

Here at the Port of Baltimore, and around the world, ports have increased their security, some out of a sense of duty to the health and well-being of the people most impacted and some because of international maritime regulations.

In the past, security revolved primarily around illegal aliens and contraband being smuggled in. Today, as we all know, it's about possible disruption to our nation by devastation through weapons of mass destruction or biological agents. Then there is the other kind of disruption — the slowdown or halt to maritime commerce.

As of early January, more than 44 ports began the process of credentialing port workers as well as any other individuals or companies that need access to port properties. It's anticipated by late fall 2008, close to one million people will have been processed for the TWIC program. At the end of the first week in January, 9,000 port workers had been processed nationally.

In December 2007, Congress approved a port security grant program that included \$8.1 million to the Transportation Security Administration's biometric card reader pilot program. This pilot program will test the efficacy of the new

Embracing TWIC Program Ensures Secure Ports


If enough ports were simultaneously put in a state of disorder, it would wreak economic havoc — first here, then throughout the nation and the globe. In order to prevent this scenario as best we can, we must have a balanced, well-reasoned and consistent approach to issues and responses.

Since 2002, our Port has significantly invested in improvements and additions to security systems. In late fall 2007, another security enhancement came into play — the Transportation Workers Identification Credential card, better known as TWIC.

The Department of Homeland Security has designated 147 of the 361 ports in the country as maritime facilities needing to have permanent TWIC readers. The remaining 214 ports will require TWIC cards for personnel entering a port, but will not have stationary readers.

TWIC reader technology.

According to Lockheed-Martin, the company overseeing the program, between 20,000 and 25,000 people interacting with the Port of Baltimore will have received the necessary background check to ensure the safety of our Port.

This program has had its detractors and controversy, but in the end, this additional layer of security for America's ports will no doubt be recognized as a necessity that will ensure that our ports remain free and open for business. 



James J. White
Executive Director