

Adam Vincent

[Back to My English 111 Web](#)

English 111

Professor Donna Reiss

April 23, 2003

Deterring Terrorism in the Ports of South Hampton Roads

Instead of business as usual, which leaves the ports of our local community vulnerable to terrorist attacks, the government's new law enforcement powers should be embraced by the communities of South Hampton Roads, the cities of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach. This will reduce the probability of a terrorist act being committed in our local community. The cowardly acts of September 11, 2001 have caused our nation to change the way we deal with those that threaten our national interest. Our local authorities must be allowed to use any mean available to defend us from terrorism. "Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists, and every government that supports them. Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated". (Bush p2) South Hampton Roads must be ever vigilant to ensure the chance of a terrorist attack on our local community will be diminished.

There are myriad vulnerabilities in the ongoing campaign against those who threaten our principles of liberty and justice with the fear and heinous cruelty of terrorism, but this focus will be limited to how South Hampton Roads now should protect her ports. Local and federal agencies have now changed the way they do business. The focus now is on teamwork and how they can best work together in order to combat this new threat. "Some Norfolk police officers have been pulled from their normal duties to

better secure potential terror targets”. (Roy) U.S. Navy ships, for the first time in history, have been employed jointly with the U.S. Coast Guard to help protect our nation’s coastline, ports and waterways from terrorist attack. The Coast Guard and Navy operate a Joint Harbor Operations Center (JHOC) under the operational control of USCG Group Hampton Roads. “The JHOC serves as a command and control center for maritime homeland security for ports in the Hampton Roads region. The JHOC integrates radar coverage of the harbor with surveillance cameras and other information to monitor and track the movement of ships in the regulated navigation area established for the port”. (Smith)

Among the United States Coast Guards newest tools for combating terrorism in 361 major US ports are three specially trained rapid response Maritime Safety and Security Teams (MSSTs). Each MSST is composed of about 40 active duty USCG members equipped with armed boats and trained to patrol, detect and counter terrorism threats in US ports and waterways. MSST 91102 was commissioned August 16, 2002 and is co-located with the Coast Guard’s Communication Area Master Station, Atlantic (CAMSLANT) already located in Chesapeake. MSSTs are another important tool, along with better intelligence, new regulations, security patrols and better partnerships with the Department of Defense, local authorities, other law enforcement agencies and the maritime industry to enhance the homeland security efforts in protecting our local ports from terrorism.

Four Cyclone-Class Navy Patrol Coastal (PC) ships in were assigned to support our nations new Department of Homeland Security as of November 5, 2001. PCs primary purposes involve coastal patrol, surveillance, and interdiction operations near the

shore. Their secondary purpose is to support Naval Special Warfare maritime operations in minimal threat environments. The PCs will continue to be manned and operated by Navy crews, but a specially trained Coast Guard team will deploy aboard these ships on maritime homeland security patrols to conduct law enforcement boardings of vessels at sea, before entering the ports of South Hampton Roads. The PCs will additionally be used in support of anti-terrorism/force protection for Naval ships and escort commercial ships in and out of U.S. ports. The USS Chinook (PC9) and USS Firebolt (PC10) are now under the operational control of USCG Station Little Creek in support of Homeland Defense. “U.S. Navy personnel are members of the Department of Defense and are normally prohibited by law (Posse Comitatus Act) from participating directly in law enforcement activities. Coast Guard personnel, on the other hand, are authorized under 14 USC 89 to board vessels to enforce U.S. law”. (Navy)

“The events of September 11 were a tremendous failure of intelligence, as well as a monumental embarrassment for law enforcement”. (Williams 1) The USA Patriot Act is a very controversial piece of legislation that has been signed into law. This law is absolutely necessary to ensure we minimize the threat of terrorist attacks on United States soil. Non-citizen suspects may now be detained indefinitely, thereby streamlining the process of conducting effective investigations. The Attorney General and Secretary of State now have the authority to designate domestic groups as terrorist organizations and deport non-citizen members. Law enforcement authorities now have less red tape to deal with as they fight terrorism via telephone and Internet surveillance and investigate suspects for intelligence purposes. The USA Patriot Act will give the law enforcement personnel of South Hampton Roads a tool to allow them to focus their resources towards

fighting terrorism instead of the dealing with the tremendous administrative burden and bureaucracy of ensuring every rule is followed so we do not violate any of the terrorist civil rights.

There will be sacrifices the citizens and businesses of our local community will be required to make, as new restrictions will be implemented to protect the ports of South Hampton Roads from a terrorist attack. “Recreational boating might be forbidden in Hampton Roads if the country moves to Code Red, the highest threat level for terrorism, or during a direct attack”. (Dorsey) Additionally, Customs now enforce tighter guidelines for local businesses that import or export goods through shipping lines to provide shipping list in much more detail than previously required. The manifest may no longer use vague and general descriptions such as “FAK” for freights of all kind or “general department store merchandise” as allowed prior to September 11, 2001. For example, furniture may not be labeled furniture, a more detailed description i.e. beds or chairs is now required. “Lillian Vernon has applied – and has required its vendors to apply – for certification in the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism. That initiative solicits industry to evaluate and update its own security practices at each link in the supply chain”. (Shapiro) Our local business will have to share part of the burden with regard to ensuring our ports are not attack through maritime commerce. Terrorism is affecting our local community in many ways, more than you might think.

The South Hampton Roads ports must be protected from the threats of terrorism. It is a vital port for maritime commerce and home to the largest Navy base in the world. There will be opposition to many of the drastic measures that we must take to decisively win this war, but it is imperative that we send a strong and clear message to those in the

world that threaten the American way of life. Freedom comes with a price and many have paid and many stand ready to pay that price with the ultimate sacrifice. The least we can do is allow the local authorities and all others charged with protecting us to be equipped with nothing less than the best tools available to end terrorism and ultimately create more stability and peace for the local community of South Hampton Roads.

Works Cited

Bush, George. "Enemies of Freedom Committed an Act of War Against America"

The Attack on America: September 11, 2001. William Dudley, Ed. At Issue Series. Greenhaven Press, 2002. Excerpted from George W. Bush's "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People," September 20, 2001. p1-7
Reproduced in Opposing Viewpoints Resource Center. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Gale Group. 2003. <http://www.galenet.com/servlet/OVRC> Document Number: X3010146204. 7 April 2003.

Dorsey, Jack. "Recreational boating may be banned during Code Red" *The Virginian*

Pilot 7 March 2003. <http://www.pilotonline.com/military/ml0307clo.html>
24 April 2003.

"Navy, Coast Guard Join Forces For Homeland Security" *Joint Release By Atlantic*

Fleet and Coast Guard Public Affairs. 5 November 2001.
<http://c21.maxwell.af.mil/maritime/navyuscg.htm> 23 April 2003.

Roy, Matthew. "Norfolk Police Heighten City Security" *The Virginian Pilot* 27 March

2003. <http://www.pilotonline.com/news/nw0327cop.html> 23 April 2003

Shapiro, Carolyn. Businesses on the front lines of port security. *The Virginian-Pilot*.

7 March 2003. <http://www.pilotonline.com/business/bz0307lil.html>
23 April 2003.

Smith, Kimberly. Atlantic Area Public Affairs, United States Coast Guard. Telephone

Interview. 11 Apr. 2003.

Williams, Patricia. "By Any Means Necessary" *The Nation* 26 November 2001. v273

i17 p11. <http://www.galenet.com/servlet/OVRC> Document Number A79915746.

23 April 2003.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to Mayranne B., Kimberly T. and Professor Donna Reiss for the careful review and sound advice on my research paper.