

Homeland Security Must Include Maritime Security

What we have all learned as a result of the “9/11” tragedy is that we are not as far apart from the rest of the world as we once thought. Perhaps those in the maritime community knew this best for, while we are thousands of miles away from the Asian continent, we are all connected by our oceans and waterways. We are dependent on the rest of the world for our trade and economic security.

The public may be focused on aviation security, but Congress and the White House understand that maritime and port security are an important part of our national security infrastructure. This has been recognized by the creation of the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in the Department of Transportation as well as by an historic **Coast Guard FY 2003 budget request of \$7.1 billion to secure seaports and inland waterways.**

Created by the Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001, the TSA is responsible for security across all modes of transportation. When fully staffed, it will have 50,000 federal employees – includes air marshals, baggage screeners, and law enforcement personnel – and a budget in FY 2003 of \$4.8 billion. TSA also will have responsibility for maritime security; already experts from all the modes have been detailed to help the TSA with its job.

The Coast Guard budget includes more than \$400 million for increased port security; \$90 million to modernize the maritime “911” system to eliminate radio coverage gaps along the coast and improve the Coast Guard’s ability to find mariners in distress; and \$500 million for the USCG’s Deepwater Project –to replace its aging boats, planes, and helicopters. Although there has been talk about moving the Coast Guard to the Office of Homeland Security in the White House, Congress has offered little support to date for a major reorganization of federal agencies and departments. Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge must cajole the bureaucracies to get things done.

Where does this leave recreational boaters and safety experts? In an important role, I believe, as eyes and ears on the waterways of the United States. As Senator John Breaux stated at a recent hearing in New Orleans, “the greatest threat along the river is from a small vessel loaded with explosives that could be detonated near an oil tanker or a cruise ship.” (*JoC Week*, Jan. 21-27, 2002). Senator Breaux is “convinced that the greatest security threat to ports isn’t from a terrorist taking over a ship, but something more like what happened [in Yemen in October 2000] with the [USS] Cole” where a small boat inflicted considerable damage on this Navy destroyer. (*JoC Week*.)

Ports are already starting to get an infusion of cash to help do security assessments and containers are being watched closely by a new interagency task force. But, recreational boaters and state boating law administrators have an important role to play in monitoring and safeguarding our waterways. They just need to bring this role to Washington’s attention.

This discussion to be continued at the Summit.

Anti-Terrorist Safety Message And Encouragement

BY JOHN MALATAK, OFFICE OF BOATING SAFETY

Captain Scott Evans, Chief of the U.S. Coast Guard’s Boating Safety Office is quoted as stating, “Tyranny is defeated by faith, resolve and the absolute determination not to let anyone or any group deprive one of their given rights to pursue life in a respectful and legitimate manner.” As President Bush has stressed, “...we, the American people, *must and will* pursue our career and life’s endeavors with vigor and enthusiasm.”

The peak of the 2001 recreational boating season is behind us. Yet, there will continue to be significant numbers of boaters using our waterways: particularly in the warmer climates. So, it is important that they know the waterways are safe, they can help keep them that way and, yes, there will be some tighter security measures.

Recreational boating is safe - just as our highways, airways and railways are- and Americans are determined to keep it that way. Yes, these are times when we must be more cautious and continually aware of our surroundings. But more importantly, we must not allow terrorists with their tyranny of hate to deprive us of the value that our Country, its people and all its resources offer: not just for ourselves but also for others from across the globe. So, use your boats, enjoy your boats and get out on the water. It is a part of our heritage and most of all, it is a legacy that ensures a quality of life for your children’s children.

By being on the waterways you too become protectors and defenders. You see, you hear and you can report. That makes it extremely difficult for terrorists with their malicious agenda to be successful. When you are out on the water take the precautions suggested below as well as noting anything that looks peculiar or out of the ordinary and report it to your local law enforcement or Coast Guard, but in no way approach or challenge suspicious activities or individuals.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR BOATERS

- Always secure and lock your boat when not on board. This includes visit to marinas, marina restaurants or a friend’s dock and other piers; never leave your boat accessible to others.
- Always take your keys with you.
- When storing your boat make sure it is secure and its engine is disabled. If it is on a trailer, then make the trailer as immovable as possible.
- Do not stop or anchor beneath bridges or in channels. If you do, then expect to be approached and possibly boarded by law enforcement officials.
- Observe and avoid all secure areas.
- Do not venture into commercial port operation areas, especially those that involve military, cruise line, fuel, petroleum, hazardous materials and other inventories that may be subject to terrorist attacks.
- DO NOT approach military, cruise line or commercial shipping: keep your distance. There is a 100-yard security zone around military, cruise line and many commercial vessels.
- Report all activities that seem suspicious either to the local authorities, the Coast Guard, the port and/or marina security or to all. -- Do not approach or challenge those acting in a suspicious manner.

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