

National & Regional

B.C. seminar to examine piracy, terrorism

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VICTORIA – Vessels of interest already transit British Columbia waters. Piracy and the potential for seaborne terrorism aren't as far from home as we'd like to believe. "Much of the general public isn't aware that piracy is still alive," said Capt. David Snider, communications director for the Nautical Institute (B.C. branch), "and terrorism is of greater concern than ever, since soft marine targets have major publicity value."



Capt. David Snider:
Terrorism of greater concern than ever.

On April 30, the Nautical Institute (B.C. branch) hosts a seminar in Victoria to discuss wide-ranging threats and ongoing measures to thwart them. Scheduled speakers comprise civilian, police and military authorities in legal, security and post-event trauma issues from Australia, the U.S. and Canada.

Although piracy and terrorism definitions often blur, the commonality is that each involves violent attacks that put people, vessels, cargo and the environment at risk. That most attacks occur far from North America is of no comfort, according to scheduled speaker Craig Allen, a professor at the University of Washington law school. "We're already affected at home by higher insurance costs and restrictions on business practices," he said. "Mariners want prevention and security on the water, but I'm not hopeful this will happen to the extent they deserve."

What of those mariners working under constant threat of violence? Speaker Rev. William Pike of Mission to Seafarers says they also live with the anxiety of being isolated from their families. "Survivors of attacks are most often in shock – sometimes delayed. They need support and re-connection to loved ones."

Legislation won't secure the planet's oceans, according to Inspector Doug Kiloh, RCMP border integrity (ports), who is also scheduled to speak at the seminar. "We can't just regulate and expect that to solve the problem. Mariners are out there alone, and become greater targets as cargo values increase. Using a freighter as a weapon is a real concern, so policing must look farther out. Since

9/11 the whole world has become our coastline."

To prepare for worst-case scenarios, Canadian government agencies (including RCMP, Coast Guard, Border Services, Transport Canada and Canadian Forces) will jointly staff three marine security operations centres (MSOCs), one each on the east and west coasts, and one for the Great Lakes region. Victoria's MSOC should be fully operational by this summer to provide awareness, analysis and action to combat seaborne threats. According to scheduled speaker Commander Al James, Canadian navy operations support centre, "We build a picture of everything within 2,500 nautical miles of our coast, and our interest increases as they get closer. The navy has been doing this alone for some time, but MSOC will broaden and unify the available resources."

The Nautical Institute (B.C. branch) is a professional body of experienced mariners promoting high standards of nautical competence. The branch conducts seminars on relevant issues, and provides mentoring, scholarships and a nautical library to the British Columbia Institute of Technology.

More information is available at www.nauticalinstitute.ca.