



**Captain Marcus Woodring
Port of Houston Authority
Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security
November 19, 2013**

Good morning Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Jackson-Lee, and Members of the Subcommittee, I am Marcus Woodring. I serve as the Managing Director for Health, Safety, Security and Environmental (HSSE) at the Port of Houston Authority.

We would like to thank Chairman Miller for holding this important hearing today. I must also recognize Ranking Member Jackson-Lee for again inviting the Port of Houston Authority as an industry witness. As you know, the Port of Houston is in the Ranking Member's district and we continue to benefit from her leadership and advocacy on behalf of the Port.

The Port of Houston is comprised of the Port Authority's eight public terminals along with more than 150 private terminals. The port is consistently ranked first in the United States in foreign waterborne tonnage, trading with over 200 ports of call globally, making us a true maritime border.

Results of a recent economic impact study show that ship channel-related businesses at the Port of Houston are responsible for more than 2.1 million jobs, generate \$499 billion in annual economic activity, and contribute over \$52 billion in annual tax revenue nationally. Just yesterday, we had the Vice President of the United States stop to visit our Bayport Container Terminal, underscoring the importance of our nation's ports in economic growth, as he travelled to visit the expanding Panama Canal.

At the most basic level, the Port of Houston would be unable to sustain its operations and economic significance in the global marketplace without border security. This "border security" encompasses many things, ranging from keeping unauthorized cargo and people from entering the United States, to protecting our environment from invasive species.

We have heard about a “layered approach” to border security, starting with offshore interdiction all the way to the sea buoy. My focus today will be on the industry efforts to secure the border within the Port of Houston. Our efforts use both physical assets and professional partnerships.

For physical assets, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Harris County Sheriff’s Office, and the Houston Police Department all maintain patrol vessels for the Houston Ship Channel. The majority of the Houston Ship Channel has been designated a “security zone” since shortly after 9/11. Other major channels into our Bayport and Barbours Cut Container Terminals are also designated security zones, i.e. “off limits”, to recreational boaters. With the density of industrial activity, and really no recreational reason to be there, the overall impact to the public is minimal - yet provides safety for boaters and security for our nation’s largest petrochemical complex. Surveillance by helicopters is also conducted on a regular basis by these same agencies.

Those are the federal and local resources, but how does industry link in? The story of the Houston Ship Channel Security District, a unique public/private partnership, gives us the answer and clearly shows the direct relationship between assets and partnerships.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the federal, state, and local governments began putting more stringent controls in place within the maritime domain of the Houston Ship Channel. The industrial facilities and companies of the Port of Houston came to the table and essentially said - we don’t have law enforcement authority or jurisdiction, but we want to help as our businesses have the most to lose if things go wrong. In 2007, the Texas Legislature passed a Bill creating the Houston Ship Channel Security District. The legislation enabled the industry to tax itself and collect assessments paid annually by the facilities and companies within the boundaries of the District, with the goal of ensuring commerce continues to flow in an unimpeded fashion.

The ultimate purpose of the Houston Ship Channel Security District is to provide a regional approach for providing greater degree of security and safety for facilities, employees and communities surrounding the ship channel by supporting projects and initiatives to enhance the capabilities,

communication, and joint operational readiness of existing law enforcement organizations.


Examples include providing the matching funds for a Port Security Grant to purchase a Harris County Sheriff's Office patrol vessel, providing matching funds for Harris County to install 33 cameras to monitor the maritime domain, purchasing the fuel used by the Houston Police Department helicopter to patrol the ship channel, and funding a watch center to monitor the camera system.

Each of these projects directly benefits industry's desire to secure the maritime border and keep commerce moving, reducing their liability for interruptions in the supply chain. None would have been possible without the mechanism called the Houston Ship Channel Security District.

I'll conclude my remarks by focusing on the collaborative nature of maritime security in the Port of Houston. We meet regularly as part of the Area Maritime Security Committee, the Central Texas Coastal Area Committee, and the Lone Star Harbor Safety Committee. Each of these committees provides a constant opportunity for maritime personnel to interact with key local, state, and federal agency leaders. We recently held our annual security drill, SECUREX 2013, at the Barbour's Cut Container Terminal. Over 170 participants from 50 different agencies/entities came together to address a "dirty bomb" scenario. While we pray that we never convene in a real life scenario similar to this, we are well prepared as a maritime community to respond.

The partnerships extend well beyond these committees. The Houston Ship Channel Security District cameras I mentioned earlier are linked in to the U.S. Coast Guard and Port of Houston Authority, with the Ship Channel Security District receiving access to both our camera systems in return. The force multiplying effect is tremendous.

Within their budgetary constraints, both the U.S. Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection provide outstanding service at the Port of Houston. They both come to work daily with the mentality that they must keep commerce flowing for the national good, while also enforcing the mandated



regulatory requirements. At the local level, they are considered leaders, partners, and valued teammates in the maritime community.

In 2009, the U.S. Coast Guard conducted a series of interviews at various ports around the nation and published the results in the “Port Interagency Information Sharing Study”. Maritime professionals from all segments of industry and government were interviewed. An excerpt from this study summarizes the extremely strong nature of maritime security in the Port of Houston:

“Port partnerships are predictably strongest, most collegial, and most productive where major calamities have necessitated life-or-death relationships of trust. This was most evident in the partner interviews in New York and Houston, where partners seek each other for after-work social and morale activities, in addition to a high degree of professional work-focused collaboration”.

I submit to you today that technology and resources are critical to maintaining maritime security, but dedicated people and trusting partnerships are equally important. The industries of the Port of Houston are proud to contribute to both.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Attachment: 2013 Houston Ship Channel Security District Factsheet

