

Security or infrastructure?

US ports forced to decide

By Paul Scott Abbott, AJOT

Security or infrastructure? That's the tough decision US port leaders continue to face.

"Security costs have complicated port development," Steve Cernak, the Port of Galveston's port director, said



Steve Cernak – Port Director, Port of Galveston
(Photo by Paul Scott Abbott)

last week at the SecurePort 2007 Western Hemisphere Port Security Conference and Trade Exhibition in Houston.

"Ports often have to either divert funds away from important projects to pay for mandated security enhancements, or reduce the scope of their security enhancements," Cernak continued.

Kurt J. Nagle, president and chief executive officer of the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), echoed such concern at the SecurePort event, held Jan. 29-31.

"Prior to 9/11, the industry consistently rated the funding of needed infrastructure development as its No. 1 challenge," Nagle told the gathering of 250 leaders from port management and security sectors.

"The dramatically increased level of resources being devoted to security enhancements has exacerbated the challenge of funding development of non-security infrastructure to handle the grow-

ing levels of international trade," Nagle went on to say.

AAPA, which represents 160 Western Hemisphere port authorities, has advocated increased federal funding for port security, but despite authorization of some \$400 million a year in US Department of Homeland Security grants for ports, actual funding appropriated by Congress is about half that figure. Federal estimates have put the cost of needed port security projects through 2012 at \$5.4 billion.

Nagle said the ports association is opposed to new taxes or fees on the industry to pay for security demands. Rather, AAPA favors funding security projects with a portion of the user fees and taxes, including \$17.5 billion a year in Customs duties, that the maritime community already pays the federal government. Most of that money now goes to federal programs not associated with ports.

The Port of Galveston's Cernak put it simply: "America's ports need more federal help."



Kurt J. Nagle – President & CEO, AAPA
(Photo by Paul Scott Abbott)

ALL ON THE SAME TEAM

Numerous security projects have been implemented at the Port of Galveston, with more on the way, but they have taken their

toll on cargo development projects that have had to be placed on the back burner, Cernak said. For example, needed bulkhead repairs have gone undone, and 80- to 90-year-old cotton warehouses that have outlived their functionality



Charles A. "Chuck" Towsley – former Port Director, Port of Miami-Dade
(Photo by Paul Scott Abbott)

have not been torn down so that room can be made for productive infrastructure on precious port land.

"I haven't had the funds to demolish these warehouses because I've had to divert the funds to security projects," Cernak said, adding that the money the not-for-profit enterprise port has had for non-security infrastructure has been largely devoted to enhancing Galveston's rapidly growing presence in the cruise sector, rather than to improving cargo facilities.

Port customers want to see improvements made, but tend not to be willing to pony up their funds, he said, commenting, "It puts the ports in the middle."

Charles A. "Chuck" Towsley, who served as port director at the Port of Miami-Dade from January 1998 through last June and who now is a consultant, was among those urging further cooperation among various governmental and

private entities in tackling security issues.

"We are all on the same team," Towsley said. "We need to overcome the parochialism that can occur."

Towsley said he has seen significant progress made on the port security front, but added that there are inherent difficulties in implementing security enhancements at existing facilities. He commented, "Security at ports, it has seemed to me, has often been akin to putting a square peg in a round hole."

John Jamian, a former US Department of Transportation Maritime Administration acting administrator who now serves as an executive member of the Swiss-based Global Coalition for Efficient Logistics, urged implementation of a unified worldwide system to maximize security and efficiency.

"Security can really have a benefit to the logistics and supply chain," said Jamian, whose career also has included a stint as execu-



A.J. "Pete" Reixach, Jr. – Executive Director, Port Freeport
(Photo by Paul Scott Abbott)

tive director of the Detroit/Wayne County Port Authority. "In fact, it has to have a benefit to logistics."

US Coast Guard Cmdr.
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Armin Cate, who has been integral in the development of the America's Waterway Watch program, said cooperation must extend beyond public- and private-sector entities traditionally thought of as playing roles in the fight against terrorism.

Likening the program to "neighborhood watch on the water," Cate said an additional layer of security can be afforded by a variety of people who frequent waterfront areas – from taxi drivers, to personal watercraft rental facility owners, to lunch wagon operators. The program provides a toll-free Coast Guard national response center number – 877-24-WATCH – to be phoned by those who spot dubious activity.

"We need everyone's help in reporting suspicious activity around our ports, waterfronts and critical infrastructure," Cate said. "Complacency may aid the enemy."

A.J. "Pete" Reixach, Jr., executive director of Port Freeport, joined others in calling for the port industry to engage actively in sharing les-

sons learned and best practices in security, such as those being undertaken by AAPA efforts.

Reixach began his remarks by harkening back to the simpler days well before the tragic events of 9/11 spurred the current broadened emphasis on port security.

"When I came to work at Port Freeport in 1985," Reixach said, "Port security basically consisted of running fishermen off the docks."

TIMES SURE HAVE CHANGED

Dr. Kenneth Christopher, a former Port of Miami-Dade director of security and now a professor of criminal justice at Park University in Parkville, MO, said he believes a significant terrorist episode at a seaport is inevitable.

"Now," said Cate, who holds his doctorate in public administration, "it really isn't a matter of if a terrorist event is going to happen, but when it will happen."

SecurePort draws 250 to Houston conference

By Paul Scott Abbott, AJOT

The SecurePort 2007 Western Hemisphere Port Security Conference and Trade Exhibition drew 250 port industry leaders, government officials, security technology providers and others to Houston from Jan. 29-31. The event was hosted by the Port of

Houston Authority.

In addition to a full slate of conference sessions and trade exhibition interactions, the agenda included a Jan. 30 reception at the Hilton Houston Post Oak.

(Photos by Paul Scott Abbott)



(L to R) Albert Samano, Jim Hinton, Chuck Neverdowski, John Gruenwald, Bob Stamps (all of TRC Solutions)



(L to R) John Robinson, John Schuenemann, Eric Knollenberg, Lynn Welch, C. Marshall Saari (all of ICx Technologies)



(L to R) Ted Falgout – Greater Lafourche Port Commission, Joel Chaisson – Port of South Louisiana, Chris Bonura – Port of New Orleans



(L to R) Rich Challen – Bardo, Mike Knudsen – Barco, Hubert Archambo – Port of Corpus Christi



(L to R) Dr. Sotiris A. Pagdadis – CA, Inc., David Schaller – Georgia Ports Authority, Kevin Younger, Younger & Associates



(L to R) Dr. Kenneth Christopher – Park University, Pablo Donati – Donati Translation & Interpreting, Diana Donati – Donati Translation & Interpreting



(L to R) Raymond Barberisi – SecurePort, Capt. William Diehl – US Coast Guard, Jacqueline Hutman – SecurePort



(L to R) F. J. Richers – Port Freeport, Pat Younger – Gulf Ports Association of the Americas, Tom Schroeder – Port of Houston Authority