



**Remarks of
Jeffrey N. Shane
Under Secretary for Policy
U.S. Department of Transportation**

**Organization of American States
Inter-American Committee on Ports
SecurePort Conference
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On behalf of Secretary Mineta, I am very pleased to be here to help you conclude this conference. Before I begin, I would like to congratulate the Organization of American States' Inter-American Committee on Ports (OAS/CIP) for its superb work in developing this conference. I also want to recognize and thank our hosts – the Port of Miami and the Miami-Dade Board of Commissioners – and our private sector sponsors, ABS Consulting, Unisys, and others that were recognized this morning.

This conference is a great example of what we can accomplish when our countries work together. You have produced an impressive product: a Strategic Framework for Inter-American Port Security Cooperation. It establishes the basis for enhancing our capacity to move goods and people throughout the hemisphere while improving security cooperation between our governments at the same time. The heightened collaboration that it envisions will also go a long way towards building a stronger, safer, and more productive transportation system that serves all our nations.

A Hemispheric Approach to Security

At the Western Hemisphere Transportation Initiative session in Ixtapa last May, ministers of transportation from across the Americas reiterated their commitment to work together to ensure a safe and secure environment for the movement of people and goods throughout the region. This conference fulfills one of the primary commitments of that ministerial – to ensure that we cooperate closely, and in a sophisticated way, in implementing security requirements put in place since the September 11th attacks. It is also a recognition that our economies depend on reliable and safe cargo movement, and that if our transportation system comes under attack again in the future, our economies

will suffer. The information and contacts you take away from this meeting are therefore vital to our region's continued security and prosperity.

As you well know, nobody can possibly overstate the importance of our ports today in facilitating trade. As trade volumes continue to grow, they will be even more critical to our economic well-being. In a study released about a year ago, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington highlighted the link between transportation and economic growth by pointing out that "trade flourishes only if there is an efficient transportation system that delivers cargo on time and at low cost...If the U.S. intermodal freight transportation system is allowed to fail, the impact on the nation's economic future will be severe." That proposition clearly holds true for all of our economies and for the global economy as a whole.

Our joint efforts in this forum also support implementation of measures endorsed by the Heads of State and Government of the Americas in the Quebec Plan of Action -- measures that were designed to increase the integration of our transportation systems. The new Strategic Plan forged at this meeting similarly reflects our democracies' shared vision of how enhanced cooperation and solidarity can help us address more effectively the transportation challenges we face in this hemisphere.

Security Challenges in a Post-9/11 World

Our job at the Department of Transportation is to provide the infrastructure needed to support the U.S. economy. The challenge we face is to ensure that we make the most efficient use of the resources available to us in all modes of transportation by integrating them into a seamless system that serves the needs of manufacturers, farmers, retailers and their customers.

This job has become more complicated since the events of September 11th. Security is now the central focus of our port authorities, and our governments have had to develop new strategies, together, to combat all forms of terrorism. Your participation at this conference demonstrates your commitment to enhancing port security. Improving hemispheric port and maritime security is essential to the smooth flow of goods around the world, and the ISPS Code and the Marine Transportation Security Act (MTSA) passed by the U.S. Congress in 2002 provide an important framework for that work.

This conference demonstrates how crucial international cooperation is to our success. This effort must not end today, however. Instead, this gathering should serve as another step in a long walk we will take together. We would like to ask all of you to ask your countries' leadership to make timely adoption of a Hemispheric Port Security Plan a high priority in the months ahead. The U.S. Department of Transportation will continue to work within OAS to advance the cause of port security.

Through events such as this we can provide port security training and technical assistance in support of the work plan and the deliverables of the Summit of the Americas. For example, our Maritime Administration can continue to use OAS funding to support the

Inter-American Port Security Training program, which trains hundreds of port security professionals in our hemisphere each year.

Other DOT Initiatives

Before I conclude, let me note a couple of related areas where we are working to enhance the safety and security of our global transportation network. For example, I serve as a co-chairman, with colleagues from the Department of Homeland Security, of the Operation Safe Commerce (OSC) program. OSC is a collaborative effort that seeks to safeguard international marine container shipments destined for the U.S. by working with our major load centers, carriers, shippers and other stakeholders to test and evaluate potential security applications. The objective of these tests is to identify practices, procedures, and technologies that can provide the highest levels of container security without adversely trade flows. \$58 million in grants have been awarded so far, and we will begin receiving results of these tests later this year.

The Bush Administration has also taken a number of steps to improve connections between our marine transportation system and our other modes to make transportation planning more coherent, especially in freight and goods movement. Most importantly, our proposal to reauthorize the Nation's highway, highway safety and transit programs – the Safe Accountable Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act, or SAFETEA – includes bold new proposals to facilitate the movement of freight and goods through the transportation system, in part by increasing marine access to our surface modes. Congress has taken up this legislation, but unfortunately has not yet completed its work. It is critical that they pass a six-year reauthorization this year that complies with the President's request. Without the freight and goods provisions in our bill, we will lose a tremendous opportunity to create the kind of seamless freight transportation system we all deserve.

Conclusion

To conclude, the delicate balance between security and productivity has never been more evident than it is today. The need to meet vital IMO security standards while expanding trade in our Hemisphere are both critical objectives to creating a better future for all of us. The close links that bind our countries will help us achieve those objectives, and the work you have done at this Conference will help build on those ties. A strong public/private partnership is also important to our success.

You have the Department of Transportation's full support in your development of an Inter-American Security Plan that will help us all to comply with the new IMO security code. I look forward to working with all of you to fully implement the recommendations presented today. Thank you very much.