Regional Maritime Management and Security

edited by Sam Bateman and Stephen Bates

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In 1997, a conference on regional maritime co-operation was held in Bangkok, Thailand. This book is a compilation of the papers presented. The group was concerned mainly with the security posture on the waters of south-east and north-east Asia. While there are unique problems associated with these regions, many problems facing security organisations are common to other parts of the world. After all, piracy, merchant ship interdiction, port safety and other challenges are not restricted to the environs of Asia.

Academics and governmental officials contributed essays to the collection, and each piece is connected in some way with diverse 'Law of the Seas' issues. There is a country-by-country examination of pressing problems, and finally an examination of how various other global regions are co-operating to confront and to eliminate their problems of high priority. Absent from the sessions were papers on Cambodia, Burma, and Sri Lanka, and a case could be made against the failure to include these countries' studies. However, like all conferences, expectations of attendees may be considerably higher than the realities of the sessions or of the contributors.

I found the issues under consideration to have value to corporate security professionals. In particular, business operations in these regions are adversely affected by losses from poor security associated with shipment of goods. Cost of insurance is affected by security breaches, created in part by 'windows' of opportunity for fraud amidst the confusions of terror and revolution in some parts. Also there are problems of pilfering, and mixing of legitimate goods with contraband travelling in large shipping containers or in bulk or mixed lots on pallets. These particular security concerns are discussed in connection with issues of regional wars and revolutions that affect carriers and their insurance rates. All these factors are considered in decision-making about whether or not to containerise cargo and to consolidate freight, or to ship loose cargo. Even choices about trans-shipment points, for example, the choice between one regional port or another, must be carefully weighed in the full range of decisions affecting the risk picture. Thus, the topics covered between the covers of this collection can measurably inform the dynamics of security over the logistics of property movement in the regions of Asia and the South Pacific.

For the security professional, the occasional discussion of specific maritime crimes will hold the reader's interest. Issues of 'war zones', etc, will interest the insurance P & I Clubs and shipowners, but they will have little bridging relevance to specific shippers' security problems. Of immediate interest are issues of piracy, state port control (basically a concern for safety), and pilferage. Central concerns here include the need to provide close management of packaging, size of shipment, mode of shipment, and choice of carrier.

Only on rare occasions will the security chief think of his job in terms of a role to advise on matters outside the corporate organisational chart. But these papers imply that they should be doing just that! When shipments are pilfered or damaged en route to a manufacturing plant or a warehouse, the usual reflection is upon the duty of the supplier. Suppliers carry burdens of tight schedules and low investment in idle personnel and open stock on shelves, but customers can contribute to overall protection by writing into contracts certain stipulations about packaging and preferred options for shipping routes. Customer security initiatives like these take into consideration how a late shipment or a shortage of actual delivered items can stall production schedules. Over time, lowered quality of security protection causes customers to search for competitors. Insurance helps the recovery of specific property losses; but the loss of customers is not covered.

The security manager of today must be involved in some way in the decisions upon which contracts are ultimately written, especially with how shipments will be delivered and when and under what conditions they will be received. He or she must be equally versed in the two sides of the logistical equation, in-bound and out-bound. And such capability extends to knowledge of the origins of ultimate product resources and where the finished product is delivered. Frankly, there is no other way of professional service in the business of shipping security.

Bateman and Bates introduce the security manager to a hostile world, but they also point out some hopeful signs on the horizon of security protection. This book is a good place to start for a security manager who wishes to provide added value to the overall posture of security in the corporate realms engaged in trans-shipments of products the world over.

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