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VPA Police Enhance Security Capabilities with New Situational Response System

NORFOLK, VA – With three marine terminals to secure, 10 miles of perimeter fencing to patrol and 250 closed-circuit television cameras to monitor, the Virginia Port Authority Police Department has a big job.

A new software system that integrates several functions with automated situational responses, however, will streamline the around-the-clock job of securing the state-owned deepwater marine terminals while expanding the capability of the VPA police.

“This situational response system, because of its capabilities, helps shrink and streamline some of the things that are normal parts of incident response,” said Ed Merkle, the VPA’s director of port security and emergency operations. “The system ties together all three terminals providing integrated video and access control with command and control capabilities.”

In November, the VPA began operating *Situator*, a software system created by New York-based Orsus, a firm specializing in situation management and integrated response systems.

For two years Merkle had been looking for software that would give the VPA police improved systems integration and automated response capability. He also wanted a system with a track-record of success and one that could operate using the police department's existing hardware.

Situator has several features and one of the most important is its ability to tie together the police department's video monitoring operation into a single system with a geographic location feature.

"You see a fence on one of the monitors and it looks like a fence, it is very hard to immediately pinpoint the location of what you are looking at," Merkle said. "With *Situator*, if there is a perimeter breach, we can immediately pinpoint the exact location and train other cameras on the area.

Also, it is important to remember that the old system(s) varied somewhat from terminal to terminal, so you had to have system-specific training. This eliminates all of that: everything is unified and that is critical."

Another feature is the system's ability to generate automated responses which keeps an officer from having to call to the command center every time the situation changes. In addition, *Situator* has a function that allows port officials to stay abreast of a situation through instant text messaging.

Other functions of *Situator*:

- Integrated incident reports
- Situation simulation for training
- Tools for system analysis
- Supports emergency response and continuity of operations
- Real-time information exchange within the domain
- Credentialing
- C-TPAT compliance

The *Situator* software was purchased using federal grant money awarded in the spring to the VPA in by the Department of Homeland Security.

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The Virginia Port Authority (VPA) is an agency of the Commonwealth of Virginia, reporting to the state Secretary of Transportation. The VPA owns and operates four general cargo facilities on behalf of the state: Norfolk International Terminals, Portsmouth Marine Terminal, Newport News Marine Terminal and the Virginia Inland Port in Warren County. The terminals are operated by Virginia International Terminals, Inc. (VIT) the non-stock, non-profit operating company. The VPA, through terminal earnings generated by VIT, is operationally self-sufficient. The VPA and correlating maritime industry is responsible for 165,000 jobs, \$762 million in

business revenues and \$61 million in state and local taxes throughout the Commonwealth.