

[Home](#)[Careers](#)[Units](#)[Missions](#)[Doing Business](#)[About Us](#)[Historian's Office](#)[Coast Guard History](#)[Frequently Asked Questions](#)[Daily Chronology](#)[Photography](#)[Assets](#)[Missions](#)[Personnel](#)[Museum](#)[Artifacts](#)[Contact Webmaster](#)**Security Levels**

## U.S. COAST GUARD ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM Operation Noble Eagle Documentation Project

U.S. COAST GUARD ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

### *Establishing a New Normalcy:*

### *Activities Baltimore, Before and After 11 September 2001*

### *The Recollections of Captain Roger B. Peoples, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.)*

Transcribed by Edward Feege



In the year 2000, Captain Roger Peoples began the last assignment of his military career by taking command of U.S. Coast Guard Activities Baltimore, a prototype unit that that integrated all the functions performed by Coast Guard units in one area under a single authority. Captain Peoples

was a logical choice to lead Activities Baltimore. During his career, he participated in numerous studies and reorganization efforts that helped define the shape of the Coast Guard. Known for his organizational expertise, Captain Peoples was a champion of the kind of integrated Coast Guard field command typified by Activities Baltimore.

When Captain Peoples took charge of Activities Baltimore, he hoped for an uneventful, three-year tour. As it turned out, it was anything but uneventful. Even under the best of circumstances, the Coast Guard faces myriad challenges on the upper Chesapeake Bay and in the port of Baltimore. During his tour Captain Peoples also found himself dealing with crises ranging from a ship collision in the northern Chesapeake to a raging train fire under the streets of Baltimore. Most significantly, the men and women of Activities Baltimore had to contend with the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks. Their response was part of the Coast Guard's largest maritime homeland security response since World War II. In addition, the Activities organizational model became the template for the new Coast Guard sector commands established in 2004.

In this written interview conducted in early 2004, Captain Peoples recounted Activities' operations before and after "9/11," noting how his command - like the rest of the Coast Guard - struggled to establish a "new normalcy" that defined how the service would assume its new wartime responsibilities, even as it continued to conduct its entire range of existing maritime missions.

---

## Contents

Background on Activities Baltimore

CSX Train Derailment, July 2001

The September 11 Attacks and Aftermath

*A.V. Kastner-Swift* Collision

Conclusion: Personal Observations on Command Tour

---

## [Biography of Captain Roger B. Peoples, USCG \(ret.\)](#)

Roger Peoples completed a distinguished U.S. Coast Guard career of over 31 years in 2003 and recently accepted a position as the Director of the Resources Management Directorate for the U.S. Coast Guard's Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Environmental Protection (G-M).

Roger Peoples enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1971 and achieved the rank of Captain in 1997. His extensive marine safety background includes tours of duty at four Marine Safety Offices (one as Commanding Officer), six years as a senior instructor at the Coast Guard's Marine Safety School, three years as Executive Assistant for the Marine Safety, Security, and Environmental Protection Directorate, and a tour as Commander of a prototype "Activities" Command. Over the years he has served as Federal On-Scene Coordinator for numerous major response efforts, including the 1994 explosion and complete loss of the tanker OMI Charger in Galveston Texas, the 2000 derailment and fire aboard a CSX train in the downtown Baltimore Tunnel, and the 2001 collision between the freighter *A.V. Kastner* and the tug *Swift* in the upper Chesapeake Bay.

Perhaps his most rewarding operational assignment was his final tour as Commander, Activities Baltimore (2000-2003), where he served as Captain of the Port and spearheaded interagency maritime security operations in both Baltimore and Washington, DC following the events of September 11, 2001. In addition to his unit's highly visible operational performance, his command was awarded the U.S. Senate/Maryland Gold Productivity Award for quality and management excellence.

Captain Peoples also spent four years as a program reviewer for the Chief of Staff and is well known for his organizational expertise. Over the past 15 years he participated in numerous studies and reorganization efforts that have helped shape the evolution of the Coast Guard. Some of these include:

- \* Sector Implementation Team (2004)
- \* Organizational Alignment Guidance Team (CG/DHS alignment) (2003)
- \* Interagency Task Force on Coast Guard Roles and Missions (1999)
- \* Bertholf Organizational Study Strategy Group (1999)
- \* Focus Group on the Marine Safety Role of the Area Commander (1998)
- \* Role of the Operational Commander (1998)
- \* Marine Transportation System Study (1997-1998)
- \* Coast Guard Streamlining and Reorganization (1994-1996)
- \* Houston Ship Channel 2000 (1994)
- \* Maritime Emergency Waterways Panel (1990)
- \* Coast Guard Headquarters Realignment Implementation (1988)

Roger Peoples is a distinguished graduate of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and has a Master of Science in National Resource Strategy. His military decorations include two Legions of Merit, two Meritorious Medals, three Commendation Medals, three Achievement medals and several other awards, including his first, the Basic Training Honor Graduate Ribbon.

---

### Background on Activities Baltimore

Q: From July 2000 until June 2003, you were the Commander, Coast Guard Activities Baltimore. Please describe your command.

Peoples: Activities Baltimore was a prototype unit that combined under one command all Coast Guard operational missions in the upper Chesapeake Bay . It was a superb, unique command that enabled a unified approach to service delivery and served as a one-stop shop for Coast Guard services.

Q: What was the size of your command, both geographically and in numbers or people? What subordinate units were under your control?

Peoples: Located at the Coast Guard Yard in Curtis Bay , Activities Baltimore (now Sector Baltimore) manages seven multi-mission stations, three aids to navigation teams, and a Regional Exam Center . The command and its subordinate units include a normal full time complement of about 250 personnel, with 150 Reserves and 1,600 Coast Guard Auxiliarists. These numbers increased substantially after 9/11 when we brought in additional personnel, boats and cutters to tighten security in Baltimore and Washington , DC .

Activities Baltimore performs all Coast Guard operational missions in the upper Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, including the waters of our nation's capital. The Activities Baltimore area of responsibility begins in the north at the Maryland/Delaware state line, in the Chesapeake & Delaware (C&D) canal, and runs south through the upper Chesapeake Bay (including its tributaries in Maryland and Washington, DC) to the Virginia/Maryland border at Smith Island. This equates to about 1,200 miles of shoreline.

The primary missions managed by Activities Baltimore include maritime search and rescue (SAR), marine safety, aids to navigation, ice breaking, waterways management, marine environmental protection and response, recreational boating safety, drug law enforcement, and port security. Those missions are performed under the four titles: Captain of the Port (COTP), Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC), Officer in Charge Marine Inspection (OCMI), and Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC). As Activities Commander, I wore all four of those hats. Each one carries significant authority and responsibility.

The Captain of the Port has broad authority for port safety and security, marine environmental protection, and waterways management activities, including the supervision of dangerous cargo operations and the control of vessel movements. A COTP can restrict traffic, close waterways, issue orders, and direct vessels when conditions warrant those actions. Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection responsibilities include commercial vessel safety inspections, marine licensing, and marine investigations. The Federal On-Scene Coordinator is the pre-designated federal official for directing and coordinating oil and hazardous substance response (planning and spill control/removal). The Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator oversees maritime search-and-rescue operations.

The Maritime Transportation Security Act also created a fifth title for field commanders. Captains of the Port now carry the title of Federal Maritime Security Coordinator (FMSC), responsible for port security planning for their areas of responsibility. Until the Commandant's 2004 decision to create Sector commands, having all Coast Guard missions under one port level Activities Command was not a common way of doing business for the Coast Guard.

Q: When was Activities Baltimore established, and why?

Peoples: Activities Baltimore was established in late 1995 as one of four prototype commands designed to examine the benefits of combining all Coast Guard operational units and missions under one a single commander. These combined commands were envisioned as a more effective and efficient way of delivering services to the public. In addition to providing one stop shopping for customers, the prototype Activities Commands created a single Coast Guard spokesman and decision maker in the port, with the full complement of Coast Guard legal authorities and resources at his or her disposal.

The Activities prototypes were originally developed as part of a two-year Coast Guard streamlining effort (1994-1996). As a member of the Streamlining Team, I had been the project officer for developing the Activities prototypes. I regarded them as my "babies," and one of my career goals was to command one to see if it could do all we had expected. I got that opportunity in 2000.

Q: In your opinion, how has the Activities concept worked in Baltimore ?

Peoples: It clearly exceeded my expectations. Early in my tour at Baltimore I set out to demonstrate that Activities Baltimore could be held up as a model of quality and performance. Not only was the crew willing to do that, they were downright enthusiastic. We refined unit quality and performance measurement processes and entered the combined U.S. Senate and Maryland state productivity awards process. The competition included dozens of quality private and public sector organizations. We had just hoped to place - we ended up taking the top (gold) Senate Productivity Award. One of the highlights of my tour was receiving the award, on behalf of my crew, from both Senators Barbara Mikulski and Paul Sarbanes.

I think one of the reasons we received that award was because Activities Baltimore was ground tested a number of times and demonstrated each time the value of its unique process-based organization. During my tour we responded to a major train derailment and fire in the Howard Street tunnel [in Baltimore], a collision between a freighter and a large tow in the upper Bay, and two groundings of loaded oil tankers. We also facilitated the Baltimore leg of the Volvo round the world sailing race and prepared extensively for the reopening of the liquefied natural gas [LNG] terminal at Cove Point.

In dealing with those issues we often operated in an intense political and public limelight, but those issues paled in comparison to the challenges we faced on 9/11. The tragic attacks that occurred on 9/11, by coincidence, occurred in two areas covered by prototype Coast Guard Activities commands. While the Coast Guard responded well to 9/11 in all of our nation's ports, Coast Guard leadership took special notice of the efficiency and unity of effort demonstrated by Activities Baltimore and Activities New York in ensuring maritime security following the attacks in New York City and near the nation's capital.

Q: Activities were also established in San Diego and New York . Does Activities Baltimore and

these other commands share a similar structure? Are there any significant differences between them? If so, why?

Peoples: During the 1994-1996 Streamlining Study effort, we sought to create a number of prototype unit mergers that would allow us to examine the merits of different organizational structures. The Activities Commands in Baltimore and New York were designed to examine a structure developed through a business process engineering approach. The previous Marine Safety Office and Group units were eliminated and the staffs merged into departments that manage the Coast Guard's prevention and response processes.

Activities Baltimore was established with a Chief of Prevention and a Chief of Response. New York had almost the same structure, except that they broke out Prevention into a Compliance Department (to manage standards) and a Waterway Management Department (to manage the waterway system). The largest organizational culture changes of the process structure were the combination of search and rescue and pollution response under one manager, and the expansion of aids to navigation to a larger waterways management role under prevention.

Activities San Diego was established as a combined (vice integrated or merged structure) unit that included a Group/Air Station, with a subordinate Marine Safety Office. The Commanding Officer of the Group was double-hatted as the Activities Commander. There was little change in status quo, operational focus at that double-hatted command. We created another double-hatted prototype in South Texas, which didn't collocate the MSO and Group/Station. Probably for that reason, it didn't work very well as an Activities and it has since been disestablished.

Here's the rest of the story. On January 9, 2004, the Commandant announced his decision to merge the Coast Guard operational shore commands in all of our nation's ports. The new commands, called Sectors, are based on the unity of effort and operational efficiency demonstrated by the Activities in Baltimore and New York. The Sectors will employ a standard process-based organizational structure, much like the original Baltimore and New York prototypes. I regard the Commandant's decision to integrate shore operations, Coast Guard-wide as another one of Activities Baltimore's significant contributions.

Q: What was your prior Coast Guard experience before you assumed command of Activities Baltimore? How did they prepare you for your duties in Baltimore?

Peoples: Before coming to Baltimore, I had a good mix of operational, staff, and training experience. In addition to six years as an instructor at the Coast Guard's Marine Safety School, I had four Marine Safety Office assignments, including a tour as Commanding Officer, Marine Safety Office, Galveston, Texas, located near the mouth of the Houston Ship Channel. Fortunately, before taking that command I had gained considerable experience responding to marine casualties and oil spills. During my tour in Galveston, I ended up dealing with a number of major incidents, including a collision between a ship and barge that resulted in the sinking of the barge in the middle of the channel, and the explosion and complete loss of the tanker *OMI Charger* in Galveston Bay [1994].

Over the years, I became used to dealing with emergencies and dealing with multiple, often competing, issues and interests. I think those experiences prepared me well for the challenges we ended up facing in Baltimore.

Q: You mentioned eight missions that Activities - now Sector -- Baltimore performs. Which missions take priority? How are these determined?

Peoples: While we strove to achieve operational excellence in all our missions, saving lives was and has always been our top priority. After 9/11, the Commandant directed that protecting the public and ensuring homeland security was a top priority, right alongside search and rescue. The top of our priority list also included training, equipping, and supporting our professionals who risked their lives to perform those missions.

That said, I'd much rather save a life through prevention than by having to pull someone from the

water. We had to be prepared to respond in an emergency, but I've always believed that focusing on prevention provides the best return for the investment.

Q: Time-wise, and across all your mission areas, would you say that prevention activities and preparation for emergencies predominated?

Peoples: Yes, but it certainly didn't seem that way. Most Coast Guard strategic goals (e.g., environmental protection, safety, maritime mobility, security, defense) are inextricably linked. When two ships collide in a ship channel, there is an environmental threat, peoples' lives are at risk, ship traffic is disrupted, and if it occurs in a military critical port, our ability to move military supplies is impacted.

Many of the Coast Guard's different mission areas, including our material inspection, our licensing and personnel qualifications, our safety standards, and our waterways management activities, are intended to help prevent that accident. Preventing marine casualties serves all of our goals at once and that's a pretty good investment. After 9/11 we still had to think about preventing accidents, and we also had to think about preventing intentional acts that could create the same result.

We found the best way to direct our day-to-day efforts was to focus on risk. After 9/11 we worked with a number of federal, state, and local agencies to assess security risks and develop plans for addressing security vulnerabilities and for leveraging agency resources.

At the same time, we didn't forget our other missions, especially environmental protection. The Chesapeake Bay is a national environmental treasure, and I was concerned about the vulnerability of the miles of inaccessible shallow shorelines and the difficulty we would have dealing with a major oil spill just about anywhere in my area of responsibility. I made special effort to assess risks to the bay, to develop strategies to address those risks, and to plan for its protection in the event something went wrong. Interestingly enough, a Ports and Waterways Safety Assessment Workshop we conducted among bay area stakeholders concluded that the greatest safety, environmental, and economic risk to the Bay was the sheer number of recreational boats operating on and near the shipping channel.

Their findings were reinforced when a fully loaded tanker hit a sailboat one night just north of the Bay Bridge and ran aground. The tanker was re-floated without incident, but following that event we sponsored an environmental risk assessment workshop to try to achieve consensus among the various federal, state and local environmental interests on how we would deal with a major spill on the Bay. We put the hard questions to the environmental community, like should we use dispersants in the Bay, or set fire to oil covered marshes? We never received full consensus from the various interests and stakeholders on which methodology would cause the least harm, but I believe we developed a much better understanding of the issues involved with a large spill on the bay and the alternatives available for dealing with one.

Based on the results of the risk assessment workshop, we updated our area response plan and worked to increase recreational boater programs, such as courtesy vessel examinations, education, and outreach. I continued to stress recreational boating safety throughout my Baltimore tour, working closely with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and the [ Maryland ] Natural Resources Police. [1](#)

Q: What were the most significant, recurring issues in the port and on the Bay with which you and your command had to deal? Are any of these issues unique to the Upper Chesapeake region?

Peoples: Search and rescue clearly was a significant challenge. The Chesapeake Bay has a huge recreational boater population and each summer seemed to bring a string of needless recreation boating accidents and deaths. We worked with the Natural Resources Police, the Power Squadron, and the Coast Guard Auxiliary to stress prevention measures, such as like safe equipment, boater education, wearing lifejackets and sober boating. [2](#)

Despite our best efforts, boater deaths still continued to occur. I remember to many of them: the father who fell overboard near Thomas Point Light trying to net a fish for his son, the young man at

the mouth of the Potomac who tried to swim a mile to shore when his engine failed, a teenager who fell off a tube being towed from a boat off Breezy Point, a father who took his family out north of the Bay Bridge in an unsafe boat, a couple ejected from their boat in the Potomac, three duck hunters who set out in January in a loaded skiff from the eastern shore, and several children I'd rather not think about. All had one thing in common, they were not wearing their lifejackets. Most of them might be alive today if they had thought to put one on.

In fact, the only incident I remember where someone died wearing a lifejacket was a kayaker who set out from Colonial Beach in March when the water was in the low 40s. Apparently he never told anyone where he was going that day and we found his body and kayak before anyone even missed him. At least we found him. When someone goes down in the winter without a lifejacket it can take some time before they come up. We go out and search, but at some point we have to call it off. One of the toughest jobs I had was having to tell a family we were calling off a search, essentially giving up hope of finding their loved one alive.

I would mention that there are positive sides to search and rescue. Despite the deaths, I was proud to be able to oversee and manage this mission on the Bay for three years. I can't help but think about how many more deaths there would be if we weren't there when the disoriented in the dark call came in or when the SAR alarm went off. And I can't help but think how many more SAR calls there would be if we didn't invest so much time and effort in prevention. Being able to help others and save lives is why a lot of young folks join the Coast Guard. I can't think of anything more rewarding.

Aside from search and rescue, there are a lot of other maritime missions for the Coast Guard in the Baltimore area. The Chesapeake Bay has substantial number of marine events, sail and power boat races, regattas and marine parades - some 200 to 300 events a year. We had to ensure these were conducted safely and that often meant setting up special safety zones and managing vessel traffic.

Keeping commercial shipping moving safely to and from port during all kinds of conditions and circumstances was another challenge. We worked closely with the Bay Pilots to work around issues like ice, grounded ships and boats, vessel groundings, oil spills, and equipment failures. The Bay also has a large commercial fishing fleet and we spent a lot of time working and partnering with the Maryland Charter Boat Association to ensure safety and regulatory compliance. Like most folks in the Bay area I found them to be a great group of hard working, friendly professionals

Perhaps the greatest recurring challenge I had was striking a balance between safety, security, protection of the environment, and the facilitation of marine commerce. Being responsible for multiple missions meant frequently dealing with conflicting interests. Like most Captains of the Port, sometimes I had to close the shipping channel to deal with an accident or threat, sometimes I had to keep ships from sailing, and sometimes I kept them from coming in to port. I will likely be long remembered for closing prime fishing spots off the nuclear power plant intake and around the LNG pier head, but there was no other way we could ensure an acceptable degree of security in those locations. I tried to make sure everyone had a voice, and I tried to be fair, but not everyone ended up happy. At the end of the day sometimes the best you can hope for is to walk away with the respect of those impacted by your decisions. I believe that most will say that I did that.

Q: During your tour, was wintertime icing a problem in the upper Chesapeake ? Who handled ice breaking duties and what was Activities Baltimore's responsibility *vis a vis* ice issues?

Peoples: Yes, winter icing can be a significant problem in the Chesapeake Bay area, especially to Eastern Shore [on the Delmarva Peninsula ] communities who are dependent on heating fuel shipped in by barge. Dealing with winter ice on the bay is a shared responsibility. Each fall the Coast Guard and the Delmarva Water Transport Committee co-sponsored an ice conference to review and discuss ice procedures among federal, state and local stakeholders. We called the group "Team Ice."

As the temperatures dropped and ice began forming around the shallow fringes of the bay, we used Coast Guard Auxiliary aircraft to conduct ice patrols and we set up an ice hotline to track areas of

the bay that may need icebreaking assistance. The state of Maryland maintained several boats with ice-breaking capabilities and the Coast Guard was ready to assist with its ice capable buoy tenders. We maintained an up to date Ice Plan that specified actions to be taken for different conditions.

Ice had the potential to impact a lot more than just getting fuel to the Eastern Shore . The year before I assumed command, the Bay had ice several inches thick in places and a barge being pushed through the C&D Canal sank after ice rode up on its deck and sheered off vent piping. Fortunately it was carrying silica and not oil, and it sank outside of the ship channel.

One of the pilots also told me of a close call he had when he was outbound on a large ship. A barge became stuck in the ice right ahead of him and he had to maneuver quickly to avoid a collision. I thought about that scenario during my second winter as Activities Commander when a tug and tow got stuck in the channel just north of Baltimore . Fortunately we were able to warn other mariners and get the tow free without incident.

We were very vigilant in monitoring vessel movement when ice began to form and in placing appropriate restrictions on vessels - for example, limiting traffic to boats with steels hulls. At times when ice got thick we would delay vessel and barge movement and take them through the ice all at once in ice breaking convoys.

My last winter in Baltimore , the winter of 2002-2003, the shallow waters of the Eastern Shore froze solid and the Fifth Coast Guard District sent in the Coast Guard tug *Chock* [WYTB-65602], one of the Coast Guard's three remaining 65-foot ice-breaking tugs. [Homeported] in Portsmouth and Philadelphia , these tugs were about the only resources available to break out the eastern shore. The *Chock* worked for about two weeks facilitating fuel barge transits to Salisbury , Maryland . During that same period, the *Chock* also responded to a medical emergency on ice-locked Tangier Island . As I recall, they evacuated a lady who was close to kidney failure. They also removed someone who had passed away on the island and ferried several people who were desperate to get to the mainland. When I visited the island in the spring of 2003, along with Chief [Petty Officer] Sonny Burnett from Station Crisfield, the town rolled out the red carpet and treated us like celebrities. To them I guess we were.

Q: Your command was in the 5th Coast Guard District and came under control of the Atlantic Area commander. How much did Activities Baltimore interface laterally with Coast Guard commands in the lower Chesapeake Bay ?

Peoples: Being a rather small outfit, most senior officers in any given Coast Guard-specialty usually know each other, and I was good friends with my counterparts to the North and South. The Commanding Officer of Marine Safety Office/Group Philadelphia, Captain Greg Adams, used to be one of my students when I taught at the Marine Safety School in the early 1980's. Captain Larry Brooks, Commanding Officer of Marine Safety Office Hampton Roads was a fellow instructor when I was at Yorktown and I had worked with both Captain Adams and Captain Brooks a number of times over the years.

Our relationship was absolutely critical, since every ship coming to Baltimore had to either come from the North via the C&D canal, or from the south through Hampton Roads. As adjoining Captains of the Port, we were often dealing with the same customers and we had to make sure that our policies were consistent. Captain Brooks and I worked together to defer a cold-water emergency lifesaving requirement so that fishermen could complete the rockfish season on the Bay without having to purchase expensive equipment . Captain Adams and I worked together on ice restrictions for the C&D canal, and in managing vessel traffic during emergencies, such as sunken vessels in the channel - Captain Adams and I both had tugs sink in the channel during our tours of duty.

Immediately after 9/11, all the Coast Guard's COTPs also imposed security restrictions on vessels and vessel movement. We had to be keenly aware of competition between ports. Any port that was viewed as more heavy-handed from an enforcement perspective might drive shippers to another port. We worked together to keep a level playing field and avoid that possibility. After 9/11

both Philadelphia and Hampton Roads were screening and boarding the ships coming to Baltimore . We still ramped up maritime security in Baltimore , but having Philadelphia and Hampton Roads as gate keepers helped free up some Baltimore resources that we used to tighten waterside security in and around Washington D.C.

Q: In the port of Baltimore and on the Chesapeake Bay , who were Activities Baltimore's most significant, non-Coast Guard partners, from the prevention, planning, and operational response perspectives?

Peoples: My list of key contacts included the Executive Director of the Maryland Port Authority, the President of the Pilot's Association, the Maryland Charter Boat Association, the heads of the various federal, state, and local agencies, and many others. For any given port there is a significant overlap in agency and stakeholder interests and authorities. For the most part, most share a common goal of ensuring safe, secure, environmentally responsible maritime transportation, but coordination and cooperation is critical.

Q: During your tour, how did Activities Baltimore go about communicating with and coordinating such as diverse group of public and private entities?

Peoples: A great deal of the planning, preparedness, and coordination took place through the various Baltimore area maritime stakeholder organizations, committees, and workshops. These groups provided valuable customer feedback and served as critical private and public sector forums to discuss and resolve diverse and often conflicting maritime issues. Some of the Baltimore area maritime area stakeholder forums we supported included:

- \* Harbor Safety Committee
- \* Maryland Maritime Security Group
- \* Private Sector Port Committee
- \* Federal Agency Quality Work Group
- \* Upper Bay Area Committee
- \* South Baltimore Industrial Mutual Aid Group
- \* Local Emergency Planning Committees
- \* Salisbury Mutual Aid Group
- \* Mid-Chesapeake Emergency Response Group
- \* Delmarva Water Transport Group

I maintained various levels of membership on each committee, from co-chairing the Upper Bay Area Environmental Response Planning Committee, to a more cautious participation in the often politically focused Private Sector Port Committee.

When I assumed command at Baltimore I was very pleased to see the breadth of stakeholder forums. I saw them as an opportunity to communicate and receive feedback on our various safety, security, environmental protection and waterways management responsibilities. I tried to focus on the larger ones and send staff to others. My Chief of Response and his staff attended the various county local emergency planning committees and mutual aid groups, such as Fire Chiefs' meetings, the Salisbury Mutual Aid Group, and South Baltimore Industrial Mutual Aid Plan. I did take the time to address the smaller groups, usually on invitation. I attended several on a routine basis, and often shared the leadership position. Charles Bartoldus and Jim Engleman of the U.S. Customs Service and I co-chaired the Federal Agency Quality Work Group, and Alan Williams of the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and I co-chaired the Bay Area Oil and Hazardous Substance Response Committee. I also co-chaired the Maryland Maritime Security Group (MMSG) with Mike Storch of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation].

The Harbor Safety Committee was a good place to discuss waterways management issues with the Corps of Engineers, the port of Baltimore , National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration [NOAA], and the Bay Pilots. The Private Sector Port Committee was a good place to address various industry segments, but that group had a tendency to discuss political positions, based on how various representatives or candidates supported the port. The federal agencies stayed away from any politically focused meetings, and stayed silent when those issues came up during regular

meetings.

I really enjoyed driving to Salisbury once a month to attend the Delmarva Water Transport Executive Steering Committee Meetings. The pace on the Eastern Shore was a lot more relaxed than in Baltimore and the natives were definitely friendly. The primary interest of that group was waterway mobility, especially dredging and [breaking] winter ice. I grew a new appreciation for the Eastern Shore community and its dependence on the rivers and waterways transportation, and I gained a lot of new friends. We also participated in a lot of other coordination forums, such as the Washington , DC Emergency Management Agency workshops, numerous interagency and response exercises, and several military coordinating groups in the national capital region.

I found that the personal relationships established in those committees were extremely helpful in dealing with emergencies and in resolving issues. I often consulted Port of Baltimore Executive Director , [James J.] White, on port issues and impacts, and I'd often call Bay Pilot president, Captain Eric Neilson, during waterway emergencies, or sometimes just to get a political read on an issue. It was a pleasure working with Alan Williams from Maryland Department of the Environment during incidents like the CSX train derailment; we had an excellent federal/state partnership. After 9/11 I found it reassuring to have Dave Austin, the Acting U.S. Customs Port Director, accompany me to participate in briefing security issues to various political representatives. It made it look like the Feds had their act together, and we did.

We also sponsored annual workshops and sessions to share information, discuss issues and solicit feedback. Some we sponsored when I was in Baltimore included:

- \* Port-Wide Industry Day
- \* Small Passenger Vessel Industry Day
- \* Commercial Towers Forum
- \* Fishing Vessel Symposium
- \* Operation Outreach
- \* Ports And Waterways Safety Assessment
- \* LNG Safety, Security, and Response Workshops
- \* Baltimore Port Vulnerability Assessment

Each would feature various speakers and workshops to discuss evolving issues, new regulations, etc. We even sponsored an Admiralty Lawyer Day to share information on our various legal roles and responsibilities. One of the largest keys to success was our interagency, inter-industry, and intercommunity contacts and relationships.

Q: During your tour, how did you find cooperation from the various departments of the state of Maryland , the District of Columbia , and industry? How important was the Maryland Port Administration in helping implement safety, security, and other measures?

Peoples: When I arrived in 2000 I was pleased to see there was already a spirit of cooperation and teamwork among the various agencies and organizations, and I tried to help maintain and build on that culture. Soon after arriving I established a list of people to meet, and issues to discuss. I asked Shirley Gillen, Activities Baltimore's long-term secretary, to get me on their calendars for a chat, and in most cases I went to their office. They seemed to appreciate the gesture.

My normal contacts with the state were below the State Secretary level, but during the CSX train derailment the State Secretary of the Environment and I spent most of a day together on scene discussing cleanup strategies and planning next steps. I shared a podium with the State Secretary of Transportation on several occasions and worked with him in developing a public communication plan just before the release of a new movie about a nuclear bomb being smuggled in through the Port of Baltimore [*The Sum of All Fears*, released in 2002]. I became good friends with Chief of the Natural Resources Police and we were able to eliminate some past staff conflict associated with our overlapping search-and-rescue responsibilities. My staff and I got along great with all the folks from the MDE, and we often shared the work associated with responding to oil spills.

I met the Governor's staff while briefing maritime security issues to the Governor [Parris N.

Glendening], and those connections proved very useful. The Governor's staff called me when they needed a quick update on significant issues of interest to the Governor, for example the collision in the Bay between the freighter *A.V. Kastner* and tug *Swift*. The connection to the Governor's office came in handy when Coast Guard and state lawyers had reached an impasse on the language in a draft memorandum of understanding with the state on enforcement of a security zone around the Calvert Cliffs nuclear power plant. I called the Governor's Deputy Chief of Staff for assistance and that was all it took to resolve the issue. While we had some overlapping safety, security, and environmental protection responsibilities with the state, there was more than enough work to keep us all busy. We could not have done our job without state cooperation and state resources, especially for search and rescue, spill response, and maritime security.

Washington, DC was a different area altogether. Before 9/11 we didn't have much of a presence in Washington. Fortunately we were already coordinating environmental protection with the Harbor Division of the DC Metro Police, so we had some good police contacts when we had to ramp up security in our nation's capital. After 9/11, the city recognized the importance of waterside security and any time there were increased security operations in DC the Coast Guard was offered a seat at the Joint Operations Center. We also had a good working relationship with the DC Emergency Management Agency and they were quick to call and offer a position in their command post.

The military facilities in the Washington, DC area presented a special challenge following 9/11. Every service, except the U.S. Marines, had a waterfront to protect in the immediate DC area, and we found that we had to clarify maritime security roles and responsibilities among the services. In general they were worried about their own force protection, while we were concerned with ensuring overall port and waterway security. It was a while before they understood that we were not there to serve as waterside security guards for their facilities.

Even after they understood that, they still seemed to like having the Coast Guard around. The Navy and Air Force in particular opened their gates and facilities to us and provided great support. With several different sets of weapons present along a relatively narrow waterway we put together a joint service group to coordinate and make sure that we all could talk to each other. My deputy initially chaired that group. Later the Army took over the joint-service coordination role for the National Capital Region.

You also asked about the Maryland Port Administration (MPA) and I can't say enough good things about their leadership and responsiveness. I was surprised to see that the MPA organized and chaired the Harbor Safety Committee - in my experience that was a bit unusual for a port. They also arranged and supported the Private Sector Committee meetings, as well as the Federal Agency Quality Work Group. If any agency had visiting dignitaries or high-level guests, the port was happy to put on a tour or conduct a briefing and they did that for us on several occasions. After 9/11, the MPA tightened security and hired a security officer to work with the various law enforcement agencies to make sure the port was responsive to security needs.

When I first met the MPA's Executive Director, Jim White, I wanted to assure him that facilitating safe and environmentally responsible commerce was one of my key objectives. I also wanted to resolve a potential conflict in Baltimore between commerce and recreation. When I assumed command the unit was preparing to facilitate the second annual Chesapeake Challenge, a powerboat race that used the channel between the Inner Harbor and Key Bridge as a racecourse. I could understand that we had to close the entrance to the port for [a] world event like OpSail 2000, but I was a little surprised that we had closed the shipping channel to a major port for a local recreational event, especially when the port had objected to the closure. <sup>3</sup> Aside from stopping commerce, I was also concerned about the safety of participants and observers, with the speedboats racing in a heavily populated area, not to mention racing in the vicinity of bridge pilings. But planning had already proceeded and the District Commander had already approved the permit for the event.

Like the previous year, the Port of Baltimore submitted a letter of objection just before the event, and like the previous year we closed the channel and held the event. Shortly after the race I paid a call on Jim White and asked if the port was really serious about their objection. I indicated that the port had been participating in the planning sessions and by waiting until the last minute to formally

object, the port made it look like they were making a *pro forma* gesture. He assured me that the port was serious in their objection, and we discussed how to get the port's and industry's input earlier in the process the next year. The next year we required a formal rulemaking process to solicit comments well in advance of the race. The owners of the race cancelled the event.

That was just one example of the natural conflict that exists in Baltimore between those who want to attract tourists and those who wanted to attract shipping. I often turned to the port and the various committees to help resolve potential conflicts. For example, when we received a proposal to begin a seaplane operation in the vicinity of the congested Inner Harbor [adjacent to downtown Baltimore] we invited the Harbor Safety Committee, the Port Planning Commission, and the Private Sector Port Committee to weigh in. The proposal was withdrawn.

Q: Activities Baltimore boat station personnel and Maryland Natural Resources Police [MNRP] rode along with each other to police various fishing and boating activities on the Bay. What was the genesis of this type of cooperation? Was there any similar level of cooperation with other agencies?

Peoples: One of the benefits of combining the authorities of the Captain of the Port with the personnel and resources of the small boat stations was the ability to conduct cross-mission pulse operations. We included the Maryland Natural Resources Police in those evolutions and I believe it fostered much better relations among our crews. For example, we used our safety and licensing authorities to conduct a multi-agency operation looking for unlicensed fishing boat operators illegally carrying passengers for hire. The state provided helicopter overflights to help spot potential violators, and once aboard we looked for licensing and safety violations and the state checked for illegal fish. The MNRP did not have shore side facilities, so their boats often docked at our Coast Guard stations. The MNRP officers frequently attended our going away parties and retirements, and I attended their academy graduations.

Colonel John Rhodes [the Superintendent of the MNRP] thought it would help foster federal/state teamwork if we both got out together on the water, and he even offered to use his boat. We visited the Coast Guard stations together and ate lunch with the crews, and we also visited the MNRP facility near the eastern side of the Bay Bridge [outside Annapolis, MD]. The Coast Guard and MNRP often teamed up to ensure safety during marine events on the bay. They worked together on everything from keeping boaters away from fireworks displays, to keeping marine regatta and parade lanes clear, to joint security zone enforcement.

I would point out that since the state's Administration has changed, they have had several people in the chief of MNRP position. It's important that the person in that position understands the critical top-to-bottom team relationship between MNRP and the Coast Guard. We had a similar team relationship with Alan Williams [of the Emergency Response and Planning Program] and his staff at the Maryland Department of the Environment.

Q: Were there any areas in which you would have liked to have seen greater cooperation, either between federal, state, and local bodies or between government and industry?

Peoples: The only area that comes to mind is the challenge associated with sharing intelligence and sensitive security information among the various federal, state, and local interests. Some of the information we were dealing with was classified and the Coast Guard had made it clear to its COTPs that divulging that kind of information to the wrong audience could get you fired. I'm sure other agencies had similar marching orders.

When we created the Executive Steering Committee for the Maryland Maritime Security Group we limited membership primarily to law enforcement. After that, the FBI and some of the other agencies were a bit more comfortable sharing up to date intelligence information. I understand that this is an issue still being addressed at the national level.

Q: What was your "command style?" Did you have any particular philosophy of command that you followed?

Peoples: While at Baltimore I tried to empower the staff and let them make decisions - that's

critical for a command with a large span of control. As the Coast Guard transitions to sector commands in the future, I believe that Sector commanders will have to resist trying to know everything that's going on and focus their efforts more on goal setting, leadership, teambuilding, and interagency partnering and outreach. That almost runs counter to our current commanding officer culture, which values and reinforces attention to detail. To keep a proper focus, I found it helpful to think of my activities command as being more like a District. District Commanders need to focus strategically and stay out of the weeds and I tried hard to maintain that approach.

As far as a leadership style, I don't adhere to any particular model. Over the years, I developed a "situational" style based on the capabilities and attitudes of the people I'm dealing with. Fortunately there was a lot of talent on the staff at Baltimore. I tried to be tolerant of small mistakes and I tried to recognize and reward risk and initiative. We held weekly staff meetings and I believe that they had a good idea of how much flexibility they had and what direction I would likely take in any given decision. I also tried to remain approachable enough that anyone in doubt about a situation would feel comfortable calling me to discuss alternatives.

I used a consensus approach where possible, but after years in this business and knowing what can go wrong, I didn't mind making the hard, even unpopular decision, especially when maritime safety or security was at stake. I used to pass to my senior staff a rule of thumb I developed over the years. It was how well I slept after making a tough decision. If I stayed awake hoping nothing bad happened because I let a vessel sail without fixing a problem, then maybe I made the wrong decision. While I lost a lot of sleep dealing with operational issues during my tour at Baltimore, I can say that I never had a decision keep me awake during my entire three-year tour.

I also think personal credibility is extremely important for a commanding officer, and that means you have to be competent and confident and have a strong moral compass. I believe honor, respect, and devotion to duty are critical core values for any leader.

Q: What was your "average" day like during your time in command?

Peoples: It started very early and ran very late if there was a significant SAR case or other urgent matter that required attention - for example, granting permission for a vessel with a navigation equipment discrepancy to enter port, or issuing an order to require repairs or corrections prior to getting underway.

I began each day with an operations briefing to review both unit activities for the previous 24 hours and plans for managing risk and preventing incidents for the next 24 hours. Each morning the unit created a Port Area Readiness Index that assessed current conditions for segments of the port. Before 9/11 we assessed things like vessel traffic, weather, aids to navigation status, hazardous cargos and assigned threat levels of red (high), yellow (elevated), and green (acceptable). Then we assigned resources and directed intervention activities to address and mitigate the risk. After 9/11 we added security risks to the Readiness Index. Our goal was to end up in the green on any given day.

Each week, we had an all-hands gathering to pass information, issue awards, and recognize promotions. I also met each week with the senior staff. We used those sessions to review what was on everyone's plate and to plan and set unit priorities.

Aside from operational oversight and staff interaction, my schedule for each day varied greatly, from visiting with industry representatives, to attending port meetings, to participating in spill exercises, to visiting stations, interacting with the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary, and making speeches.

#### [CSX Train Derailment, July 2001](#)

Q: You and Activities Baltimore personnel responded to the CSX train derailment in the Howard Street Tunnel in Baltimore in July 2001. What were you and Activities Baltimore called upon to do in the aftermath of the derailment?

Peoples: That was an almost unbelievable scenario. A 60-car freight train had derailed and caught fire under the City of Baltimore in the two-mile long Howard street tunnel on 17 July 2001. Eight tank cars containing hazardous materials were near the area of the fire and personnel entry to assess the damage was near impossible. Black smoke billowed out the ends of the tunnel and resulted in evacuations, major disruptions to city traffic flow, damaged utilities, and postponement of several major-league baseball games. Data transmission lines running through the tunnel were damaged and resulted in a worldwide slowdown of data transmission.

Activities Baltimore was one of many agencies responding to deal with various aspects of the derailment. We brought in chemical response and technical expertise to assist in air monitoring and hazard identification, we assisted in the evacuating boaters in the inner harbor and maintaining an exclusion area, and we worked with CSX, the city, and various agencies and responders to help ensure an overall coordinated effort.

Q: To an outside observer, it might appear odd that the Coast Guard was called upon to respond to train derailment. Was this tasking a result of your designation as Federal On-Scene Coordinator?

Peoples: Yes. Because of the proximity of the tunnel to the coastal area and the threat of contaminated water runoff to navigable waters I was the Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) for the response. Some background - the On-Scene Coordinator is a pre-designated federal official responsible for ensuring an immediate and effective response to oil spills and chemical releases. FOSCs have broad authority to assess incidents and response efforts, to direct cleanup, and to initiate a federal response, if necessary. In general, if the responsible party or other agency is responding promptly and efficiently, the FOSCs monitor and assist as necessary. Most Coast Guard Captains of the Port are pre-designated as the FOSC for their areas of responsibility. The Coast Guard FOSCs manage the coastal zone, and the EPA [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency] provides FOSCs for inland incidents. That's almost always the case for oil spills.

Hazardous materials incidents, such as the CSX train derailment, are handled somewhat differently. By agreement with EPA, Coast Guard FOSCs only respond to hazardous substance releases that threaten nearby coastal waterways. Our response to those incidents is usually limited to the emergency phase of the response. The EPA normally oversees long-term hazardous substance removal operations. During the CSX response, the Coast Guard served as FOSC until the fire was out and a response plan developed. Then the incident was handed off to EPA. I brought in the EPA FOSC early in the response to ensure a coordinated federal response effort and a clean hand-off.

The response to the CSX derailment was a bit of a different role for a Coast Guard FOSC. In marine casualties the Coast Guard has broad legal authority to deal with all aspects of the incident, including managing vessel traffic, investigating the cause, and closing a waterway if necessary. Most of my FOSC experience was in dealing with incidents of that nature.

In this case, the train derailment occurred nearly a mile from the water, and because of the fire, the central focus of the response became fighting the fire. Local officials were well prepared to do that. The city has a well-developed hazardous materials response capability, and local chemical response expertise is well established through a local chemical community association called the South Baltimore Industrial Mutual Aid Plan (SBIMAP). A very experienced Baltimore Fire Chief [Division Chief Donald W. Heinbuch] served as the incident commander for the firefighting effort.

The Coast Guard (federal) role in the CSX derailment thus became one of assessing the effectiveness and progress of the overall response, overseeing environmental monitoring, ensuring waterside safety, and providing assistance as necessary to the responders. We did this working closely with our state counterparts in the MDE, and with a host of other agencies with an interest in the response.

Q: Who were some of these other agencies? Where were you physically located during this incident?

Peoples: Agencies responding with CSX during the response to the derailment included:

- \* State: MDE, Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Maryland Department of Transportation, and the Maryland National Guard;
- \* City: Fire and Police Departments, Office of Emergency Management, and City Public Works;
- \* Federal: National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), NOAA, EPA, and FBI;
- \* Political: Mayor Martin O'Malley, Governor Glendening's office, the State Secretaries for Transportation and Environment, other state political reps.

Because of the hazards associated with multiple chemical cargos, I called in additional federal specialty expertise, including:

- \* The NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator for chemical hazard expertise;
- \* The EPA FOSC, who provided technical and cleanup advice, and later took over as FOSC;
- \* The Coast Guard National Strike Force, for chemical response expertise - they also oversaw and double-checked the air and water monitoring. Air monitoring was critical to safety, evacuation and public access decisions.
- \* The Coast Guard Public Information Assist Team to ensure that public information was consistent and media needs were met. As it turned out, the Fire Department provided a superb spokesman for city and for the response effort.

Most of the agencies that responded to the derailment staged in the parking lot next to the Orioles baseball stadium. After the fire had burned awhile, the tunnel began to act like a big chimney and the smoke from the fire was flowing out the north end, some distance away. As long as the fire was burning, the south end was the safest place to stage. Every agency brought some form of trailer, mobile home, or command post. The stadium lot, roped off from public and media access, began to look like a big trailer park. The Fire Chief's command post was located closest to the south end of the tunnel. Having all agencies in the same parking lot made it easy for key officials to get together to assess progress and plan next steps.

The overall objective of the response was to get the fire out, conduct cleanup, and restore access and transportation. Our key goals in doing that were protecting people, protecting the environment, and ensuring critical interagency coordination and teamwork. Ensuring interagency teamwork took a little effort. Many of the people at the scene had not worked together and were not completely familiar with the other agency roles and responsibilities. That became most apparent when the National Transportation Safety Board representative arrived on scene and began trying to preserve evidence during the firefighting efforts. Eventually everyone found their niche in the team.

Q: What were your primary concerns with the derailment?

Peoples: The first and biggest concern was for the safety of the public and response personnel. Initially, with a long list of chemicals on the train and not knowing what was on fire, the city evacuated the downtown area all the way to the waterfront. Fortunately the city has a very robust and effective police department and they went all-out to put up barriers and rope off streets.

We brought in boats from nearby Coast Guard Station Curtis Bay, used Captain of the Port authority to establish safety zones closing the Inner Harbor [adjacent to downtown Baltimore] and an area of Middle Patapsco creek. That meant no one could operate on the water, including the water taxis. At least one dinner cruise boat couldn't get its passengers back to the downtown area and offloaded them at Fells Point. We reopened the waterways the following day when the evacuation area was narrowed.

Another concern was the possibility of water/harbor contamination from the storm drain system. A 40-inch water main had ruptured near the Howard Street tunnel sending millions of gallons of water through the storm drain system. Contractors placed booms around storm drain outlets in the Inner Harbor and we ensured the water was tested periodically for contaminants. At one point the pH level dropped from 7 to 4 for about 30 minutes, indicating the possibility of an acid release. One of the tank cars near the fire contained hydrochloric acid.

Understandably, everyone was very focused on the fire. With firefighting well-managed and underway, my primary concern was for what would happen when the fire was out. We needed a plan for assessing the integrity of the train cars and conducting an appropriate cleanup before reopening the tunnel. In order to ensure those issues were clearly addressed, I used FOSC authority to issue an "Administrative Order" to CSX, specifying expectations for the response and cleanup. We circulated the document in draft form to ensure other agency interests were represented. We worked out the specific requirements with the MDE, EPA and the Fire Chief, and with our technical experts - they all agreed with the provisions. The specifics addressed in the order included requirements to:

- \* Submit a written site safety plan;
- \* Conduct atmospheric monitoring;
- \* Conduct full assessment of hazmat tanks to determine integrity, contents, and suitability for removal;
- \* Plan for removal of the tank cars and longer term remediation.

I should point out that CSX was acting responsibly and didn't need to be ordered to respond. As a matter of policy, FOSCs typically notify "responsible parties" in writing of their responsibility to conduct an effective response and cleanup. For chemical incidents, that notification usually takes the form of an Administrative Order. For the CSX response, the Administrative Order also served as a mechanism for ensuring interagency consensus on what had to be done. With all the agencies on scene, that was a critical accomplishment.

Q: How long were you involved in the response to the derailment? At what point were your and Coast Guard responsibilities fulfilled?

Peoples: We handed off the cleanup to the EPA OSC on 23 July, when the fire was out and the emergency phase was over. The emergency phase of the response lasted about six days. Looking back, it was one of the most unique incidents I've seen in my 30-year career. It would be difficult to design a more challenging scenario.

Q: Were there any larger Coast Guard or maritime "lessons learned" that you took away from this incident?

Peoples: Yes, definitely. I don't think I've ever been involved in a response where there wasn't room for improvement, but in the end, the fire was safely extinguished and the tunnel was cleaned up and reopened without incident. The public was kept well-informed, and most importantly, no one died or was injured. That's a success in my book and my hat is off to the firefighters and others who entered the tunnel to battle the fire. They are true heroes.

One of the lessons learned is that you can't plan for everything. Another is that you can't always organize things the way you've been trained to respond. Incident command organization is something we stress in our contingency plans, and I would have liked to see us go to an Incident Command System (ICS) structure in response for the CSX response. But in an unusual case like this one, you have to look at what's in place and how it's working. If it's working, you shouldn't try to reorganize things and change horses in the middle of the race. No matter how it's accomplished, the most critical aspect of a successful response is a well-coordinated team effort.

Who was in charge of the CSX train derailment? Lots of people asked that question, but there is not a simple answer. We have to recognize that there may be a number of agencies in charge of particular facets of any large response operation. For example, in this incident the Fire Department was in charge of putting out the fire, the Police Department was in charge of evacuation and access control, the NTSB was in charge of the investigation, and the Maryland Department of the Environment had safety and oversight responsibilities similar to the Coast Guard. There was a strong desire on the part of the Fire Chief and the Mayor to demonstrate to the city's residents that they were in charge and could handle the incident. That was fine with me. A lot of different people were coming together for the first time and under stressful conditions, they were working together, and agency responsibilities were being met, and that's what was important. If the responsible party and local agencies are responding promptly and efficiently - as was the case with CSX, the feds

don't come in like gangbusters and insist on being in charge. It doesn't work that way and I don't think it could have worked that way.

Another lesson we learned is that practice makes perfect. Two weeks after the CSX train incident, there were several explosions in downtown storm drains, and manhole covers were blown in the air. The product causing the explosions in the drain was identified as tripropylene, one of the cargos that had been involved in the CSX train fire. Many of the agencies that had responded to the derailment found themselves back together. Only this time, everyone came together quickly in unified decision making.

It took several days to clean up drains, vent and re-open streets, but the response went effortlessly. CSX assumed financial responsibility, for the drain cleanup but didn't immediately admit to owning the product. MDE later confirmed that samples of the product from the drain matched the product from the train derailment. While the tunnel drainage system was supposed to be independent from the city storm drainage system, the pH drop previously observed in the Inner Harbor led us to suspect a leak between the two drainage systems. Apparently that proved to be the case.

### [The September 11 Attacks and Aftermath](#)

Q: Where were you when you heard of the attacks in New York and the Pentagon? What was your initial reaction?

Peoples: I had driven to Jacksonville, Florida on September 10, 2001 to visit my parents. The next morning after the plane hit the Pentagon, the Fifth Coast Guard District paged me, but I was already packing my car to head back to Baltimore. The waters adjoining the Pentagon and Washington D.C. were under Activities Baltimore jurisdiction and we didn't know if the terrorists had something more planned for the nation's capital or nearby Baltimore. I needed to get back.

Like most Americans, seeing the events unfold on TV that morning created feelings of shock, disbelief, horror, sorrow and anger all at the same time. As I drove North toward Baltimore, I called into the office to discuss unit security activities. I also kept in touch with my wife. Her sister worked in the Pentagon and was missing. It was a stressful drive back to Baltimore, as the hours passed with no sign of my sister-in-law. Fortunately, she showed up that evening, shaken up but uninjured. She was working very close to the impact area and managed to get out through the rubble and fire. She had hidden under a nearby underpass, and later caught a cab to a friend's house. She was more fortunate than half of her co-workers, who perished in the attack.

Q: In general, what kinds of policies did Activities Baltimore implement in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks, and what were you trying to achieve? Activities Baltimore also had responsibility for the Potomac River in the vicinity of the nation's capital. In general, what kind of steps did you take on that body of water, and with whom did you coordinate?

Peoples: Following the September attacks, the Coast Guard immediately increased security measures for all our nation's ports and waterways. Both Washington, DC and Baltimore were in declared states of emergency, and our initial approach to waterway security was to lock down the most sensitive and vulnerable areas. Working with the FBI, and state and local law enforcement, Activities Baltimore exercised Captain of the Port Authority in establishing two security zones to restrict all vessel movement on sections of the Potomac River, as well as portions of the Port of Baltimore. Essentially, we closed the Potomac River and its tributaries north of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, and closed the Baltimore Inner Harbor from Domino Sugar to the Baltimore World Trade Center. One of the media outlets in Washington D.C. later reported that it was the first-ever mandated closure of the Potomac River.

That was a relatively easy decision. Obviously there are many sensitive national landmarks, military facilities, and political and public population centers in and around Washington DC. The decision to close the Inner Harbor in Baltimore followed a bomb threat to the Baltimore World Trade Center. During security coordination meetings with the Baltimore Police Department, we learned that there were dozens of similar threats under investigation. The Baltimore police eventually located and

arrested the person who phoned in the threat to the Trade Center.

A mixture of Coast Guard, state and city small boats enforced the waterway closures. The Washington, DC Metro Police had excellent on-water support capability. In Baltimore, we had help from the Baltimore Harbor Police and MNRP. We gave them VHF radios for their small boats to ensure we had good communications. On one occasion a Coast Guard boarding crew in Washington located some weapons aboard a sailboat, and when the boat's owner got a little upset, the boarding officer called the Metro Police for backup. We found that when you call the DC police for back up, you get backup, and lots of it. Our folks had a great relationship with all of the enforcement agencies.

In order to sustain the lock-down of the waterways north of the Wilson Bridge, we brought in Coast Guard resources from other areas of the country. We don't advertise the total numbers of resources employed, but we had cutters and boats from as far as North Carolina, and we had Law Enforcement Detachments that had previously conducted drug enforcement operations in the Caribbean. We also brought in hundreds of Reservists from all over the country.

The diversion of small boats and crews from our stations to Washington, DC left a gap in search-and-rescue coverage. We addressed that by backfilling the stations with Coast Guard Auxiliaries. For a short period after 9/11, the Auxiliary was the only search-and-rescue capability we had at some of our stations. The Auxiliary also assisted by making aircraft over flights to increase our maritime domain awareness. We could not have met our security responsibilities without these additional resources.

In order to provide tight command and control, we went to a full Incident Command System structure at Activities Baltimore, with a 12-hour watch rotation. We already had outfitted the Activities Basement for just that purpose and had installed computer and phone capabilities for the ICS planning, operations, and logistics managers. We also found it necessary to designate a full time media spokesperson. We established a forward logistics detachment at Bolling Air Force Base in order to support Coast Guard resources in Washington, D.C. We staffed it with communications personnel who could help manage information flow, and storekeepers who could handle the berthing, messing, medical and other challenges associated supporting detached forces.

While closing the waterways was an easy decision, deciding when and how to relax the restrictions was a lot tougher. The waterway closures meant no one was permitted to move on the water or to transit areas covered by the security zones. The closures soon began to have an economic impact on the area. The dinner cruises in DC couldn't get underway and the water taxis in Baltimore couldn't move people around the Inner Harbor. While I received some pressure from industry to reopen the waterways, there was never any second-guessing from my superiors, from our political representatives, or from the public. I was aware of letters written to congress enlisting their support to reopen the waterways, but I never felt congressional pressure. I think everyone understood why we had to tighten security.

Nevertheless, I was very sensitive to the economic impact of waterway closures and worked closely with the federal, state, and local agencies to constantly reassess the need for the restrictions. Near the end of the first week I had a conference call with the Washington FBI and Metro Police and we agreed to three objectives: maintain tight interagency coordination, restore commercial and public mobility as much as practical, and retain the capability to ramp back up and close the waterway if necessary. All agreed that we could begin to relax the waterway restrictions, but that we had to do it carefully.

We began by letting the dinner cruise ships operate in a limited area, with some precautions, and we gradually relaxed the restrictions on other vessel movement. There were a number of boats that just wanted to get out of Washington, DC and we escorted them out in convoys so we could keep an eye on them. Later, we opened the waterway during daylight hours only, subject to 100% inspections of any boats that wanted to come north of the Wilson Bridge. The Potomac River had various restrictions and boarding requirements in place for roughly two weeks.

The restrictions for the Baltimore Inner Harbor were lifted after four days. That was not an easy

decision because port Executive Director, Jim White, who worked on the waterfront at the top of the World Trade Center, was a lot more comfortable with the Inner Harbor closed and a Coast Guard cutter sitting outside his window. I set up a meeting with him to discuss the issue and brought in the FBI, the Baltimore Police Department, and MNRP to convince him there was no credible threat to substantiate keeping things buttoned down so tightly in Baltimore. He understood, but later arranged to have three barges moored adjacent to the Trade Center as a buffer. Today, the barges have been replaced with cables that serve to keep small boats at a distance from edge of the Trade Center.

We also worked with Secret Service, the Department of Energy, the DC Emergency Management Agency, and others, depending on the situation and the location. A number of jurisdictions come together at get to the Wilson Bridge, including the Maryland State Police, the MNRP, the DC Metro Police, Virginia State Police, and adjoining county sheriff departments. That had the potential to create some coordination challenges, especially if something happened right at the bridge.

We did have a bit of a scare in that location just after we had began to lift some of the post-9/11 waterway restrictions to let some weekend boat traffic move on the Potomac. My Deputy, Commander Quain Kahler, and I were aboard one of our 41-foot small boats in the Potomac. We were changing out cutters in DC and I had decided to get out on the water and say "thank you" to the crews.

It was in the afternoon and there had been a bomb threat on to the Wilson Bridge that morning. We were about five miles north of the bridge when someone yelled that there was a Ryder rental truck stopped in the middle of the Wilson Bridge and the driver was running toward the Virginia side. Commander Kahler and I looked at each other with a "this could be it" look on our faces, and quickly decided to evacuate a one-mile area above and below the bridge. We headed for the bridge at full speed, along with a Metro Police boat. We radioed [Coast Guard] Station Taylors Island's 55-foot boat, which was conducting boardings south of the bridge, and told them to clear the area. I remember seeing the 55-footer running up to the bridge and swooping up a couple and their kayak to get them out of harm's way.

Commander Kahler asked our coxswain to let us know when we were a mile from the bridge. It seemed that our 41-footer kept getting closer and closer to the truck on the bridge. When the coxswain finally stopped the boat, Commander Kahler swallowed and asked (more than stated), "That's a mile?" It looked like we were way too close. A number of recreational boats stopped behind us and we told the 41-foot boat crew to get away from the windows. As it turned out, the Ryder truck had a flat and the driver was just going to get help; his timing couldn't have been worse. We laughed about it later, but whose of us who were there that day will never forget our initial feelings when we saw that truck stopped on the bridge

Q: Prior to September 11th, what kind of security planning had Activities Baltimore done? Did these help you implement new security procedures in the aftermath of the attacks?

Peoples: In the fall of 2000, Activities Baltimore sponsored a first-in-the-nation port vulnerability assessment with the Department of Defense to ensure continued vigilance against port security threats and domestic terrorism. The President had created a commission to evaluate United States seaport security and in a parallel effort the Coast Guard was examining a way to assess the vulnerabilities of major ports. When Headquarters asked me if they could use Baltimore as a prototype, I jumped on it.

The assessment took several weeks and we shared the results with the port and facility owners through the port committees so they could address the identified weaknesses. The complete list was classified, since we did not want it to get in the wrong hands. I think our pre-9/11 security assessment better prepared us to address port wide security issues before and following the terrorist attacks.

I have to give Baltimore Mayor O'Malley credit for initiating the first Baltimore area interagency port security planning and coordination meetings. He brought in a security consultant to work with Baltimore area law-enforcement agencies to evaluate security issues, including port security. When

they asked me to attend a meeting, I invited some of our contacts in the FBI, the Customs Service, and the MNRP.

The Baltimore Police Department arranged the initial meetings and several of them took place inside the Camden Yards stadium offices. The meetings grew in size and eventually pulled in every security organization, sheriffs department, and law-enforcement agency in the Chesapeake Bay area. Once when addressing this group I couldn't help but notice how many different kinds of weapons were being carried or worn on various parts of the body - this was not your normal harbor safety committee. The group made great progress fostering interagency cooperation and even staged a joint exercise involving a terrorist scenario in the inner harbor. The Coast Guard was an integral part of this committee, initially called the Baltimore Inner Harbor Security Advisory Committee (called BISMAC).

With strong federal and state support, the scope of the BISMAC planning and preparedness effort expanded to all of Maryland's tidal waters and I was asked to assume chair of the Group. With the pending passage of the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA), I gladly assumed that role. [4](#)

MTSA would require the Coast Guard to create Port Security Committees and this one was ready-made. We changed the name to the Maryland Maritime Security Group (MMSG) and organized an Executive Steering Committee that could discuss law enforcement sensitive information and oversee the larger general port security committee membership. I asked the FBI to serve as co-chair of the Executive Steering Committee, and the FBI let us use their Joint Terrorism Task Force facility as a meeting place. The director of the Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies [MITAGS, in Linthicum, MD] offered us spaces at their facility for the general meetings. By the time I left Baltimore, the MMSG was well established and well on the way to developing an interagency port security plan.

I should also mention that, following 9/11, we ended up spending a lot of time coordinating with the military facilities that line the Potomac and Anacostia rivers, and that activity continues to this day. Activities Baltimore now attends a number of military coordination forums for the National Capital Region, including the flag-level Military Partnership Group, the Council of Eagles, and several others. These forums include military representatives from the Naval District of Washington, the Military District of Washington, the Air Force, and Coast Guard.

Q: The Coast Guard's response to the September 11th attacks resulted in the service's largest port security effort since World War II. At the same time, the Coast Guard and Activities Baltimore were still fulfilling your roles in the areas of search and rescue, marine safety, marine environmental protection, maritime mobility, etc. How did you cope with these conflicting demands? Did you receive significant additional manpower?

Peoples: The Coast Guard's multi-mission nature provides a unique capability to surge resources into any priority mission area. As previously mentioned, after 9/11 we pulled the law enforcement-qualified crews from our stations and backfilled with the Coast Guard Auxiliary. We brought in people from other Coast Guard units and we activated Reservists. We tried to maximize the use of interagency resources and focused our people and assets resources on the highest risks.

Everyone worked longer hours in the weeks following 9/11. Fortunately for us, September is just past the bay area's heavy search-and-rescue season, and before the buoy tenders would be busy doing ice change-outs. We got a resource break there. Also, we capitalized on the synergy that exists among some of our missions. For example, security and safety are two sides of the same coin and many of our safety inspections of facilities and vessels were modified to include a security focus. Today, our Port State Control inspection program, originally a marine safety initiative, is a significant component of our security inspection program.

We also cut back in some mission areas, for example we stopped responding to some minor oil spills, and we eliminated some discretionary programs. Some in the towing vessel community were not happy to see us stop doing voluntary safety checks of uninspected towing vessels, but we just couldn't afford to keep doing everything we used to do before we assumed an increased security posture.

After 9/11, I told numerous audiences that under the Coast Guard's "new normalcy," every Coast Guard Captain of the Port would be taking a number of security measures for the foreseeable future. These include:

- \* Increased vessel traffic measures, such as escorts, screenings, and tracking;
- \* Increased on-water presence and deterrence patrols;
- \* Increased facility and infrastructure security assessments and inspections;
- \* Increased inter-agency coordination and planning;
- \* Increased maritime domain awareness.

Fortunately, additional security resources are making it to the field. Before I left Baltimore we had received new equipment and several new small boats, including two new 25-foot homeland security boats for Washington, DC and new 27-foot Safeboats for two of our stations. We also began the stand-up of a new Station Washington.

The proposed reopening of the LNG facility at Cove Point became a significant undertaking for Activities Baltimore and we spent considerable staff time facilitating the safety, security, and response risk-assessment workshops, holding public meetings and dealing with public and political concerns with LNG. I met more than once with Senator Mikulski on this issue and she was genuinely concerned about the safety of Maryland citizens, as well as the ability of the Coast Guard to cover all its missions and deal with LNG security.

We spent a lot of time preparing for the reopening of the LNG plant, and that included planning for the safety and security measures we would have to take with the arrival of each ship. I left Baltimore just before the first LNG ships began to arrive at Cove Point, but I'm sure my relief is covering the bases.

Q: As a consequence of the September 11th attacks and the threat of future attacks, President Bush signed the Homeland Security Act of 2002 in November of that year and officially established the Department of Homeland Security, the Coast Guard joined DHS in March 2003. Did you see any effect of these changes in the field?

Peoples: At the port level, we were already working closely with the agencies that combined under DHS, but the new organization helped strengthen our interagency ties. Unlike other agencies that had to merge into the DHS structure, the Coast Guard was recognized as an independent agency and retained its safety, mobility, national defense, security, and environmental protection responsibilities. So the change for the Coast Guard was relatively minor at the port level. The Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 probably had a more noticeable immediate impact on the Coast Guard, since it added substantially to our security responsibilities.

Q: Prior to September 11th, what was Activities Baltimore's relationship with the U.S. Customs Service? Did this change after the attacks, and was it affected at all by Customs' subsequent bifurcation in DHS between the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) the latter along with elements from the former Immigration and Naturalization Service?

Peoples: Prior to 9/11, the U.S. Customs Port Director and I were already co-chairing the Federal Agency Quality Working Group (FAQWG) in Baltimore and I had brought him to several of the other port committees, so we already had a good working relationship. We were tracking some of the early draft legislation on port security, even before 9/11, and knew we would have to be joined at the hip in order to make things work between our somewhat overlapping inspection jurisdictions.

The merger of the Customs Port Director into CBP was therefore somewhat transparent to us. The special agents, or non-uniformed side of Customs, moved to ICE. Before 9/11 the special agents worked closer with the Coast Guard Investigative Service than with Activities Baltimore. After 9/11, the uniformed and non-uniformed sides of Customs and Immigration became members of our Maryland Maritime Security Group Executive Steering Committee. They had new titles, but one of the key things that helped the local transition to DHS was that the people involved in the

reorganization were already on a first name basis.

Q: Did industry offer any assistance with Activities Baltimore's homeland security duties?

Peoples: Industry was very receptive to addressing security issues, even before 9/11. We saw that during our Port Vulnerability Assessment. After 9/11 we worked with every one of our waterfront facilities to identify security improvements, right down to fences, lighting, guards, etc. The *Baltimore Sun* had published an article about facility security gaps and everyone was anxious to make improvements.

We kept the Baltimore Private Sector Port Committee updated on security issues, and that organization was very helpful in helping brief political representatives and ensuring them that the agencies and the private sector were working together to tighten security. The Private Sector Port Committee sponsored a joint public and private-sector security overview for Representatives [Benjamin L.] Cardin and [Wayne T.] Gilchrest immediately following 9/11, and that did a lot show Baltimore had its act together. The Baltimore Maritime Exchange was also very helpful in distributing our port security bulletins and serving as an information broker.

Under MTSA the maritime industry is facing a whole host of new security requirements, but even before MTSA was passed, the Baltimore area maritime industry and the port of Baltimore were very interested in helping us improve port security. I'm confident they will aggressively act to meet MTSA security requirements.

Q: At the personal level, did your "average day" change at all after September 11th?

Peoples: My average day was probably a little more organized in the period immediately after 9/11 because we were in an ICS structure with set operational periods. I had to follow a schedule, including scheduled rest. I learned from dealing with past emergencies that you have to force yourself to rest or you'll become somewhat ineffective somewhere about the third day. I also began eating regular meals and ended up trimming off 14 pounds in the first month. I saved time by setting objectives to focus every meeting and phone call, and I also spent a lot of time framing in words what we were doing to enhance and tighten security.

Being able to describe what we were doing for port security after 9/11 became increasingly important, and after the first month I found myself speaking several times a week to various audiences. The speaking demands were overwhelming and we often divided them up among the staff. It was critical to keep the message informative, reassuring and unclassified. I usually briefed the Congressional reps, the Governor's office, and high-level visitors, as well as our major port committees, and I did a lot of keynote speeches for dinners and luncheons.

Everyone seemed to want a security official to address their organization, and being so close to Washington, we had a steady stream of requests from the international community, from academia, from the Hill and from every yacht club and civic group in the area. We accommodated as many as we could.

#### **A.V. Kastner-Swift** Collision

Q: In February 2002, the bulker *A.V. Kastner* collided with and sunk the dredge barge *Swift*. How did Activities Baltimore respond to this accident? Who else responded? In a case such as this, what was the division of labor between agencies? The collision happened not far from the mouth of the Bohemia River and the western approach to the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal. Did the accident affect other traffic transiting to or from the canal? Was the canal closed to navigation? If so, who made that decision?

Peoples: The collision occurred in early morning fog on February 25, 2002. The *A.V. Kastner* was involved in a collision with a quite lengthy tow that included dredging equipment, tugs and work barges. The tug *Swift*, owned by Norfolk Dredging, sank very quickly in the channel, along with a work barge and several lengths of dredge piping. Four of the tug's nine-member crew lost their

lives, two were found inside the sunken tug, and two others were recovered in the water several days after the collision. The response to the collision lasted almost two weeks and involved multiple agencies coordinating a host of activities, including search and rescue, waterways management, pollution response, site safety and salvage, investigations, and public relations.

The overall success of the interagency effort demonstrated the value of response community preparedness and highlighted the benefits of the consolidated Coast Guard Activities Baltimore command. Unlike the CSX train derailment, which had occurred outside our normal planning and operating area, the collision in the Upper Bay was clearly within the Coast Guard's area of jurisdiction and expertise.

Several things happened very quickly. The Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC) immediately launched small boats to the area and worked with Natural Resource Police and local emergency response personnel to look for people in the water. The Captain of the Port worked with the Corps of Engineers and Bay Pilots and issued a safety zone closing the Upper Bay to marine traffic. The Corps of Engineers closed the C&D canal to traffic from the North. The Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC) worked with the Maryland Department of the Environment to initiate the pollution response, and the Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection (OMCI) launched the marine casualty investigation and brought in technical expertise to oversee the salvage effort. Those facets of the response occurred simultaneously and were somewhat seamless to the public. It helped that I wore all of those hats.

The initial response to the collision played out very quickly. We had boats on the water reporting back to Activities Baltimore, but Cecil County, Maryland emergency personnel had been first to the site and had created a makeshift command post on the Eastern Shore near the accident site. We deployed an officer to that location to help coordinate among the various agencies and to relay information to and from on-water assets and Activities Baltimore. Cell phone coverage was almost non-existent in that part of the bay and it soon became evident how much we had come to rely on wireless phones - fortunately we had portable VHF radios.

A local news helicopter fed live video from overhead for the entire first morning and we all felt like we had a front row seat. Four people missing and there was a possibility that someone may have found an air pocket in the tug, which rested at the bottom of 40 feet of fast-moving, very cloudy, and very cold water. Cold-water diver capability was not immediately available, and when local divers finally arrived on scene the current was too swift, too much time had passed, and the risk to the divers was too great to try to enter the tug. We called off the search-and-rescue effort the first night, after briefing the next of kin. Through crew interviews we learned that two of the crew of the *Swift* had made it safely to shore, two were seen going under the water, and two were potentially inside the tug. The rest of the crew had been recovered alive.

Several family members traveled to the area and gathered on the Eastern Shore near the collision site. We brought in Chaplain Stephen Lee from the Coast Guard Yard to provide whatever comfort he could. Chaplain Lee was quick to drop by any time Activities Baltimore was involved in an emergency. He had visited with response crews both during the CSX train derailment and during extended security operations following 9/11. Soon after we called him, Chaplain Lee responded to the scene of the *Kastner/Swift* collision and spent considerable time with friends and relatives of the missing personnel. He was an invaluable part of the response effort.

At one point, the sister of a missing crewmember was having difficulty dealing with the situation and was becoming more and more distressed. One of our Coast Guard boat crews suited her up and took her out to the site of the sunken tug. That seemed to calm her down. A reporter took a picture of us bringing her back ashore and put it in the paper as an example of our humanitarian approach to the incident. I'm glad the boat crew felt empowered enough to take that lady out without having to jump through a lot of hoops. It was the right thing to do at the right time.

The media was ever present on scene and we kept them informed as well as we could. Because of the presence of the cameras relatively close to the site of the accident site, and the potential for finding bodies on the tug, we decided to wait until after dark to bring it to the surface. That turned out to be a good decision; one of the bodies was visible in a doorway when the tug came up.

Although the MNRP normally doesn't deal with deaths on commercial vessels, we asked them to assist and they quickly stepped in to handle transportation and disposition of the deceased.

Coast Guard technical personnel, brought in from the Marine Safety Center, were a significant help in reviewing salvage details and making recommendations regarding the final salvage plan, which was developed by the salvor and submitted for my approval. The Corps of Engineers brought in special equipment to survey the bottom and identified a large debris field that also had to be removed before we could reopen the channel.

Throughout the closure, we called many of our major shipping and towing reps on a periodic basis to let them know the status of the channel closure. Ships coming from the north were rerouted through Hampton Roads, but barges couldn't transit the open ocean and were impacted the most.

The *Swift* was raised on March 4 and hauled away on a hopper barge. Contractors removed a significant amount of debris from the channel over the next two days. A sunken deck barge was raised on March 6. The Corps of Engineers surveyed the bottom and gave it a green light and we opened the waterway that same evening.

Q: How was the subsequent investigation of this accident carried out?

Peoples: The Coast Guard conducted the investigation. During the course of the investigation there were conflicting statements and multiple lawsuits. The Coast Guard made an extensive effort to try to reestablish the track lines of the involved vessels and to try to determine the cause of the collision. I wish I could tell you what caused the accident, but two years later the investigation still has not been finalized.

Q: Was the *Kastner-Swift* accident an isolated event, or did it have broader implications or a broader message about navigation safety on the Bay and elsewhere?

Peoples: I would need to see the details of the investigation before trying to draw any conclusions from that particular accident, but in my years of marine safety experience I have seen enough ship and barge collisions to be able to say that this was not an isolated incident. Anytime you have two-way traffic in a channel there is some a risk of a collision and you can never completely eliminate that risk, especially since human factors still contribute to a majority of incidents. The Coast Guard is actively evaluating risks on our nation's waterways and is pursuing a number of active and passive measures to reduce the risk of collisions and groundings. The recent decision to create Sectors should also help the Coast Guard enhance its focus on prevention and waterways management.

#### [Personal Observations on Command Tour](#)

Q: In hindsight, how would you characterize your tour at Activities Baltimore? What do you consider your most satisfying accomplishments? Was there any area in which you wished you had made more inroads - i.e., any "unfinished business?"

Peoples: My tour of duty in Baltimore ended up being the most challenging and rewarding part of my career. It was honor to be one of our nation's Coast Guard Captains of the Port on 9/11, and to be able to serve on one of the front lines in our war on terrorism. As far as unfinished business, I wish we could have made more progress on the port security plan we were developing, but we gave it a good start and I'm confident my relief will make it happen.

Most Coast Guard accomplishments are team accomplishments, and what happened on my watch was no exception. I have described some of our most visible responses and activities throughout this interview, but I honestly believe that our greatest accomplishments are the ones that are not so readily apparent. They include the people who are alive because of our safety and security programs, the ships that didn't collide because of our waterways management actions, the environment that was not damaged because of our prevention and response activities, the drugs we kept off of America's street, and the vast array of goods that move unimpeded to and from our

ports. Those are our real accomplishments and I'm proud to have been able to contribute to those for nearly 32 years.

Q: What do you think will be the greatest challenges to the Coast Guard in the years ahead?

Peoples: Maintaining an appropriate balance of safety, security, environmental protection, and maritime mobility will continue to be the Coast Guard's greatest challenge. If the forecasts are true, in ten years we'll see maritime trade increase dramatically, vessels will change in size, speed and complexity, coastal populations will continue to bloom, and technology will create new capabilities and opportunities, and challenges. The Coast Guard's multi-mission flexibility, its core competencies and its broad authorities position the agency well to help the nation meet those challenges.

In the near term, the Coast Guard must continue to develop and focus its security responsibilities to ensure alignment with new Department of Homeland Security, without losing site of its non-homeland security missions. Implementing the provisions of the 2002 Maritime Transportation Security Act is another near-term challenge that involves developing regulations and policies for a host of new security requirements, such as port security assessments, security committees, vessel, facility and port security plans, access credentials and more. One of the greatest challenges we face as we implement MTSA in our nation's ports is how we will increase security without unduly restricting legitimate trade, mobility and public access.

But I'm confident that we will figure out how to meet those challenges, like we always do. And ten years from now I believe we will still have a strong, flexible and nimble Coast Guard, with talented people who will continue perform well any military, multi-mission, maritime challenge that comes their way. Notice I keep using the word "we." I'm proud to say that I'm still part of the Coast Guard, and as a new Coast Guard civilian, I look forward to helping shape our great organization to meet the challenges of the future.

END OF INTERVIEW

---

#### NOTES

1 The Maryland Natural Resources Police (MNRP) is an enforcement arm of the Department of Natural Resources. The Natural Resources Police provide a variety of services, including conservation and boating law enforcement, throughout the state of Maryland .

2 Organized in 1914, the U.S.Power Squadron is a nonprofit, educational organization dedicated to making boating safer and more enjoyable by teaching classes in seamanship, navigation and related subjects.

3 OpSail 2000 was a tall ships event.

4 The Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 mandates the development of regulations and policies for a range of new security requirements, including port security assessments; vessel, facility and port security plans; and access credentials, among many others.

#### [Download Plug-Ins](#)

Download Plug-Ins: Some of the links on this page require a plug-in to view them. Links to the plug-ins are available below.

 [Adobe Acrobat Reader \(PDF\)](#)

*Last Modified 8/10/2009*

