



For Immediate Release
12/05/2011

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Maritime Security Operations Center Opening Ceremony at the Port
Includes Rear Admiral Roy Nash, U.S. Coast Guard Commander,
And Members of Louisiana's Congressional Delegation



(BATON ROUGE, LA) A keynote address by a U.S. Coast Guard rear admiral, comments from members of Congress and a ribbon cutting were among the activities held this morning, December 5th, 2011 to dedicate the new Maritime Security Operations Center at the Port of Greater Baton Rouge.

The recently completed facility overlooking the Mississippi River and the capitol city is located next to the port's administrative offices in Port Allen. This regional center has the capacity and resources to operate during catastrophic events such as hurricanes, floods or other natural or man-made disasters and will assist multiple federal, state and local agencies in responding to maritime emergencies and in facilitating security of the Mississippi River in the port region, which encompasses approximately 100 river miles, said Larry Johnson, current president of the Port Commission.

Input from the maritime community, including the Coast Guard, river pilots and industry located on the river, as well as multiple emergency response agencies, identified a need for improved communications and a central command center for coordinating response to maritime emergencies. Examples of the interagency groups that respond to such emergencies include local, state and federal law enforcement; U.S. Attorney; U.S. Corps of Engineers; U.S. Coast Guard; U.S. Customs and Immigration Services; FEMA and Louisiana National Guard.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the dedication by sheriffs of seven parishes along the Mississippi River near the port: East Baton Rouge, West Baton Rouge; Ascension; Iberville; West Feliciana; East Feliciana and Point Coupee. Known as "Joint Task Force 7" or JTF7, the group of sheriffs will share resources in responding to maritime emergencies and utilize the Maritime Security Operations Center whenever necessary in their cooperative efforts. Bud Torres, Sheriff of Point Coupee Parish and an instrumental figure in the organizational efforts of establishing JTF7, said, "This has been the vision for area law enforcement for some time, and we are all committed to securing the vital resources within the maritime industry in this region. This is a unique regional effort and will have a very positive impact from here forward."

Jay Hardman, executive director at the port, commented, “This is another great day for the Port of Greater Baton Rouge. I believe that in building this center we have successfully utilized the funds that were made available to us to help secure one of the most important waterways in the world. It has been a collaborative effort between federal, state and local governments and the port.”

Speakers at the dedication included:

Rear Admiral Roy A. Nash, United States Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Coast Guard Eighth District Commander; The Honorable David Vitter, United States Senate; and The Honorable William Cassidy, U.S. House of Representatives, District 6.

The United States Navy Band from New Orleans performed as part of the opening ceremonies and a helicopter fly-over was presented by the United States Coast Guard.

For more information on the Port of Greater Baton Rouge, visit www.portgbr.com.