

On 23 April 2008, the Port of Los Angeles staged a security alert at the city's massive World Cruise

Terminal as part of a comprehensive anti-terrorism exercise. For the first time, port operatives deployed their newest piece of equipment, the Small Craft Intrusion Barrier. Anchored at either end of the terminal, between berths 93 and 95, the barrier prevented access to the cruise ship port. Although deployment of the interlocking barriers took over four hours, officials were satisfied with the result.

'Every day, we try to do things to improve security,' says George Cummings, director of Homeland Security for the port, 'but it's a challenging thing to protect.'

At Florida's Port Canaveral, the world's second-busiest cruise ship port, officials are also stepping up security. The port has introduced round-the-clock waterside patrols, distance restrictions from moored vessels, and armed coastguard vessels to shadow cruise ships as they enter and leave the harbour. The initiatives are part of a multimillion-dollar anti-terrorism plan.

In the aftermath of 9/11, US ports were identified as weak points in national security. With just 6% of cargo containers being inspected, for example, terrorists could exploit relatively lax security to bring explosives into a port to cause devastation and cripple critical infrastructure. The attack on the *USS Cole* in the Yemini port of Aden in 2000 highlighted the

The cruise industry is enjoying a well-documented renaissance: ships of growing scale carry a record number of passengers to more locations than ever before. Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), the Fort Lauderdale-based industry group, predicts another record year in 2008, with member lines carrying some 12.8 million passengers.

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dangers posed in foreign ports, even those considered 'friendly' to Western maritime interests. The incident, which claimed 17 US naval personnel, further underlined a ship's vulnerability to waterside attack.

But with relatively few documented attacks on cruise ships – the *Achille Lauro* hijack of 1985 and the foiled attack by pirates on the *Seabourn Spirit* off the coast of Somalia in 2005 are notable exceptions – how real is the threat to cruise ships and the ports they visit, and how challenging is it to protect them?

Megaships, such as Royal Caribbean's *Freedom of the Seas*, promise unprecedented levels of comfort and service. And the locations they visit are changing. While Caribbean and Mediterranean ports have long been cruise itinerary mainstays, ports in the Middle East, Asia, Latin America and Africa are growing in popularity as passengers demand wider choice and year-round cruising. Dubai Cruise Terminal expects to receive 96 cruise calls this year bringing in some 200,000 passengers, says Awadh

Lock down

Since 9/11, ports have raised their security profile. Peter Drennan talks to **Christel Wiman**, CEO of Ports of Stockholm, and **Charles Mandigo**, director of fleet security at Holland America, about the challenges of creating a safe harbour.

S Al Ketbi, executive director of the Dubai Convention Bureau. He expects passenger numbers to increase to 420,000 in 2010. Oman is also reaping the dividend of tourists' demand for winter sun: some 98,000 cruise ship visitors were expected in Muscat in the last winter season.

Such growth, says Charlie Mandigo, Seattle-based director of fleet security for Holland America Line, is part of the growing challenge. 'The capacity of cruise lines is increasing, and that leads to more ships in port. Arguably, to a terrorist, that means more opportunity, more visibility. If a new port has not been a common destination for cruise ships, then the infrastructure is not going to be up to the standard of established ports,' he says.

As a consequence of the 9/11 attacks and the perceived vulnerability of ports and shipping, the US and the UN sought far-reaching maritime security measures, standardised to ease implementation. In November 2002, President George W Bush signed into law the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA), designed to protect the nation's ports and waterways from a terrorist

attack. The MTSA and the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code – developed by the International Maritime Organisation, an arm of the UN, as an amendment to the 1974 Safety of Life at Sea Convention – came into effect on 1 July 2004.

While cruise ships had traditionally operated at a higher level of security than other vessels, the ISPS Code did enshrine new measures intended to make both cruise ships and the ports they visit safer. Central to the code is the concept of risk management: to determine what security measures are appropriate, an assessment of the risks must be made in each case.

Security conscience

Among many requirements for shipping companies, the code stipulated that they

each appoint a company security officer who serves as the overall manager of fleet security. All ships must further appoint a ship security officer to manage onboard security procedures and regulations, including the implementation and maintenance of a security plan and the training of crew members.

Arguably the greatest addition of the ISPS Code, however, was its inclusion of security requirements for all ports visited by cruise ships, transferring significant accountability for security from ship operators to the ports they visit. Governments were given the responsibility of ensuring that port facilities within their jurisdiction were in compliance with ISPS regulations.

'We have spent many millions of Swedish krona to comply with its requirements,' says

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Christel Wiman, CEO of Ports of Stockholm. 'We have deployed cameras, 24-hour control of port facilities, fencing and gates, security controls for employees within the area, and additional training. We have a security company that works with us.'

But is ISPS enough to prevent an attack on a cruise ship? 'If someone really wants to do harm, it's impossible, or almost impossible, to stop them,' Wiman says. 'You can make it more difficult to try by having better security controls, but you can never be sure. Stockholm is a city and cruise vessels come to the centre. The waterside is open and 10,000 archipelago vessels call at the port.'

Security presence

The rising popularity of Dubai as a cruise destination raises questions about security at Port Rashid. While the city and the UAE in general have taken extraordinary measures to safeguard the safety of visitors, some security analysts fear the city's Middle East location and Western leanings may make it a target.

Awadh Seghayer Al Ketbi of the Dubai Convention Bureau does not entertain talk of security fears. 'Dubai is a safe destination and its safety comes from its stability,' he says. 'However, we have implemented the ISPS security system and have trained all our security staff to be aware of the code and to implement it. Our security department is proactive in ensuring that ISPS [regulations] are strictly adhered to at all times.'

Ports in other parts of the world lack the stability of Dubai, and the resources that allow for a modern security infrastructure. As a result of the political violence

that followed a flawed election in Kenya last December, several cruise lines cancelled calls to Mombasa, despite assurances from the Kenya Ports Authority that the port and surrounding areas were secure.

'The greatest threat is not of a terrorist act directly against a cruise ship,' says Mandigo, 'it is having people ashore in the wrong place at the wrong time.'

When looking to return to a port like Mombasa, or adding a new port to the itinerary, Mandigo sends security assessors a month ahead to evaluate conditions on

the ground. With the green light given, security personnel return to the port three days prior to the ship's arrival to work with port operatives and to ensure the appropriate measures are in place, staying on the ground throughout the port call.

While it is impossible to guard against 100% of vulnerabilities, this adaptable security presence and robust international legislation, create a formidable security environment for the growing number of cruise passengers, and act as a deterrent to criminal acts directed at cruise ships. *wc*



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