



## Action MDA

### The Maritime Domain Awareness Newsletter of the USCG Auxiliary

#### ***MDA Effectiveness Depends on Effective Communications***

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This report was received from the Virginia Department of Information Technology. The message is applicable to everyone in the Auxiliary.

Security Services has received reports that there has been an increase in attempted penetration of both physical and cyber security in a number of institutions including hospitals, medical facilities, fire stations, and rescue stations. Suspicious activity has included the surveillance and photography of potential targets such as water treatment plants, chemical storage facilities, storage facilities, bridge structures, train and subway stations, and large office buildings. In some instances, ventilation systems for buildings were also identified as potential targets. The individuals who attempted security breaches tried to use deceptive means including false credentials to gain access to secure locations.

With regards to cyber threats, attempts have been made to gain access to confidential, proprietary, and sensitive information. Attempted breaches were focused on intrusion, as well as using emails to try and gain information. The emails were reported to be very creative and they attempted to manipulate their targeted audience.

With this report, we need to be vigilant now more than ever towards both our physical security and our cyber security. Security Services recommends the following:

*Always use your employee identification badge for building access. Do not allow others to "piggy back" through doors. Be aware of your surroundings and aware if things seem unusual, or out of the ordinary. If you see any suspicious activity or something that seems out of the ordinary, please contact local authorities.*

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According to James F. Jarboe, Special Agent in Charge, Tampa Division, FBI "Intelligence bulletins have been issued in relation to the potential of a broad range of attack scenarios including acts involving weapons of mass destruction, plots to attack bridges and financial institutions and fuel refineries, plots to use small aircraft for suicide attacks, and possible interest in crop dusting capabilities, commercial drivers licenses with hazardous material endorsements, and an offensive SCUBA diver capability."

While it may not be possible to describe what a terrorist SCUBA operation might look like, we should be able to recognize most legitimate operations. The first consideration is where; most recreational diving is conducted at known locations, such as reefs, wrecks, and so on. Dive boats, both commercial and private operators, frequent attractive dive spots. They will usually display the red/white

diagonal stripe dive flag, and less frequently, the rigid Alpha flag. If you patrol an area regularly, you know where to expect them. Recreational dive boats will often have identifiable features, such as racks for compressed air bottles, and openings to facilitate the egress and ingress of divers. However, many of us dive from our unmodified boats. In climates with warm and clear water, recreational diving may occur just about anywhere, but the sites will usually have in common the lack of any nearby High Value Assets (HVA).

Legitimate SCUBA diving takes place in areas that have no apparent recreational attraction. Interesting wrecks are often located in areas where we would not otherwise expect to see dive operations, such as in murky, turbid and frequently cold water. On the east coast there is a dive club that specializes in visiting sunken submarines. There are dive sites from Cape Hatteras to the Potomac River; I was astounded to learn that so many subs are on the bottom in accessible sites.

Other operations involve police, fire, and rescue divers. These can take place anywhere, including near HVAs. Common features include lights, blue lights in the case of police, and flashing red for fire and rescue units. Usually more than one boat will be on scene. Whether the operation is an actual case, such as a rescue or evidence search, or training, there will often be an Urgent Marine Information Broadcast on VHF-FM Ch. 16. Other operations are less visible, as I know of one training exercise that involves towing Seal Team divers behind a recreational boat and releasing them near a Coast Guard Station to simulate an attack. I have also seen police units training in narrow waterways near bridges and using unmarked boats. Uniformed officers onboard were a giveaway.

University researchers often dive in unusual locations. It is important to know

the markings of local colleges and universities, so as to better recognize their boats. Research projects can occur anywhere, and researchers, particularly graduate students, are often unaware of any need to notify the Coast Guard of their activities.

If we know what to expect, we can better recognize the unexpected. Any SCUBA operation observed near an HVA that cannot be positively identified as being the "good guys" should be reported to your operational command. SCUBA divers can cover considerable distances, especially using mechanized tow sleds. Report any suspicious activity.

### *Info Bits....*



What is MDA? Maritime Domain Awareness is the effective understanding of anything associated with the global maritime environment that could upset the security, safety, economy or environment of the United States. One of the ways we can maintain awareness is by reviewing available intelligence sources. Here is just one of the many reports obtainable from the FBI.

<http://www.fbi.gov/mostwanted/terrorists/fugitives.htm>

The Department of Homeland Security encourages individuals to report information concerning suspicious or criminal activity and cyber security incidents to Homeland Security. Homeland Security Advisories and Information Bulletins are available from DHS.

[http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial\\_0335.xml](http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0335.xml)