

100

Centennial  
Celebration



Port of  
**LONG BEACH**  
*The Green Port*



*Saluting the Port of Long Beach on its Centennial*



Cosmo Perrone is the director of security at the Port of Long Beach. He's pictured above inside the command and control center, where security assets such as cameras, radar and sonar are displayed on screens for interpretation. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

## Staying Safe And Secure

Network Of Agencies Lead The Way In Port Security Technology And Integration

■ By **SEAN BELK**

In a moment's notice, Cosmo Perrone has to be alert and ready to respond nearly 24 hours a day. As director of the Port of Long Beach security division, his job never ends, primarily because of what's at stake – one of the most critical economic engines for the region and the country that provides thousands of local jobs and a large percentage of the nation's imported goods.

With more than 44 percent of all United States containerized cargo moving through the twin ports, a total shut down of port operations

would cost the U.S. economy an estimated \$1 billion per day. Any number of scenarios – from labor union strikes and accidents to tsunamis and terrorist attacks – could have potentially devastating impacts to the supply chain of international trade and the communities it serves.

“If these ports were shut down, there would be no petroleum products, you wouldn't be able to get goods on your shelves and it would basically stop the societal movement and activity in Southern California and well beyond that,” Perrone says. “And so the process of how we can prevent that and how we can recover from it are starting to take a stronger emphasis.”

Just as the Long Beach and Los Angeles ports have expanded in scope and size over the years, so has the intricate system that keeps the operation safe and secure. Since the 9/11 attacks, security efforts at seaports across the country have increased tremendously, especially at San Pedro Bay, where the ports are a dominant part of international trade and commerce.

Known as the second busiest port in the nation, the Port of Long Beach harbors 10 piers, 80 berths and six operating container shipping terminals, while servicing close to 140 shipping lines at any given time. The intertwining myriad of government agencies – including the Long Beach police and fire departments, U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs & Border Patrol – might all have different reasons for being there, but all converge on common ground to oversee activity at the 3,000-acre Port of Long Beach.

For Perrone, communication is everything, and keeping an eye on outside circumstances is critical to such a widely impacted operation. His day begins at 5:30 a.m., checking news outlets and Web sites from other countries, Washington, D.C., and the East Coast. After highlighting key factors that might impact the port, Perrone then arrives at the port's three-story command and control center, a \$21 million state-of-the-art facility that was built in 2009. It includes a helipad on the roof.

Today, with a staff of about 80 security employees, Long Beach port security is the first department to “cross pollinate” information each

day, holding meetings with other divisions of the harbor department, a wide range of county, state and federal agencies, and stakeholders throughout the harbor proper.

It's all a part of what he calls “systems and regional integration,” and there's always something going on, he says, whether it's visiting dignitaries, which takes a strategic plan to secure the perimeters on both land and sea, or relief in the event of a disaster at one of the terminals.

Although a 2007 report states that large tsunamis are rare and “extremely infrequent” at the port complex due to the surrounding tectonic plate structure, any warning of an



The port's three-story, state-of-the-art command and control center is a \$21 million facility that was built in 2009 with an intricate surveillance system and a helipad on the roof. Currently, the center is home to both the port security division and the Long Beach Police Department's port police unit. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)



Part of the Long Beach Police Department's port security team is pictured at top, from left: Lt. P.J. Burns, Sgt. S. Smock and officers R. Peterson, D. Canaria and B. Pak. Above, a department quick response boat accelerates through the water in the Port of Long Beach harbor district to respond to a call. (Photographs by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

Continued From Page 70

offshore tsunami is not taken lightly, Perrone says. "The uniqueness of my job requires me to always be connected," he says. "Even though I get shot off in the evening, there's always that possibility of that call . . . a tsunami activity taken place or perhaps some major accident that's taken place. So it doesn't stop when I go home, this job requires you to be on all the time."

Perrone usually spends Monday afternoons attending the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners regular meetings and every Tuesday the port security department holds meetings on projects and contracts. There are also weekly meetings of the Area Maritime Security Committee (AMSC), a group made up of appointed officials and port stakeholders led by the U.S. Coast Guard and the FBI. The committee focuses on acquiring grant funding and integrating a strategic long-term plan.

The contractual relationship between the Long Beach Police Department, or "ocean unit," and the Long Beach Fire Department and the port's security division, known as "harbor patrol," is a complementary one, Perrone says. They both share the same building, but harbor security is focused on the assets of the port and the police are primarily focused on law enforcement and criminal activity.

The port's arm of security extends even further, working in a multi-jurisdictional network involving the Port of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, the Marine Exchange of Southern California as well as the California and U.S. departments of Homeland Security. The agencies now meet before grant season to prioritize projects together and work to leverage assets between each other. "There's

been what I call a symbiotic relationship here," Perrone says. "One can't survive without the other. We need to find ways to constantly improve our communication and I think we're doing that in a much better way than we could have done before."

What made such an extended network of agencies possible has primarily been new advancements in technology that have created new forms of communication and tracking. These include fiber optic cables that connect all the way to Downtown Los Angeles and several surveillance cameras for monitoring operations out of the port's control center, which has dozens of screens for viewing various parts of the port. "We are considered one of the leaders," Perrone says. "We have an extensive technology program."

The port security also now tries to integrate as much of what's going on in the logistics and trade industry as in the world of security technologies, which often provides a new approach to lingering problems, he says. Working with the Port of Long Beach Facility Security Officers, (FSOs) the port's main goal is communicating to the port tenants, terminals and operators. "We are a landlord port," he says. "We don't run the port, the tenants do, so it's important for us to convey as much information as possible to them."

Since 9/11, the Long Beach and Los Angeles port complex has been a major base for security initiatives and innovations, as part of a memorandum of understanding with U.S. Homeland Security. The Port of Long Beach, alone, has received more than \$100 million in security grants since 2001, for such development as video-equipped submersibles to detect threats under water; radiation scanners called Advanced Spectroscopic Portal (ASP), to detect nuclear threats; and the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) program, which requires port workers to pass background checks to enter port facilities.

In addition, the port's security communications systems, which are highly important during an emergency, include a Web-based portal to improve coordination, an AM radio station with a hazard alert system to broadcast traffic and emergency information, and an Emergency Notification System to contact port employees. The port is also going out for a new contract for a (Radio Frequency Identification) RFID system to be deployed on water instead of land.

Looking ahead, Perrone says, after the last decade of focusing on "response and intelligence" efforts in reaction to the terrorist attacks, there is now more of a focus on "deterrence," and how such an event can be prevented by putting infrastructure as a top priority. The department of homeland security, for instance, in its quadrennial report issued this year, elevated "resiliency" to one of its core missions, and recently the AMSC also elevated the "continuity of operations" at the port as one of its major missions, Perrone says.

"I think it's really thinking in a different way," he says. "Moving and enlarging security, not just the incident, but the consequences of the incident and how we can deal with those consequences effectively so that we don't shut down."

Perrone says staying financially solvent in these economic times is also a new challenge for port security in the coming years as federal and state agencies are slashing budgets for security grants and funding. He says the main goal in the future is to keep working together and further opening up the communication lines of agencies and affected parties throughout the supply chain.

"We don't think solely on who we are here, in an isolated area," he says. "We know we are connected to the larger community, so we try to encourage that communication and the integration of their systems with our security systems . . . We're trying to integrate everything we do in the larger geographic picture." ■