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This Issue:

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Since 1998, Integrating Professional Communities of Homeland Security

Interview Channel Master John F. Morton Interviews Adm James M. Loy, USCG (Ret.), Acting Secretary of The Department of Homeland Security, 3 Feb 2005

By John Morton
Interviews

On 3 February 2003, the day after President Bush's State of the Union Address, DomPrep's John F. Morton, James D. Hessman, and Martin Masiuk visited with retired Coast Guard Admiral James M. Loy, acting secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), at his headquarters in Washington.

For the complete audio download of the interview, please see www.DomesticPreparedness.com

Admiral Loy addressed in considerable detail the DHS strategy for implementation of the National Response Plan (NRP). He also provided insights into the Department's soon-to-be released National Cargo Security Strategy, an outgrowth of public- and private-sector consultations and reviews that began with a Cargo Security Summit, sponsored by the Homeland Security Institute, held in Washington, D.C., in December 2004.

For information on the Homeland Security Institute and the Cargo Security Summit, visit www.homelandsecurity.org

Turning to the NRP, Admiral Loy discussed at great length the organizational structure implemented by the plan and how state, local, and tribal governments—and the private sector—provided input and coordinated their own preparedness planning and response efforts. He also discussed the interface between the NRP and the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and commented on how governments and the private sector can access training.

A Note From the Publisher

By Martin Masiuk
Publisher

Since the 10th of November 1998, our company, DomesticPreparedness.com, has had one primary mission: to help educate, and integrate, the various communities of professionals—policemen, firemen, and other first responders—working in the overall field of domestic preparedness. These previously under-appreciated American heroes are the ones we have always counted on to protect our homes and our communities, and to maintain order, in times of disaster, either natural or manmade.

In the past three years, though, the very definition of preparedness has changed significantly, and in ways not previously imagined. In 1998, awareness was the rallying call. And "not if, but when" was the message voiced by government officials who, although personally convinced of the dangers posed by international terrorism, realized it might take a "Pearl Harbor" type of incident to lift the topic to the forefront of the nation's consciousness.

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A Note From the Publisher

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Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened. Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, those responsible—at all levels of government—for protecting the U.S. homeland from attack have developed and now are executing a sophisticated series of programs that go far beyond the prevention of passenger aircraft being used as bombs, and anthrax being delivered via the U.S. postal system. Those programs—some of them already implemented, others still in the conceptual stage—take a truly comprehensive approach to homeland security that includes not only detailed plans for responding to attacks but also, and of perhaps greater importance, preventing such attacks from ever happening.

By embracing an "all hazards" approach to the development of response plans, cities, states, and the nation as a whole can react to disasters, natural or manmade, both more quickly and more effectively—and at a lower cost, in both lives and dollars.

The prevention of disasters represents a different challenge. For many years, America's businesses have been continually pushed to be more efficient, faster, better, and less expensive. Just-in-time deliveries, once the impossible dream, are now standard. But security was not built into the equation. Today, it must be.

The Same Mission, With a Broader Focus
As the mission has changed, so have we. In the beginning, DomPrep.com focused on the response side of the equation. Because we worked mostly with first responders our message emphasized the presentation of information on such matters as personal protection and decontamination, detection, planning, and training. Now, thanks to the creation of our eNewsletter T.I.P.S. (Total Integrated Preparedness Solutions) and the addition of several more, and more diverse, channels to our website, we have been able to expand our previous coverage to additional communities of preparedness professionals—members of the U.S. Coast Guard, for example, and of the National Guard; FEMA (the Federal Emergency Management Agency) and NIH (the National Institutes of Health) employees; and such private-sector organizations as the American Red Cross.

By creating a number of specialized WebChannels, we quickly realized, we can organize and channel content from a large number of preparedness professional communities in a way that helps other professionals, in other preparedness communities, gain a working knowledge of the principal issues and concerns of preparedness professionals in such fields as the following:

- Fire Hazmat
- Emergency Medicine
- Law Enforcement
- Military Support
- Coast Guard
- Customs and Borders
- Standards
- Building and Facility Protection
- Critical Infrastructure
- State and Local Governments
- Global Preparedness

The approach we have taken will work, we believe, because each content provider—i.e., Channel Master—is an operational professional with years of experience whose own work is primarily in the field about which he or she is

writing. To provide continuity and overall guidance we hired, as editor in chief, James D. Hessman, who has more than 40 years of writing and editing experience with such respected publications as Armed Forces Journal International and the Navy League's Sea Power Magazine.

To round out the group, John Morton, also a highly experienced professional, will manage an "Interviews" WebChannel. John will ask leaders (such as Acting Secretary of Homeland Security James M. Loy, interviewed in this issue of T.I.P.S.) from government, industry, and academia a series of questions in their various areas of jurisdiction. Their replies will be delivered either in the form of straight text, or streaming audio--or eventually, perhaps, video.

Our intention is not to drift into the arena of inside-the-beltway policies or politics. And, although the Channel Masters may from time to time discuss management concerns, grant-funding issues, and similar topics, each of them knows that the T.I.P.S. goal is to provide a diverse array of readers with the information needed to develop a Total Integrated Preparedness *Solution* to problems within their specific areas of responsibility.

A Preview of Future Developments

It has often been said that the fifth side of the Pentagon represents industry. Without the high-tech weapons and platforms provided by the U.S. defense industrial base, America's warfighters would be unable either to defend the American homeland itself or to protect U.S. political and economic interests overseas. As in the Department of Defense, the decisionmakers at DHS, particularly in that department's Directorate of Science and Technology, certainly look to the strength that industry brings to the equation.

DomPrep.com also recognizes and appreciates the sophisticated systems and sensors that provide critical advantages to the nation's preparedness professionals. However, in the race to bring the best solution to market, and to pass a set of standards that meets operational requirements, there will always be both winners and losers. It will not be DomPrep.com's, nor T.I.P.S.'s, position to take sides, only to report the latest developments. However, debate and discussion are encouraged, and a forum for rebuttal will be online with our next issue (23 February 2005).

Last October, we tested yet another new forum, WebConference. The first effort was a big success. Dr. Peter Estacio, at DHS, Peter Kant at Jefferson Consulting, plus representatives from Idaho Technology, Smiths Detection, and GenPrime all delivered 15-minute presentations on or related to the important topic of bio-agent detection. The content was presented with both streaming audio and slides, which experience shows is a very efficient way both to develop awareness and to build support for the various solutions offered by industry. Bio-Agent Protection soon will be relaunched. In addition, we are working on a number of other topics for future discussion, including the following:

- Dealing with the Dirty Bomb
- Respiratory Protection
- Technologies for Cargo Security
- Risk Assessment
- Video Surveillance
- Medical Countermeasures for CRN Incidents
- Decontamination New Technologies
- Explosives Detection Devices
- Syndromic/Epidemiological Surveillance
- Medical Countermeasures for Biological Incidents
- Training & Simulation
- GIS and Homeland Security Applications
- Biometrics and Authentication

In conclusion, the publisher has one observation to share. Since 1998, I have had the good fortune—indeed, the *privilege*—of meeting many, many people from all levels of industry, government, and academia. They share one common trait that bonds all of them into a united and powerful whole. It is simply this: Anyone who considers himself or herself to be a preparedness professional shares a passion for the work in which he or she is engaged.

"Protecting the homeland" and "Responding to attacks" are not slogans. They are, rather, true guiding lights. Our intention is to provide the information that preparedness professionals need to carry out their noble mission. The channel masters, the editor in chief, and I look forward to receiving your comments, criticisms, suggestions, and recommendations on how to do our own jobs better.

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Port Security: Would Perfection Result in Failure?

By Bonni Tischler
Customs and Borders

Considerable rhetoric has been expended—by the media, by politicians and academicians, and by everyday Americans—over the past three years about the need to protect U.S. sea, land, and air borders from terrorist attack or infiltration. Much of that rhetoric focuses on what is not being done, alleges that cargo security is "non-existent," deplores the fact that only five percent or so of incoming containers are now being inspected, and postulates the need for 100 percent inspection of all containers entering the United States now and for the foreseeable future.

It is true, of course, that prior to 11 September 2001 the name of the game for importing cargo into the United States was facilitation—i.e., making it as easy as possible to offload as many containers as possible within a given period of time. In contrast, "security"—however that word is defined—was barely visible on the radar screen. Nonetheless, cargo security was, and is, an important issue, for shippers and ship-owners alike, if only because of the billions of dollars in estimated losses caused by what frequently is called "shrinkage."

Shrinkage was, and is, though, cargo theft—couched in politically correct sheep's clothing. So some attention already was being paid, well prior to 9/11, to the need for and use of better and more reliable bolt locks, and container seals, and other devices designed to provide total cargo visibility from the point of origin "overseas" (including Canada and Mexico) to the point of offloading in a U.S. port.

Political and Economic Factors
Obviously, though, if a container can be infiltrated to steal one or more cases of valuable wines or a shipment of high-tech computers, it can just as easily be infiltrated to insert weapons of mass destruction, explosives, migrants, or other contraband cargo. The basic crime here, of course, is smuggling, sometimes described as perhaps the second oldest crime in the world. But more about that later.

Before forming any final conclusions about the alleged need for 100 percent inspection of containers it may be helpful to review some basic facts about the U.S. air, land, and sea borders, the quantity and types of imports now arriving in U.S. ports, and the huge and almost certainly harmful economic ramifications that would ensue if those imports are seriously disrupted.

Here, there is an important political and economic factor that must be taken into consideration—namely, that if economic disruption is indeed an attractive and highly effective tool that Al Qaeda and/or other terrorist groups might use against the United Stares, security at America's borders still must be balanced against the necessity of efficiently and quickly moving cargo into and out of the U.S. port system.

If that is not possible, the terrorists win. It's that simple. The 2002 lockout in West Coast ports—which provides a helpful example—clearly demonstrated what would happen if a large number of U.S. seaports were closed and/or if the trade process was interfered with or significantly disrupted in any other manner. That lockout resulted in billions of dollars of lost opportunities, sales, and revenues—including revenues to state and local governments.

Some Is by Land, Most Is by Sea
According to the most recent trade statistics available, the United States imported a broad spectrum of cargo of all kinds, collectively valued at $1.36 trillion (estimated), in fiscal year (FY) 2004. The top five countries of origin in that same year were Canada ($100 billion), China ($82 billion), Mexico ($70 billion), Japan ($62 billion), and Germany ($35 billion).

The value of the same imports, broken down by mode of transportation, is as follows: Most U.S. imports come by sea; imports by air take a distant second, followed by imports loaded on trucks and, at the tail end, cargo carried by rail. Canada and Mexico, the principal U.S. land-border trading partners, are the source of most truck and rail shipments into the United States. China, Japan, and Germany access the United States mostly by the sea.

There are several other relevant statistics that put the dimensions of what might be called "the cargo problem" into even clearer focus. The most important of those statistics is that the United States possesses approximately 6,900 miles of land borders and 95,000 miles of shoreline. The Border Patrol, an important component of the DHS (Department of Homeland Security) Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency, is responsible for all land areas between the U.S. ports of entry. That is a huge assignment, because there are a total of 317 designated land, sea, and air ports of entry through which cargo, and passengers, may enter the country.

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With responsibility for 20 sectors and 33 border checkpoints between the various ports of entry, CBP is required to process, on a typical day, more than 1.1 million people (passengers and pedestrians combined); 64,432 truck, rail, and sea containers; 2,639 aircraft, 365,079 vehicles of various types; and 75,734 merchandise entries. To do all this, and a number of other important tasks (including some that are highly classified), the agency employs approximately 40,000 personnel, including 18,000 officers, 11,000 Border Patrol agents, and 1,500 agricultural specialists.

On a yearly basis, approximately 11 million containers enter the United States through its land-border ports of entry, and nine million through the nation's seaports. All of these containers—plus bulk cargo (e.g., grain, oil, coal, etc.) and RO/RO (roll-on/roll-off) cargo (such as trucks, tractors, and other rolling stock)—must be processed both expeditiously and effectively. With the current work force, and using current technology, a requirement to search 100 percent of all containers and/or other cargo entering the United States would sink the entire trade process into a quagmire and severely damage the U.S. economy.

A Layered Defense, An Affordable Strategy

It is recognized at all levels of government, however, that in the current environment "high-risk" cargo must be screened and processed differently than low-risk cargo. That is the challenge: how to select the right percentage to inspect or otherwise examine more carefully—either through a "targeting" process, or by use of new and/or improved technological systems, and/or by encouraging (or mandating) industry and international partnerships, and/or by changing the way the actual import/export process works.

Most senior officials—in the private sector as well as local, state, and federal governments—seem to agree that a layered defense strategy employing "all of the above" would probably provide the most efficient as well as most affordable solution to the security problem.

The federal government—DHS, primarily—already has initiated several programs to help in the process. Among the most important of those programs are what is called the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, the Container Security Initiative, Operation Safe Commerce, the development of an automated targeting system, and a lengthening of what used to be called the 24-hour rule (the time required, before entry into a U.S. port, for cargo manifests to be submitted). Additional information on these and other programs is available on the DHS website www.dhs.gov.

The automated targeting system was initially developed by expanding and improving an existing capability that U.S. Customs had developed over the years to profile incoming cargo, containers, and conveyances. One goal of that program was to identify the various levels of risk associated with smuggling contraband of any type. Because the basic method for introducing anything other than legitimate cargo into the United States through the normal trade process is considered smuggling, Customs personnel had learned to look for anomalies that would identify so-called "targets of interest" for additional and more intensive examination.

When high-risk cargo or containers has been identified, non-intrusive technology—i.e. scanners and/or narcotic-detector canines—is used to further narrow the field. Only after the enormous universe of incoming cargo has been reduced to a manageable volume of cargo considered to be extremely suspect is that cargo subjected to intensive hands-on searches by Customs personnel.

To summarize: The United States is a very large country geographically blessed with, and sometimes burdened by, many thousands of miles of land and sea borders. Protecting all of those borders on a continuing basis is a huge challenge. The only way to do it at this time is by selectively identifying the "right cargo" that must be thoroughly searched. Requiring a careful search of 100 percent of the cargo entering the United States would shut down the entire U.S. economic system.

The guiding principle that must be followed is one known to law-enforcement professionals all over the world: The provision of adequate security must never result in a major, and long-term, negative impact on the economy. In that context, protection must be considered a work in progress. Technology is not necessarily the sole and/or most important answer—but technology is evolving every day, and certainly will provide at least part of the answer. But in the new age of international terrorism no promises have been, or could be, made that solving the cargo problem and/or the numerous other contentious issues involved would be quick, easy, or cheap.

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Days of Reckoning: The Maximum Effort

By Joseph Cahill
Emergency Medicine

Many hospitals and emergency agencies (such as the police and fire departments) already have plans on hand to call up their off-duty staff in times of a natural or manmade disaster or other crisis in their home communities. It is intuitive to think of the term "maximum effort"' when referring to all of the on-duty as well as off-duty staff that are called in during such situations. But there are a number of significant problems that must be dealt with when, and preferably before, a maximum effort is called for.

The first reason that maximum efforts are rarely practical is that, when all members of the hospital's staff have been called in, there will be too few staff able to work the following day. In short, a truly maximum effort is not sustainable beyond the short term. Probably only sustainable for incidents that are shorter than the time it would take to call in the off-duty staff.

The second reason that a maximum effort is seldom practical is that the hospital's "routine" must still be done. Patients will continue to come in, by ambulance, by private car, or as "walk-ins." And all of them, particularly those coming to the emergency room (ER), will still require care.

There are several steps short of the maximum effort that can be taken to help a hospital care for the "routine" patients while dealing with the influx of incident-related patients in times of crisis. Many of those steps are designed to decrease the number of patients in the hospital who are not there because of the specific crisis. In these situations, the term maximum sustainable effort refers specifically to a staffing level and use of resources that do not strip the hospital's ability to function the next day—or leave it unable to deal with the "usual" volume of non-crisis-related emergencies that it has to cope with in a theoretically "average" day.

A useful way to think of the problem, perhaps, is as an equation--with the resources (including staff) on one side and the patients that can and must be treated on the other. Planning for a maximum sustainable effort almost always involves adjusting both sides of the equation.

Patient Flow: Shifting the Equation
As with any emergency there is usually some routine work that can safely be set aside—for example, a police officer might well decide to respond to a report of a violent crime in progress rather than to ticket an illegally parked car. Similarly, hospitals should have plans to shift from their normal workday status to a situation calling for a maximum sustainable effort. One way that a hospital can do this is to decrease its in-house patient population—e.g., by postponing elective procedures that can be rescheduled for another day. In addition, but only to the extent that it can be done safely, patients who are ready or almost ready for discharge can be "fast tracked" and sent home or to a rehab facility.

Hospitals and EMS (emergency medical services) agencies already collaborate on a system involving so-called "diversions," which frequently are used when a hospital is full to capacity for a particular type of patient (burn patients, for example, or patients who have been seriously injured in a train or car wreck). The hospital relays such information to the EMS system so that ambulances will transport new and/or additional patients to other hospitals or other medical facilities that are not as crowded.

In theory, patients receive better care this way, because they have a shorter wait for treatment at the hospital that is not overwhelmed and/or where there are more medical and personnel resources available. During any truly major crisis any and all hospitals in the area should at least consider going "on diversion." This would permit the hospital's own staff—who would normally be caring for ambulance patients in the ER and/or after they have been admitted—to be shifted to care for emergency room patients far from the scene of the crisis.

The EMS system can help significantly—by, among other things, distributing the overall patient load between the hospitals both in and outside the effected area. This requires some very important decisions, of course—preferably by someone at a level where he or she "see the whole board." Such decisions cannot be made "on the fly," but must be made based on the information available both from the hospital and from the scene of the accident or incident. Under what is called the incident command system (ICS), the transportation unit leader–who is usually the ideal individual to make such calls—decides, taking into account both the needs of the patient and the capabilities and workloads of the available hospitals, which patient goes to what hospital.

There are several ways that hospitals and/or EMS agencies can improve the staffing side of the equation. One way is to move from three eight-hour shifts to two 12-hour shifts. This would stretch the staff by a third, and decrease the number of tour changes a day—thereby cutting to some

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Days of Reckoning: The Maximum Effort

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extent the productivity loss that usually occurs when the shift changes. In addition, staff members who usually do not take care of patients but are licensed or certified to do so can be pressed into service. Training, support, and administrative staff, for example, can be shifted temporarily into the patient care arena. The only caveat to diverting personnel this way is that their regular work, usually essential to the smooth functioning of the hospital, may still need to be done. If an administrator is responsible for making sure that supplies are available he or she might be more valuable doing that than in treating patients.

Answers: In Advance, and in Writing

It should be obvious that all hospitals should have one or more crisis plans, including at least one dealing with a local crisis (the loss of electric power, for example) and others for off-site disasters—a train wreck or plane crash—that would result in a major influx of patients. Such plans should at least consider the use of other medical facilities in the area.

When a comprehensive plan is in place, hospital workers not only know what to do in a crisis, but also where to go to for answers in these times of crisis. To fully achieve these benefits, though, requires frequent and thorough training. When a crisis or disaster or other event occurs of such a magnitude that the entire emergency services resources of the community are needed to respond—or, worse that those resources are quickly overrun—hospitals and first-responder agencies are forced to activate their mutual-aid plans. Simply stated, a mutual-aid plan is a written agreement between emergency services agencies that they will come to help one another in times of crisis.

When an emergency agency cannot quickly respond, for example, to deal with a major disaster, a mutual-aid plan previously agreed to will specify what other agency or agencies in the area can be called in to help. This plan is used both during a disaster and when normal call volume increases to a point where a routine request for help would have to wait for a unit to become available.

Typical mutual-aid plans provide such information as who and/or what agencies are covered by the agreement, how the request(s) for help should be communicated, who has the authority to make the request, and—perhaps the most difficult decision of all—who or what agency is responsible for a broad spectrum of financial liabilities and payments. (Generally, the agency "owning" the resource continues to pay for its own staff, and related maintenance costs, while the agency receiving or being helped by the resource is responsible for damage and loss. However, this varies from agreement to agreement and should be clearly stated to avoid problems.)

Many states now not only have in place a statewide mutual-aid plan but also require the development of local plans. However, most of these plans and requirements pertain only to fire and police agencies and have no bearing on other resources. In addition, other government agencies are seldom covered by these requirements.

An example of how the mutual-aid concept could be applied to non-emergency-services agencies would be the typical sequence followed when there is a major incident involving a large number of fatalities. In such disasters it frequently happens that the local public-health agency or coroner's office is responsible for processing the human remains but is not able to complete all of the post-mortem work needed in a time frame acceptable both to the victims' families and to the local community. The instinctive answer, of course, is that neighboring communities will simply send their own coroners to help as needed.

But there are numerous legal, financial, and other issues involved: the identification of remains, for example, and the legal certification of death. There also may be jurisdictional issues that must be dealt with, and there are several cost issues that would not be easy to resolve—e.g., who will pay the salaries of those who have been "volunteered," so to speak? In addition, who or what agency of government will indemnify the "on-loan" coroners if they are injured, or if they cause some kind of damage, or if there are legal issues over the identification of, release of, or treatment of remains? (Malpractice insurance, in other words.)

As with the pay issue, there are numerous points of view, and a very large number of economic, political, and other factors that must be taken into consideration. For planning purposes, though, what is important is not how these questions are answered, but that they are answered--in advance, in writing, in the mutual-aid agreement documents.

By taking into consideration both sides of the staff-patient equation a hospital crisis plan can maximize the effectiveness of the facility without surrendering jurisdictional control to an all-agency effort. Hospitals already are both major community resources and vital components of the local infrastructure. But most hospitals can and must be much more responsive and much more capable than they now are.

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Protecting U.S. Ports: A Challenge of Staggering Magnitude

By James D. Hessman
Coast Guard

For many years prior to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center Towers in New York City, and on the Pentagon, the U.S. Coast Guard was perhaps the most overworked and under-funded agency of the federal government. In addition to serving in time of war as a full working partner with the nation's other armed services, it also was assigned a myriad of other missions and responsibilities to carry out in both peace and war. Many of those missions required the on-scene presence of Coast Guard personnel, cutters, and aircraft 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The most important of those missions is, and always has been, saving lives—on average, the Coast Guard has saved an estimated 4,000 lives per year in recent years, or about eleven lives per day. It also assists, in various ways, an average of 136 other people "in distress" at sea, carries out 106 SAR (search and rescue) missions, interdicts 15 illegal migrants, investigates 38 vessel casualties of various types, boards almost 300 vessels, and monitors the transit through U.S. ports of more than 2,500 commercial ships.

Those are all daily averages, it should be emphasized. And they do not take into account a long list of the USCG's other responsibilities, including – but not limited to - the interdiction of narcotics, the enforcement of U.S. fisheries laws, the tracking and cleanup of oil and hazardous chemical spills, the conduct of vessel safety checks, the processing of mariners' licenses and other documents, and the teaching of boating safety. Not to mention icebreaking during the winter months, to keep U.S. ports open and ready to receive cargo.

With rare exceptions, each of those and other USCG missions has been growing larger and larger every year—as U.S. overseas trade has continued to grow in both variety and volume, as more and more illegal migrants have attempted to enter the United States by sea, and as the number of U.S. boat owners has increased exponentially.

Too Much for Too Few, and Not Enough
Today, it is the Coast Guard itself that is in need of a SAR mission. The reason is simple: too many jobs for too few people, and not enough of the right equipment. In addition, much of the equipment now in the Coast Guard's hardware inventory is antiquated and obsolete—e.g., cutters that saw combat service in Vietnam, or earlier; patrol boats too slow to keep up with the high-speed/high-tech boats used by today's drug smugglers.

The operational problem is compounded by the requirement imposed on the Coast Guard to carry out all of its other duties while paying significantly more attention to port and maritime security. Until 9/11, between 15 and 18 percent of the service's people and hardware resources were assigned to maritime security—mostly, though, to interdict illegal migrants and illegal drugs, and to enforce U.S. and international fisheries laws. Only about two percent of what Admiral Thomas H. Collins, commandant of the Coast Guard, calls its "resource base" was directly involved in "active port and coastal security duties." Immediately after 9/11, though—in fact, before midnight of that second date that will live in infamy—Coast Guard operations surged to the point that about 50 percent of its resource base was assigned specifically to the port-security mission.

In the three years since the 9/11 attacks, Collins told a National Defense University audience in December 2004, the service has "rebalanced" its missions/resources matrix and now has about 25 percent of the resource base assigned to port and coastal waterways security. That percentage seems unlikely to decline at any time in the foreseeable future—but will undoubtedly soar back to the 50 percent level, and beyond, if there is another terrorist incident, of 9/11 dimensions, in any of the nation's 361 ports.

How real is the threat of an attack on a major U.S. port? Opinions vary from pundit to pundit, but the typical (but necessarily vague) answer falls into the "not if, but when" category. Commercial aviation flights into and out of U.S. airports are now not 100 percent safe – but they are considerably safer than they were prior to 9/11. U.S. land borders also are safer than they were three years ago—but an estimated three million illegal aliens still entered the United States last year, according to a Lou Dobbs article in the 27 December 2004 issue of U.S. News & World Report.

A Problem That Will Double in Size
The dimensions of the port-security problem facing today's U.S. Coast Guard are of staggering magnitude. Some (but not all) of the specifics were spelled out by Collins in his NDU "Distinguished Lecture" address. An estimated 8,000 foreign ships make 50,000 port calls annually into the United States. Less than five percent, by volume, of America's two-way foreign trade, imports and exports combined, is carried by U.S.-flag ships. More than 95 percent of the nation's foreign trade—with nations other than Canada and Mexico—flows through U.S. seaports. The overall volume of U.S. trade is expected to at least double during the next 20 years.

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Protecting U.S. Ports: A Challenge of Staggering Magnitude

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There are other aspects of the problem that Collins and his already understaffed service have to cope with. Few if any of the USCG's responsibilities can be farmed out to other agencies. There can be no let-up in the interdiction of illegal aliens (some of whom, it is now obvious may be terrorists.) Nor in the interdiction of illegal drugs—because drug sales often are used to finance terrorism.

Counterterrorism experts, both in government and in the private sector, concede that there is absolutely "no answer" to the wide spectrum of threats already facing the U.S. Coast Guard as it seeks to guarantee the safety and security of the U.S. port system. In other words, there is no absolute "guarantee" that the Coast Guard could or should provide.

There is, though, an equally broad spectrum of partial solutions to the problem: adding more people, and more equipment, for example; requiring the ports themselves, the shippers and ship-owners, and labor unions, to expand and improve their own security systems and programs; installing more, and more highly sophisticated, sensor and audiovisual systems in ports and at the entrances to ports; and working with other agencies—local, state, and federal—to develop and implement a comprehensive, unified, and thoroughly integrated maritime-and-port-security plan that addresses all threats and all challenges, from whatever quarter.

So the real answer is not if the challenge can be met. It can – but it depends on where, and when, on the timeline continuum the threat becomes a reality.

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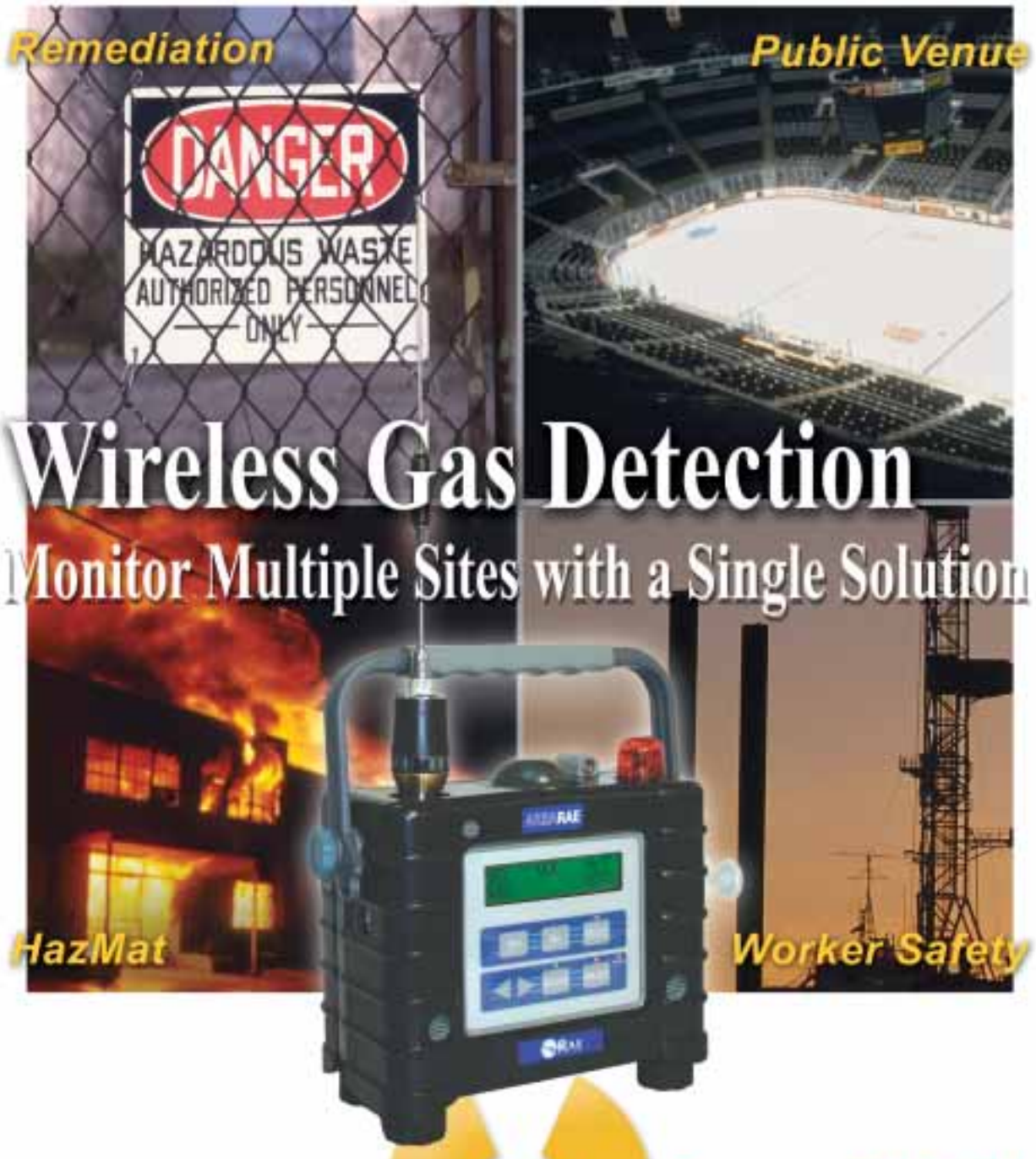

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