

✓ Report seeks extensive maritime security

A new report by the Rand Corporation has concluded that it is not adequate to base maritime counterterrorism efforts only on increasing port security and the security of cargo containerships, rail cars and trucks that transport goods into and out of United States ports.

RAND researchers prepared the report by considering

different types of terrorist attacks that could strike maritime activities. The authors assessed each scenario for its likelihood, its potential impact on the loss of life, and the potential economic impacts. They also considered the likely application of civil liability in the aftermath of different attacks.

Researchers point out that

their review of more than 30 years of terrorist activity shows that less than two percent of international terrorist attacks have hit maritime targets. Historically, this is because it has been difficult to successfully carry out maritime terrorist attacks and because such attacks have rarely caused the large loss of life or generated the heavy news coverage that

terrorists seek, the study says. The report acknowledges that the contemporary relevance of these factors is in a state of flux but that relative prioritization of risks in the maritime domain remains underdeveloped.

The largest maritime disaster would involve the detonation of a nuclear device smuggled through a major domestic port inside a shipping container.

However, the report stresses that the likelihood of such an event occurring is far lower than for other types of attacks.

Though considerably less catastrophic than worst-case scenario, the report argues that attacks on passenger ferries or cruise ships would be more probable. These attacks might involve on-board bombs or biological contaminants

inserted into the food supply, according to researcher

"Focusing solely on securing the container supply chain without defending other parts of the maritime environment is like bolting down the front door of a house and leaving the back door wide open," said Henry Willis, a RAND researcher and a co-author of the report.

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