

Marine Domain Awareness and Homeland Security

You're the one who will make a difference

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The Coast Guard Auxiliary became part of the new Department of Homeland Security (DHS) March 1, 2003. As the lead volunteer organization in the department, we have some unique responsibilities.

Our Homeland Security (HLS) Transition Team is defining our role in the new department. Part of the plan is already in place through the Operation Patriot Readiness Program - Phases I & II, in which we have inventoried our members' capabilities, operational readiness and availability.

As you train, develop and grow in the Auxiliary, keep your capabilities inventory up-to-date. We need to know your personal capabilities as well as assets offered in support of the HLS, which will take these capabilities and recast them into a deployment plan that will support the Coast Guard. Our support will be tailored to the needs of the Coast Guard on an ongoing basis, allowing our continuation as a force multiplier to their role. Specifics of this deployment plan will be outlined in Operation Patriot Readiness - Phase III Execution & Deployment. This phase will provide general outlines for identifying potential threat areas/sites and matching Auxiliary resources to them. You will learn more of Phase III during the balance of this year.

Additionally, we will stand ready to provide "surge force" capability during times of special need, as we did in the months following the Sept. 11 attacks. The Auxiliary role is now greater than "Team Coast Guard"; we are considered an integral part of "Coast Guard Forces."

A critical part of the HLS plan is Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). The terrorist threat is viewed as coming from land, sea, or air. The land threat is manageable through our border security and the air threat has undergone great analysis and revision in the last 18 months.

The maritime threat is much more difficult to identify and secure because the large volume of surface transportation in the maritime domain compounds it. Hazardous materials and the difficulty in regulating container traffic complicates it even more. MDA involves a grassroots effort to secure our ports, harbors and waterways by enhancing everyone's awareness of the activities taking place in the maritime domain. Most mariners know instinctively when these activities are normal and routine.

We will be asking our members, recreational boaters, and commercial operators to be vigilant and report any unusual activities or situations they detect on or near the water. This program will be administered through our traditional recreational boating safety (RBS) missions of public education, vessel safety checks and marine dealer visits; as well as our operational multi-mission patrols, operational support and watchstanding and our marine safety activities and public affairs.

The implementation of the MDA program requires each of you to identify opportunities to implement the program in your specific area of responsibility.

To be effective, MDA must be applied port by port, station by station, waterway by waterway. It will not happen at the national or district level; it must be discussed and implemented by our members at the division, flotilla, and individual member level. Consider seriously our responsibilities for MDA as you implement your 2003 boating season programs. In Coast Guard terms, this is an "all hands evolution." We must all be "sensors." We must all contribute to the new Maritime Security "profile."

Our goals are awareness and detection, prevention and deterrence. We want to use our core competencies in a layered operation to push our maritime boundaries outward.

Special Coast Guard teams in each major port area will analyze information collected through the MDA program. This information is a form of intelligence and while each piece of information may seem insignificant on its own, together this information can take on a greater meaning as part of a pattern or progression of activity, like a piece of a complex jigsaw puzzle. Knowing this, you can appreciate the importance of prompt and accurate reporting in the MDA program.

Readiness is another critical part of our HLS Plan. All of the resources in the world will do us no good if they are not ready to be deployed. We would like to position our resources in a strong Bravo status, which means they are ready to go at any time.

As an end product of the Auxiliary's "Operational Patriot Readiness - Operational Order," each flotilla and division should have or be in the process of developing its Ready Response Plan. Correspondingly, each member should know his or her responsibility.

ities under the plan. General instructions for forming Flotilla, Division and District Ready Response Plans will be announced shortly as part of Operation Patriot Readiness - Phase III. This will allow for consistency amongst the plans. Furthermore, elected officers of each unit should appoint a Ready Response Team, including key staff officers, to develop and implement your unit's plan.

In early February, the President elevated our nation's security level to a Code Orange level of awareness. Whenever a security threat is detected, we in the Coast Guard Forces will need to be aware of our role. We will translate the state of readiness into three scaleable Maritime Security (MARSEC) postures: 1 -New normalcy; MARSEC 2 -heightened risk; and MARSEC 3 - Incident imminent. Ensure that all of our members are aware of their responsibilities within each of these states of readiness.

As Auxiliary members, we have a wide variety of skills and experience that enable us to be especially effective in MDA and Ready Response. These are called core competencies and include our ability to contribute in RBS missions, surface operations, on the water, in our versatile Auxiliary aviation programs and in the many augmentation tasks, we assume.

Core competencies complete the circle in our plan by applying our capabilities defined in Operation Patriot Readiness to the MDA and Ready Response activities, which are so important in our new role.

There are actually two parts to our plan. First is business as usual - traditional RBS missions with a heavy measure of MDA infused, standard multi-mission patrols and support, backfill and low-risk augmentation. Second is our ability to surge as a force multiplier in support of Coast Guard Forces.

Think of them as two sides of the same coin. You are the one who will make a difference in our ability to implement this plan.

Semper Paratus!

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