Remarks by Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security James Loy at the Maritime and Port Security Summit

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Thank you, John, for that kind introduction. I'm honored to be here today to join your important discussion about ongoing efforts and strategies to elevate our security within the maritime community. "We are safer, but we're not yet safe," President Bush has said. And he is right.

Terrorism is a scourge that is not going away; it is the new reality under which we live. And while we can put protections in place – which we have done – that make us more secure, as long as there are terrorists bent on carrying out their evil plans, we must recognize that we are at war. A war like none other that preceded it, but a very real war nonetheless. And in this struggle, we have to be right hundreds of times a day -- the terrorists only once. Such a threat must be met with unparalleled urgency and action. We cannot afford to grow complacent, the stakes are simply too high. John, your conferences on homeland security show that you and others here understand that urgency, and I commend you for your action.

The people at the Department of Homeland Security also understand the urgency. And we know that maritime and port security is a vital piece of the puzzle in our mission to protect the homeland. So we have put in place many measures that are designed to make us safer.

But maritime and port security – really, all aspects of homeland security – must remain a high priority for every citizen – from port authority directors and local police to business owners and commercial shippers. Because for all the measures designed to make us safer, we need all of you working across America to implement and enforce these measures. You are critical to this process.

This conference is a good forum to reinforce this shared responsibility. Here, we will share best practices, emerging technologies, baseline standards – as well as an unwavering commitment to defeat terrorists and preserve our freedom. We are all partners in our shared mission to protect and secure this nation from further attack. We all have a stake in upholding the freedom that many before us fought to preserve.

So now, as we face perhaps our most dangerous enemy – an enemy whose sole object is the destruction of the freedom we cherish – it is not enough that we are strong, we must also be smart. We must operate every day with the knowledge that our enemies are changing based on how we change. As we shore up one vulnerability, they work to uncover another. And so it is imperative that we stay one step ahead.

How do we that? By leveraging the collective energy, ideas and commitment of all our citizens. Let me give you an example: The recent collaboration that has occurred between our military, local governments and the private sector to secure our maritime interests offers a picture of how we can strengthen our homeland defenses by being smarter about the way we utilize both our resources and each other.

Several years ago, the Coast Guard and the Navy began working together to achieve a joint and interoperable maritime force. This National Fleet concept required a commitment on the part of both the Navy and Coast Guard to inventory all maritime challenges and resources and work to eliminate any security gaps and any unnecessary redundancies.

Putting this strategy in place has led to unprecedented cooperation, a heightened standard of protection, better stewardship of taxpayer money and expanded security capabilities. For example, working with the Navy we developed an Integrated Anti-Swimmer System that has the sonar capability to discern the difference between a fish and a potential hostile diver. It is a technology that has bolstered our underwater port security significantly. This type of cooperation is a key building block to a much larger concept that many of you are familiar with: Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).

Our maritime domain is one of the most valuable components of our national and economic security. More than 95 percent of overseas trade is processed through our ports. More than 9 million containers enter our seaports annually. And every day thousands of miles of coastline and waterways and 361 ports must be patrolled and protected.

Examining the full scope of maritime challenges and vulnerabilities, pooling our resources, sharing intelligence, strategically addressing our weaknesses and building and maximizing our capabilities is critical to achieving Maritime Domain Awareness. It is critical to the safety of our nation.
Already we have accomplished a great deal improving Maritime Domain Awareness. Working with all stakeholders at the local, state and federal level, the U.S. Coast Guard, as the lead federal agent for maritime homeland security, is coordinating multi-agency efforts to ensure our ability to track vessels both in our ports and up to 2,000 miles off shore.

Partnering with the Navy and local agencies, we have stood up multi-agency command centers in Norfolk and San Diego. The goal of these centers is to leverage existing sensors and data bases and integrate them into one shared display that is linked to a national Maritime Common Operational Picture.

In San Diego, for example, the Navy’s radar network, the San Diego Port Authority’s video surveillance system, Customs and Border Protection’s border surveillance sensors, and the Coast Guard’s extensive radio network are all combined in one center. Watch standers from Coast Guard, Navy, Customs and Border Protection and the Harbor Police all work side by side in the same space to ensure the security of the port from any security intrusion.

We will also continue to reach beyond the confines of the command center to share appropriate information with government partners unable to have a physical presence in the center. And we will continue to share information with members of industry. Experience has shown us that this kind of information sharing ensures effective relationships and operations among all trusted stakeholders.

Multi-agency centers such as the one in San Diego are prototypes for the kind of integration, coordination and cooperation between agencies and maritime authorities that we want to create to support all of our strategic ports. Again, it’s about leveraging our assets and the power of partnerships. And these partnerships do not end at our borders. While we have strengthened the security around our harbors and ports, we have also focused on internationalizing our efforts – working with our international partners to push our borders outward, to put in place programs and technology that catch threats before they ever make their way to our shores. In effect, we are transforming our coastlines into the last line of defense, not the first.

For example, before September 11, we never looked in a container of cargo until it got to our shores. And nearly 20,000 containers of cargo arrive in our ports every day. Homeland Security developed a program known as the Container Security Initiative. And as a result of this program, at this moment, there are U.S. Customs inspectors in Rotterdam and Singapore and Hong Kong and 29 other international ports of trade working alongside our allies to target and screen cargo.

With the use of large-scale gamma ray and x-ray imaging systems, Customs officers can safely and efficiently screen for contraband, including weapons of mass destruction. These units can scan the interior of a full-size, 40-foot container in under one minute.

In this way, we are able to enhance our security without sacrificing the free and swift flow of commerce on which our economy depends.

Standards are also important. Measuring success is important. So, the United States spearheaded the development of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, which was adopted by the International Maritime Organization in December 2002. This international code came into force July 1, 2004, and is the basis on which U.S. inspectors determine if anti-terrorism measures are adequate. Since the program went into place four months ago, we have already completed six assessments and are well on our way to completing two more.

And by collaborating with the Department of Defense, the State Department and other invested agencies, we are also moving forward with the International Port Security Program. Through this effort, U.S. inspectors will be able to assess anti-terrorism measures at port facilities in 135 countries within the next three years.

In addition, we are working closely with our private sector partners to ensure that they are undertaking the necessary security measures required under the Maritime Transportation Security Act. Cargo security entails securing the entire supply chain through which cargo passes. This means having a security plan that addresses threats and vulnerabilities, and places into effect appropriate countermeasures from the time the cargo is loaded into a container until the time it reaches its final destination.

Cargo that moves by sea must pass through port facilities, both on its way to be loaded onto a vessel for export and then after it is offloaded from a vessel to travel by truck, train or another vessel to its final destination. Thus, facilities in the port area are a critical element to the supply chain security picture.

That’s why the President and Congress made sure that the Maritime Transportation Security Act included performance standards for facilities’ handling of cargo. Provisions include such things as routinely checking cargo, cargo transport unit, and cargo storage areas within the facility prior to and during cargo handling operations. The cargo is checked for evidence of tampering by checking seals and other methods used to prevent tampering upon the cargo’s entry onto the facility and upon storage within the facility.

Also, under the Maritime Transportation Security Act, port officials, ships’ captains and facility operators submit
individualized security plans to the Department for approval. Of course, we realize that one size does not fit all. The plans should be flexible, with the ability to ratchet protective measures up or down, based on the threat.

They should utilize technology, such as the new Automatic Identification System, which will help us quickly separate law-abiding vessels from suspect ones. And they should meet or exceed basic national and international standards so our response to a terrorist threat or attack is coordinated, not chaotic.

Already, the Coast Guard has received over 99 percent of the required vessel and facility security plans, and I want to commend such swift action and cooperation. Also, the Coast Guard has developed forty three Area Maritime Security Plans for the United States. These plans define the roles and responsibilities of the local, state and federal government to protect the critical infrastructure in our ports. The plans also augment the individual vessel and facility security plans.

The implementation of these plans will complement The Department of Homeland Security's actions. Our posture is one of “layered security” – and all of these various layers make us stronger and lead to greater Maritime Domain Awareness. And the more we work to achieve Maritime Domain Awareness, the more terrorists we stop in their tracks – and the more we deter them from attempting to penetrate our ports.

As we increase our awareness, we enhance our ability to identify, evaluate and eliminate potential risks long before they ever have a chance to materialize. That is why, within the strategic goals we developed for Homeland Security, of our five functional goals, awareness comes first. Acute awareness is key to achieving the remaining four goals of prevention, protection, response and recovery. Thank you all for participating in this conference to increase your awareness and share your insights.

Intelligence – particularly a shared, two-way flow of intelligence information – is absolutely critical as it drives everything we do. And that is true not just of the maritime domain but across the entire scope of homeland security. The challenge now is to take the unprecedented cooperation we have achieved in building our awareness capabilities and bring that same level of commitment to achieve our other goals of prevention, protection, response, and recovery.

In the end, regardless of what your job description says, we all share the same task – preserve and safeguard the freedoms and lives of the citizens we serve. And as we move forward, we must remain bold and steadfast, building our strength through smart, strategic planning, and in so doing, freedom will remain safely ensconced in our care.

The future of homeland security presents many challenges that we must face as a government and as a nation. But there is also great opportunity – opportunity to build upon the spirit of unity and determination that has gripped this nation in the wake of 9/11, to take this moment in history and put all of our resources and energy toward making our nation safer and stronger, to leave behind a legacy of progress and accomplishment that will mean an inheritance of security for future generations.

This is a great nation, a nation of patriots. And united, we can and will defeat the perpetrators of terror and fear, and build a bridge to the future for all who love liberty and peace.

Thank you.