

Marine Safety Office Houston-Galveston
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Port Security Information Bulletin
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**Warning of Potential Swimmer Attack Indicators
and Protective Measures**
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During the past two years, there have been numerous incidents that have occurred involving suspicious individuals possibly conducting surveillance of port facilities, cruise ship docks, naval bases, dams, bridges, and power facilities in the United States. Also, there has been law enforcement reporting of suspicious individuals having queried marine shops and schools concerning equipment and training. While DHS possesses no specific information indicating that a swimmer attack of any kind is currently being planned in the U.S., such targeting would be consistent with Al-Qaeda's stated objective to disrupt and undermine vital economic interests in this country and to cause mass casualties and panic. This PSIB provides general characteristics of terrorist surveillance activities and general protective measures. It was developed by DHS in collaboration with the FBI, which issued this information to the law enforcement community.

The following indicators may point to possible terrorist planning. Alone, each indicator can result from legitimate recreational and commercial activities; however, multiple indicators combined with other information can possibly suggest a terrorist threat or impending attack. Unusual requests for training as well as certain characteristics of training could represent potential terrorist interest in using diving to conduct terrorist activity.

These indicators may include requests for specific specialty training, including inquiries inconsistent with recreational diving. Threats and coercion or attempts to bribe trainers for certification may also be an indicator. In addition, requests to learn advanced skills that can be associated with swimmer attack training, including training with rebreathers, deep diving, conducting "kick counts" or receiving navigation training may be considered. Other indicators include rapid progression of diver training and certifications, especially if the training is routinely conducted between the same individuals. Training sponsored by groups or agencies not normally associated with diving, or training conduct by instructors who do not advertise and appear to have little means of visible support, (especially those with a history of extremist views), may be indicators of pre-operational planning. Other key indicators include training conducted in remote, atypical locations or restricted areas.

In addition, suspicious attempts to purchase specialized marine equipment may provide indication of pre-operational activity. Other indicators may include individual purchases of common gear in excessive quantities, attempts to rent advanced gear without required certifications) or attempts to rent gear that is inconsistent with the stated purpose of the diving). Other suspicious activity can include volume purchasing inquiries related to swimmer delivery vehicles (SDVs) and diver propulsion vehicles (DPVs), exclusive purchases of darkened gear or after market painting and attempts to purchase advanced gear such as rebreathers or other equipment used in mixed gas diving by individuals who appear to lack expertise in the use of the equipment. Finally, attempts to purchase large magnets, large diameter PVC pipe or empty compressed gas cylinders or theft of them, and any other objects that may be used to create improvised explosive devices may be an indicator of terrorist activity.

Logistical planning for swimmer attacks may include characteristics such as groups of individuals, especially those with no visible means of support, sharing a common address near the water. Attempts to take diving equipment, particularly advanced gear, without the required certifications on commercial flights, cash purchases of small boats or personal watercraft from private individuals and invalid or unusual explanations of visitor, employment or student status may be indicators. Employment attempts at diving equipment dealers or rental shops may also be suspicious.

Surveillance and probing of potential targets is consistent with known practices of terrorist organizations that seek to maximize the likelihood of operational success through careful planning. Possible indicators of surveillance may include attempts to photograph or loiter near restricted areas or sensitive sites, and unusual behavior or activity by employees, vendors, visitors or contractors at a sensitive site.

The Department of Homeland Security encourages individuals to report information concerning such suspicious activity to their local FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) Office, <http://www.fbi.gov/contact>, Department of Homeland Security (NIPC) Watch and Warning Unit at (202) 323-3205, toll free at 1-888-585-9078, or by email to nipc.watch@fbi.gov.

The U.S. Coast Guard reminds the maritime industry that they may also report information concerning suspicious activity 24 hours a day to the National Response Center (NRC) at 1-800-424-8802.

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