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# Coast Guard further streamlines maritime domain awareness data

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By Melissa Dawkins  
Special to Federal News Radio

The Coast Guard set standards for streamlining information and data transfer between state, federal and local partners, Adm. Mark Butt of the Coast Guard said at a committee hearing on improving the use and integration of maritime defense-awareness data in maritime transportation.

The new standard is Ozone Widget Framework, an open-source Web application. In the future, DHS could require Coast Guard partners receiving federal money to comply with the Ozone Widget Architecture, Butt confirmed at the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation [subcommittee hearing](#).

Setting the standard is part of a larger effort by the Coast Guard to [streamline information and data flow](#) between the Coast Guard and its partners.

Ozone Widget Framework will fit into the WatchKeeper architecture, Butt said. WatchKeeper is a data fusion and information-management system employed by the Coast Guard to share material with port partners, such as the Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, as well as state and local agencies.

WatchKeeper still is in the testing phase. The Coast Guard has deployed WatchKeeper in 22 of 35 locations, and plans to finish implementing it in remaining locations by the end of fiscal 2014, according to a March [press release](#).

"One of the things I think is going to drive port partners into playing more with WatchKeeper is the fact that the recognition of cyber issues becomes more prevalent throughout the agencies, and we've already got the defenses in place. I think that will help bring the port partners to our standards," Butt said.

The push for improved data sharing and security comes after the Government Accountability Office found that the Coast Guard's implication of its Common Operation Picture (COP) is lacking, though the Coast Guard has made some progress.

"The Coast Guard has also experienced challenges in developing and implementing COP-related systems and meeting the COP's goals for implementing systems to display and share COP information. These challenges have affected the Coast Guard's deployment of recent COP technology acquisitions and are related to such things as the inability to share information as intended and systems not meeting intended objectives," according to GAO director of homeland security and justice issues Stephen Caldwell's [testimony](#).

In addition to implementing new communication technologies, Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-Calif.) is calling for increased utilization of unmanned maritime vehicles to monitor seaways.

Butt said, however, implementing such new technologies is difficult because of legal restrictions and definitions.

"The technology has gotten way ahead of the laws for governing vessels. So what these things are and how they can be utilized is still open in a lot of ways. We're not even sure what they constitute right now, as far as what type of vessel [they are] , if they're a vessel," Butt said.

Hunter, however, pushed back.

"I'm not talking about you learning how to regulate a new and amazing technology," Hunter said. "What I'm saying is, why don't you put it to use?"

Butt said the Coast Guard is looking at other strategies to improve security under [tight budgets](#).

"One of the things we're doing to try to help with the coverage because of the budget pressures and the number of patrols, we're working with the university programs from DHS Science and Technology, and with the [University of Southern California](#) to utilize game theory as a way of optimizing and scheduling our patrols that make it look entirely random, and makes it harder for somebody to anticipate where the patrols

will be," Butt said. "So even though we're having to slide back operations a bit, what we're working on is ideas that will allow scheduling that gives the appearance that we're out there a lot more than what we are, because it puts the boat in the right place."

In addition to maritime cybersecurity concerns, House members are also worried about port security. Rep. Janice Hahn (D-Calif.) plans to reintroduce a bill aimed at addressing broad gaps in port security.

"I think our ports are one of the most vulnerable entry ways into this country," Hahn said.

A similar bill, [Gauging American Port Security Act](#) (H.R.1535), also sponsored by Hahn, passed the House but died in committee in the Senate in 2012.

*Melissa Dawkins is an intern for Federal News Radio*

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