

SMALL VESSEL SECURITY SUMMIT REPORT

When the National Boating Federation learned of the Small Vessel Security Summit and the perceived threat by small vessels to maritime security, we were pleased by the invitation and the opportunity to offer our thoughts and suggestions on this important subject. Admittedly, most of our two million members were not aware of the threat or risk of terrorist use of a small vessel in an attack. Assuming the threat is real, we feel a risk assessment would be very useful in order to assess the most probable risk, the level of deterrence needed and the amount of resources required to implement a solution. This could also provide a description of the physical characteristics and type of individuals for the boating public to be on watch for and the most probable locations for an attack. In any case, the boating community needs to cooperate with the Department of Homeland Security and the Coast Guard to assist in achieving adequate deterrents to prevent the threat by small vessels to maritime security, or at least mitigate the risk.

The first and most obvious need is the ability to identify the vessel and those aboard. Some suggestions have come directly from our members. One was to implement an Automated Identification System transponder for recreational vessels. This is apparently not favored by the Vessel Traffic Service, as it would overwhelm the receivers with so many additional signals. The solution to this may be a modified, less robust, AIS system to delineate small and recreational vessels on a different frequency. This would have the additional benefit of reducing the cost to far less than the existing commercial units. However designed, a means must be found to provide a low cost transponder or this would be a strong disincentive to the boating community. Further suggestions for vessel and passenger identification were to require vessels to display documentation numbers on their bow just like state vessels do now. The Coast Guard could integrate the state registered vessel data and documented vessel data into a national data base, which would provide instant identification of the vessel and its ownership without the necessity of boarding. Direct linkage to the file from on board the Coast Guard vessel would be required, plus on-going data base maintenance. If boarding was deemed necessary to verify the operator, a boating education certificate is suggested for identification, consistent with state regulations, or a state driver's license. This would have the dual benefit of operator identification and required mandatory education. (Currently all but 13 states now require mandatory boating education.) Passenger identity could be via state driver's license.

A model for the Coast Guard small vessel deterrent system, suggested by a member of the Maryland State Police Aviation Command, could be the National Capital Regional Control Center. The Center is a 24/7 operation which the Coast Guard participates in.

If an incident occurs, say a small plane entering the no-fly zone over the Capitol, it can be tracked, identified and if necessary neutralized under the Center's control. This technology could be adapted for small vessel tracking, identification and interdiction. It should be easier to track a small vessel doing 18 knots than a small aircraft doing 150 MPH.

The systems and approaches described above do not address the problem of foreign registered small vessels at our maritime borders. We have been told a foreign pleasure craft need not report itself in U.S. waters. We believe the foreign pleasure craft poses a greater risk than U.S. vessels since it is foreign, difficult to identify and has no AIS system.

Another way in which a small vessel could be used by a terrorist is simply by theft of the vessel. To this end, a suggestion has been made to implement a system of updating reports on small stolen vessels in real time, available to all waterborne Homeland Security commands. These could also be included in the national data base.

Other ways to protect our waterways is to enhance existing programs that have good potential but have lost momentum. Foremost among these is America's Waterway Watch program. As the brochure says: we, the millions of U.S. boaters, are the "eyes and ears" for our maritime security. This initiative should be reemphasized through aggressive media ad campaigns, public education and outreach. We also have the established security zones around ships and port facilities. Recent reports show that U.S. Navy efforts to construct physical barriers around ships and port facilities have failed and millions of dollars wasted. Clearly, this problem needs to be rectified. Nonetheless, the security zones for critical ports and vessels at sea should again be brought before the public in the methods mentioned earlier.

In summary, a number of ideas have been discussed here to minimize the small vessel security threat. Some are good existing programs and others are new procedures and technologies. Regardless of what systems are implemented, their utility without adequate enforcement and surveillance is questionable. We have noticed decreased Coast Guard presence on our waterways, at least in the mid and southern areas of the Chesapeake Bay. While we believe increased enforcement is necessary, we do not think boat operator licensing, which is expensive and ineffective, is a solution. Again, we suggest a formal risk assessment be conducted to quantify the scope of the threat, the most probable perpetrators, and the geographic areas of greatest risk.