

**Opening Statement of Chairman Thomas R. Carper**  
**“Evaluating Port Security: Progress Made and Challenges Ahead”**  
**June 4, 2014**

*As prepared for delivery:*

We have called this hearing to take a look at the current state of port security in the United States and find out if we are heading in the right direction. I hope we can also focus on the work that needs to be done over the next few years to ensure that our port security efforts maintain the proper balance between security, safety, and trade facilitation.

This is important because our focus as a Congress cannot solely be on security, but also on maintaining and enhancing our economic competitiveness. Port security is no easy job.

It involves the maritime security provided by the U.S. Coast Guard when its men and women patrol our coasts and waterways. It involves the physical security of port facilities, like our ferry terminal in Lewes, Delaware, or an energy refinery along the Gulf of Mexico or Delaware City, Delaware, that is safeguarded by state and local authorities. And it involves the cargo security provided by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which screens cargo to prevent dangerous goods from entering the United States, while also facilitating the flow of trade and transportation.

That last part is a particularly important piece. Even as we build and maintain strong layers of port security, we need to take care to not impede transportation and commerce.

Our ports and waterways are the lifeblood of our economy. More than 95 percent of all U.S. trade is handled by our seaports. These ports account for over 30 percent of U.S. Gross Domestic Product. That’s more than five trillion dollars in trade each year.

As the former Governor of Delaware and someone who was ultimately responsible for running a major port, I have a good appreciation of the important role they play in our economy. The Port of Wilmington, located along the Delaware River in the northern part of my state, is the number one seaport in North America for the importation of fresh fruit, bananas, and juice concentrate.

The Port of Wilmington isn’t just important for the State of Delaware, where it serves as a key economic engine in New Castle County; it’s a key port for the entire east coast of the United States. So protecting our ports, and safeguarding our economic lifeblood, is a responsibility I take very seriously.

As the Government Accountability Office and other experts have noted, U.S. port security has come a long way. Shortly after 9/11, the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 became law and empowered the Coast Guard with new authorities to ensure commercial vessels and port facilities meet minimum security standards.

A few years later, the SAFE Port Act of 2006 authorized key cargo and supply chain security programs enforced by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Since that time, these port and cargo security programs have matured and taken root. Not only that, many of our international trading

partners, and international trade and security organizations, have created similar security programs, emulating the Department of Homeland Security's good work. But we shouldn't – and we can't – stop here.

I want to use this hearing as an opportunity to explore how the threat to ports has evolved and what the next steps for DHS should be. I also don't want to imply that there is no room for improvement. I frequently say, I know everything I do, I can do better.

In a recent letter to Congress, DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson indicated that he believed the 100 percent scanning mandate for inbound cargo shipping containers was impractical, and not the best use of taxpayer resources. If that is the case, we must look for a better way to address security risks while preserving the necessary speed of moving containers through the ports.

So I welcome the Secretary's pledge to make a good faith effort to improve the Department's capabilities, without getting in the way of the legitimate flow of trade. I look forward to discussing this issue with some of our witnesses.

I also look forward to hearing how the Department of Homeland Security plans to address emerging threats, how it can make programs more effective and efficient, and how the agencies represented here today can work with international organizations and foreign partners to raise the global standard for port security.

As you can see from our lineup of witnesses, port security is a team sport. It's a perfect example of why bringing all of these agencies together into the Department of Homeland Security was the right thing to do. The components present here today work seamlessly with one another to develop and implement the Department's layered, risk-based strategy for port security.

From the Coast Guard to Customs and Border Protection, the Transportation Security Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Administration, and DHS's Office of Policy – each plays a critical role, and all must work together.

I am also glad to have the Government Accountability Office with us today, because it has done a considerable amount of work in this area. I thank you all for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.”

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