have poor access controls and substandard physical barriers. While the box is in storage waiting for its load date, it could be vulnerable to tampering by employees or trespassers. And containers do not typically benefit from intrinsic alarms or intrusion-detection devices that could summon help in the event of a break-in. Ports rarely inspect outbound containers, so should a WMD be successfully inserted into one, it will not be detected — prior to or after detonation — until it arrives at the target destination.

4. The container is loaded onto the ship. Neither the port nor the ocean carrier will bother, in most cases, to inspect the container for a missing seal or evidence of tampering prior to loading it onto the ship. And while there may be commercial protocols or other agreements that mandate some form of inspection of outbound containers, the reality is that on the infrequent occasions that they occur, the process is often hurried and less than conscientious.

5. The container is transported to the U.S. by the ship. A container may find itself visiting numerous ports before finally arriving at its intended destination. During its voyage, the ship's itinerary could include a port of concern — that is a port lacking fundamental physical, personnel or information-security programs and home to a threat such as al-Qaida. Such a port could present a risk to the integrity of a ship and its cargo. Despite the advent of the U.N.'s International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, the reality is that many ports are still bereft of effective security systems, or even guards.

With vulnerabilities replete throughout the supply chain, the apparent solution is to carefully screen each container arriving in the U.S. Given the recognized threat they pose to homeland security vis-à-vis terrorism and crime (containers are a preferred method for smuggling drugs from South America and Europe), it surprises many that less than 5 percent of containers arriving in the U.S. are inspected by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. But inspecting each box, whether through nonintrusive inspection technology or by simply breaking the seal and pulling the contents, is a logistical impossibility.

It is because of these vulnerabilities and limitations that two U.S. antiterrorism programs, the Container Security Initiative and the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism were created.

For the maritime industry, much of what was voluntary under C-TPAT has now become mandatory under new international and federal regulations. The bar to C-TPAT membership has, in effect, been lowered to where any port or ship is close to already meeting the requirements for membership. Much more, however, must be accomplished to ensure maritime security.

Protecting containers through the supply chain will require more than C-TPAT or CSI. It will require more than inspecting 5 percent of containers arriving in U.S. ports. Given the stakes, and the preparedness of enemies like al-Qaida to target American lives in the thousands or tens of thousands, the U.S. is already woefully far from a level of protection that would give comfort to most Americans.

For example, few foreign ports can afford container X-ray systems that are used for quick and effective nonintru-

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been melded into Homeland Security, mixing armed agents with law enforcement training and scientists. All have been encouraged to learn the skills of the others, often with negative results.

Of those interviewed, 65 percent said they were "just somewhat or not really satisfied with strategies for deployment."

The DHS strategy of "one face at the border" was panned with the majority, 53 percent, of Customs officers surveyed saying it has a negative effect and 17 percent saying it has been a positive development.

"They want us to be meeters and greeters instead of enforcement officers. After 9-11 they are trying to mesh three jobs into one, whereas each person would specialize in their respective areas," according to one respondent.

Hiring freezes currently in place and personnel regulations are not regarded as favorable to the war on terrorism. The agency's hiring freeze was considered negative by 63 percent in the survey, while 52 percent said they believe that efforts to consolidate unions and change personnel regulations will make it more difficult to accomplish their mission of protecting the country. Only 8 percent said it would make their mission easier.

The officers were asked the question: "Could the DHS be doing more to stop potential terrorists and protect the country? Most, 62 percent, said they believe that the DHS could be doing more to stop potential terrorists. Of those, 41 percent said the DHS could be doing a lot more. On the other side, 36 percent said the DHS is doing "as much as can be expected."

Sixty percent of border-protection personnel surveyed said morale is low among the people they work with. One in three cite poor management, 21 percent cite lack of opportunities for promotion or relocation, and 20 percent cite overall lack of job satisfaction as the main reason for considering leaving the job.

On a positive note, 39 percent said the morale is high and, of those, 8 percent say it is very high. But 31 percent said it is very low among the 60 percent who said the morale is low. In all, 45 percent have considered leaving their jobs, the report said. 🇺🇸

sive screening by Customs officials. Bear in mind that a foreign port will serve as the origin of any container bearing a WMD bound for the U.S.

And yet, as Stephen Flynn of the Council of Foreign Relations pointed out in his new book, "America the Vulnerable: How Our Government Is Failing to Protect Us from Terrorism," the cost of installing cargo-scanning equipment in all of the world's marine container terminals would be between \$500 million to \$600 million, or about the cost of four F-22 fighters.

On the matter of training, standards have yet to be developed and codified for container inspections. As it is, underpaid, untrained stevedores or guards at ports throughout the developing world are being tasked with the responsibility of preventing a WMD from leaving their port and detonating in Port Everglades. Try asking the

residents living in Fort Lauderdale if that makes sense. Inspections of containers, both loaded and empty, should be performed by port or Customs personnel trained and certified by an objective body like the Maritime Security Institute or the International Maritime Organization.

Much of the debate on container security hinges on cost: Who is going to bear the financial burden of hardening a port against terrorism? Washington has contributed a paltry \$500 million toward port-security grants in the U.S., less than 10 percent of the conservative estimates as to what is needed. The White House has implied that the port and its community should shoulder most of the costs, but is that fair? As Flynn pointed out, more than 40 percent of all containerized cargo arriving at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles is bound for America's interior. The whole country is the beneficiary of the nation's 361 ports. And as engines of commerce for the country, much more must be done to protect these ports in general, and containers in particular, in the U.S. war against global terrorism. ⚙️

Kim E. Petersen is president of SeaSecure LLC and the executive director of the Maritime Security Council.

Update: Cargo screening to expand

The U.S. plans to expand the screening of shipping containers for weapons of mass destruction and other contraband before the cargo is allowed into the country, Robert Bonner, head of Customs and Border Protection, said Aug. 26 in a presentation before the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

As 90 percent of the world's cargo moves by container and 46 percent of all goods entering the U.S. arrive in oceangoing cargo containers, the securing of this "most critical link" in the U.S. and the global trading system is at the forefront of the Bush administration's homeland security strategy, Bonner said.

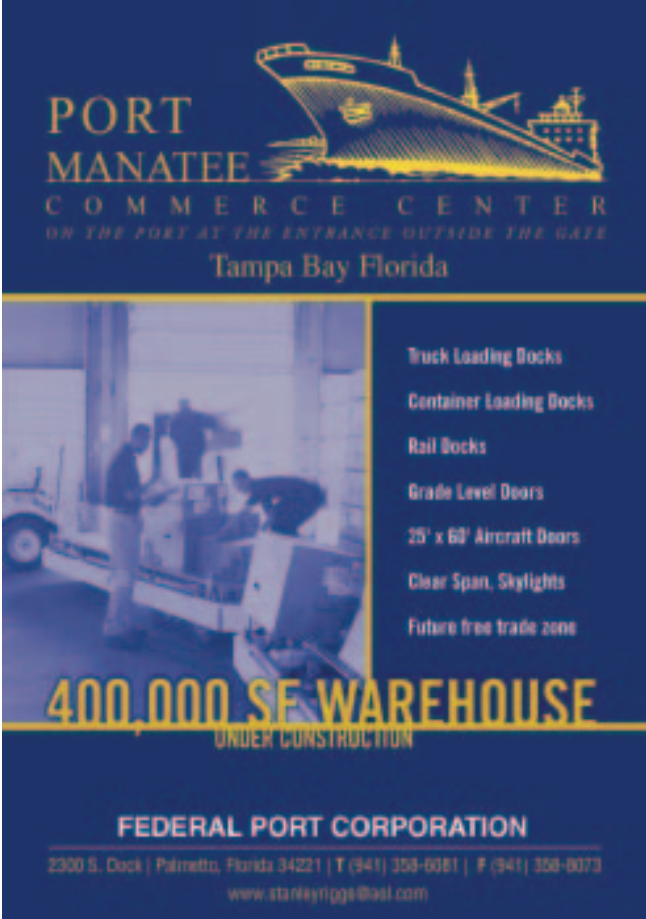
The detonation of a weapon of mass destruction in a U.S. port facility is "truly the sum of all fears," Bonner said. Such an event, he said, would have a devastating human cost and could cripple the global economy.

The initial goal of the Customs is to sign up the top 20 ports that account for 68 percent of the containers entering the U.S. annually.

Once the top 20 targeted foreign ports have been enrolled in Customs' Container Security Initiative, Bonner said the agency will begin to broaden its outreach to incorporate other nations with important ports into the program, including those in Latin America.

"The ports represent the world's major seaports, but we are not stopping there. We plan to expand the CSI network even farther," Bonner said.

Under the initiative, U.S. Customs agents placed in foreign ports examine shipping containers bound for the U.S. and identify those that pose a potential terrorist risk. Customs officers use large-scale gamma ray and X-ray imaging systems to screen for contraband. Inspectors also use radiation-detection devices to scan for radioactive materials. If necessary, containers are opened and unloaded by the host government's customs service for a manual inspection, which is observed by CSI officials. 🇺🇸



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