Partners in protection

Story by PA1 Scott Carr, 7th Dist. and
Marine Cpl. Zachary Crawford, Camp Lejeune
The silence of a cool Charleston, S.C., night was shattered as the sound of machine gun fire echoed off brick buildings and parachute flares lit up the sky as a group of terrorists conducted a simultaneous water and land attack on Coast Guard and Marine Corps personnel April 23.

The frontal water and land attacks were actually a diversionary tactic for swimmers who were attempting to attach explosive devices to the hull of a moored Coast Guard cutter in an effort to blow it up.

Coast Guard boat crews from the interim Maritime Safety and Security Team, manned by Tactical Law Enforcement Team North, engaged in a cat and mouse display of high-speed boat tactics with an opposing 20-foot boat.

All of these actions were not from actual terrorists, instead, they were from Coast Guardsmen and other personnel acting as terrorists for a training exercise.

Coast Guardsmen, U.S. Marines and civilian law enforcers took fortified positions here and hosted one of the largest waterborne maritime exercises ever held in the port city.

Approximately 50 Coast Guardsmen from Camp Lejeune’s Port Security Training Detachment and more than 100 Marines from the 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorism) joined hands with federal and state law enforcement agencies to practice anti-terrorism and port security during Exercise Harbor Shield-2002.

During the exercise, the Marines focused on specific shore, pier and port security tactics, techniques and
procedures. Coast Guardsmen served as port security instructors as well as opposing-force role players during the 48-hour final portion.

**Fighting terrorists**

As part of the exercise, the 20-foot opposing boat, operated by two Port Security TRADET members acting as terrorists, entered into a security zone around the CGC Gallatin, a 378-foot high-endurance cutter homeported in Charleston. The cutter simulated a military ship whose crew was scheduled to depart for the Middle East.

While the MSST boat crews shadowed and screened the threatening boat away from the Gallatin, Marines manned defensive positions at the end of the pier, and about 12 other Marines armed with M16 rifles were strategically located on the waterfront.

The terrorist boat made a final attack after the shore attack was repelled. The terrorists outmaneuvered the MSST boat and became aggressive inside the security zone. It came within 500 yards of the Gallatin. The MSST boat broke off their chase. The Marines on the pier opened fire and destroyed the attacking boat.

Harbor Shield provided an opportunity for Coast Guard units in
Standing guard  U.S. Marines stand security watch aboard the CGC Gallatin, which simulated a military preposition ship scheduled for deployment to the Middle East, during the port security training exercise in Charleston, S.C.

Charleston to examine the interoperability of federal, state and local law enforcement partners. These maritime security partners work closely together to detect and address potential threats to the Port of Charleston.

"You will always fight like you train," said Cmdr. Jim Tunstall, commanding officer of Group Charleston. "You have to walk before you run. That's what we're doing here. We're learning to walk. Since this is a fairly new concept working with so many different agencies, I think this will be a successful exercise if everyone comes out of it unharmed and we have a long list of lessons learned."

Crucial preparation

For the Port Security TRADET, the exercise had a couple of benefits.

It allowed the detachment to conduct tactical boat training for all maritime law enforcement agencies involved and play the role of opposition forces for the exercise.

The training also helped the detachment develop lessons learned to help them create a viable training regiment for the four new MSST units that will be established this year. This was a very important aspect of the exercise because the detachment is responsible for training the new MSSTs.

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Marine Capt. Lee Melton.
For the Marines, Harbor Shield was an opportunity to take a real-world scenario and work with the Coast Guard, something the Marines admit is new to them.

"This is the first time we've done anything like this," said Marine Capt. Lee Melton. "We want to develop the skills we'll need and take them anywhere in the real world."

The working relationship established between the Marines and the Coast Guard could easily be put into practice in a foreign or even a domestic port.

"The training we're doing here is aimed at sharpening our skills when dealing with the protection of foreign as well as (United States) naval assets," said Brig. Gen. Douglas V. O'Dell, 4th MEB's commanding general.

"The tactics we are practicing are used both in and out of the United States when dealing with anti-terrorism," added O'Dell.

**Teaming up** During Harbor Shield, U.S. Marines and Coast Guardsmen coordinated in many port security efforts including a personnel search exercise, top, and maintaining a security zone and guarding against opposing aggression, below.
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Reaping the rewards

When the members of MSO Charleston decided to conduct the exercise, they hoped it would increase the knowledge and interoperability of their local port security partners.

"From the local perspective, I thought the tactical training was extremely successful and I couldn’t be happier," said Cmdr. Gary Merrick, commanding officer of MSO Charleston. "The exercise helped us to gain a greater understanding of what our area security plan should look like for the overall protection of the port."

The week prior to the exercise, participants from the MSO, Coast Guard Stations Charleston and Georgetown, TACLET North from Yorktown, Va., South Carolina Department of Natural Resources, City of Charleston Marine Patrol, Charleston County Marine Patrol and North Charleston Marine Patrol underwent a rigorous training regimen.

All of the law enforcement participants received classroom and practical training on swimmer identification, pier sweeps both on foot or from a boat, daily boat tactics training on enforcement of two or three boat security zones, high value assets escorts and general port security.

Eye to the future

The detachment came out of this exercise with a huge list of lessons learned.

"We had a list of lessons learned even before the exercise began," said Cmdr. Fred White, officer in

Under the sea

During the swimmer identification portion of the training exercise, Coast Guard personnel from the Port Security Training Detachment and U.S. Marines demonstrate how security threats can come from beneath the water.
Harbor Shield was an excellent opportunity to conduct extensive training in an EXTREMELY REALISTIC scenario.

BM1 Tim Parker, MSST 602

charge of the detachment. “The exercise was an enormous undertaking. No one got hurt, we conducted boat training and raised public awareness. Now, we have the arduous task of sifting through all the data and extracting the pertinent information to incorporate it into a training program for the new MSST units in a very short period of time.”

For MSST 602, Harbor Shield was an opportunity to conduct extensive training in an extremely realistic scenario, according to BM1 Tim Parker, a member of MSST 602.

All the underway time, training and realistic scenarios MSST 602 experienced will be put to good use as the unit gets ready for four real-world deployments to the Seventh Coast Guard District.

Harbor Shield started as an idea last Fall to train Charleston area port security resources in tactical port security boat crew training. By April, Harbor Shield had grown into a full-scale field training exercise focused on real-world scenarios.

Coordinating the task wasn’t simple, but the ripple effects of Harbor Shield should be seen for years to come as the Coast Guard continues to take the lead in maritime homeland security.