Coast Guard MSRT Sees Expanding, Evolving Role



Maritime Security Response Team West members train on April 10 in Cordova, Alaska, with the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force.
U.S. Coast Guard/Chief Petty Officer Matthew Schofield

NATIONAL HARBOR, Md. – The U.S. Coast Guard's maritime security response teams (MSRT) continue to evolve, as the service looks to make them more effective and expand their capabilities.

The mission of the teams – one is based in San Diego, California, and another is in Chesapeake, Virginia – is tactical, as MSRT is a ready assault force, whose members are trained in maritime security, law enforcement boarding procedures, force protection and environmental hazards response within a tactical law enforcement operation. The teams also combat chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats posed to the United States.

Lt. Jake Tronaas, Direct Action 6 team leader, Maritime Security Response Team West, said his team is working on a more robust working relationship with U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and other Department of Defense agencies.

"In the last few years, our mission set has changed," Tronaas said.

Once focused primarily on issues related to San Diego, his

team
now focuses on vast counter-terrorism responses and is responsible for an area
from Alaska to Australia.

Tronaas said his unit recently completed three weeks of training
in Alaska, in preparation for response potential incidents in the Arctic.

“We definitely need to work on being prepared to cover our operational area,” he said during the Navy League’s annual Sea-Air-Space exposition.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security agency team stays consistent
in terms of operations throughout the year, but sees a slight uptick in the
summer months, as more events, such as United Nations meetings along with presidential
and Coast Guard commandant missions, occur.

The team also recently transitioned to a maritime security response team from the maritime safety and security team, allowing them to
focus on additional legacy anti-terrorism missions that predate the Sept. 11,
2001, terrorist attacks.

“This
is a consolidation and will make us and the Coast Guard more efficient,”
Tronaas said.