

## Testimony of

Roberto Saarenas, Security Director, Port of Tacoma

On the Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) Program

Before the Border, Maritime and Global Counterterrorism Subcommittee

Of the House Homeland Security Committee

September 17, 2008

Good morning Madam Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. For the record my name is Roberto Saarenas, Director of Security and TWIC Facilitation for the Port of Tacoma, Washington. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this Subcommittee with an update on the implementation of the Transportation Workers Identification Card (TWIC).

The Port of Tacoma began TWIC implementation on November 7, 2007. We were selected by the Department of Homeland Security as one of the first five ports to adopt TWIC, and as of September 5<sup>th</sup> 2008, we've had 6,107 enrollments, of which 4,635 cards have been activated. However, we conservatively estimate another 4,000 individuals - or 40% - still need to enroll in our Port area before the deadline in only five months.

Last week, the Port of Tacoma participated in the Port Security Caucus hosted by the American Association of Port Authorities. At this meeting, port security directors from around the country exchanged information about their experiences with the TWIC enrollment process. We are experiencing similar challenges as other ports, including:

- Problems with fingerprint readers. Specifically, there have been problems with the software being unable to verify the fingerprints of individuals when they come in to the enrollment center to activate their TWIC. If there are problems in a secure office environment, it's difficult to imagine how the readers will work once exposed to the extreme weather of a maritime terminal.
- Lack of communication and inconsistent messages from the enrollment center staff about requirements for enrollment or activation. For example, some of my security officers have been told to come to the enrollment center, and then are admonished by staff when they show up without an appointment; additionally, citizens

born outside the United States receive inconsistent information about the documentation required of them. This has frequently resulted in long waits to enroll or activate cards. We are concerned this situation will get significantly worse the closer to the enrollment deadline. We are unsure if the contractor is prepared to handle the surges in enrollment.

- Outreach to critical port personnel such as truckers, vendors and contractors. While we and other ports have conducted considerable outreach including signage, town hall events and the like, this remains a significant concern.

Looking forward, the Port of Tacoma along with other major U.S. ports has identified a number of areas we urge DHS and the USCG to address, including:

- Ensuring ample time for vendors, contractors and service workers to get their TWIC. This is particularly worrisome for those individuals who need access to the Port only temporarily or infrequently but for whom an escort is unreasonable; for example, municipal utility workers checking meters or railroad workers handling secure cargo.
- Providing clear, consistent guidelines for escorting of roll-on, roll-off cargo – that’s large bulk cargo such as automobiles or tractors – as well as guidelines for escorting ship-board crew. In the absence of industry guidelines, the Port of Tacoma is developing its own protocol for escorting in these situations, but clearly it’s in the best interest of everyone if there is a template for all Ports to adhere to.
- Greater outreach. TWIC is a federal mandate; we believe the U.S. Coast Guard and Department of Homeland Security should take greater responsibility and have a much more active role in the outreach efforts about the new requirement. They cannot rely only on industry and the federal contractor to get the word out about this mandate.
- Long-term plans for enrollment centers. Most enrollment centers, like ours in Tacoma, are in temporary locations or are on short-term leases. What is the long-term, on-going plan for these centers? For example, enrollment centers need to have adequate parking for trucks

and they need to be ADA compliant; they can't simply be located in a shopping mall.

- Finally, we urge DHS to exempt the TWIC card readers from the cost-share requirement under the port security grant program.

The public ports in the United States share the goal of Congress and the federal agencies in ensuring the security of our nation's gateways, while avoiding disruption of the flow of international commerce. The Port of Tacoma and other U.S. ports are committed to doing our part to comply. We offer our concerns not simply to criticize but to educate and hopefully improve the system.

Thank you for your attention today; I'm happy to try and answer any questions you may have.

**DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS**  
**Required by House rule XI, clause 2(g)**

1. **Name:** Mr. Roberto Saarenas, Director of Security & TWIC Facilitation,  
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2. **Business Address:**  
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3. **Organization you are representing:**  
Port of Tacoma
  
4. **Any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which you have received since October 1, 2005, from Federal Agencies under the purview of the hearing, the source and the amount of each grant or contract:**  
None.
  
5. **Any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) which were have received since October 1, 2005, from Federal Agencies under the purview of the hearing by the organization(s) which you represent at this hearing, including the source and amount of each grant or contract:**
  - From Department of Homeland Security:
    - Port Security Grant Program (Office of Grants & Training, 2006):
      - Security Force Patrol Boats \$364, 941.
      - Waterways Intrusion Detection Enhancements \$1,748,049.
    - Port Security Grant Program (Office of Grants & Training, 2007):
      - Port Wide Emergency Broadcast System \$1,062,969.
      - Facility / Perimeter Security Intrusion Prevention \$8,074,353.
      - TWIC Installation & Implementation \$2,467,872.
  - Sub-Contract with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL\*) for assistance setting up and staffing the National Rail Test Center \$600,000.

\*PNNL contract is with DNDO, an agency of DHS

  - From U.S. Department of Commerce:
    - NOAA Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program grant \$1,450,558.