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Mines and underwater IEDS in US ports and waterways: context, threats, challenges, and solutions.

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Abstract : A broad spectrum of nontraditional and asymmetric threats challenges U.S. maritime homeland security. Under the cloak of legal activity, groups that would do the

United States harm can enter the U.S. homeland anywhere along more than 95,000 miles of coastlines and through some 360 ports from Maine to Guam. The threats of the Cold War are gone, and the United States finds itself operating in an environment where piracy, illegal migration, drug smuggling, terrorism, arms proliferation, and environmental crimes are carried out by anonymous, loosely affiliated perpetrators. Naval mines and underwater improvised explosive devices (UWIEDs, or minelike booby traps) are among these threats to U.S. maritime interests. A true sleeper threat, mines and UWIEDs can with great effect attack the good order of American ports and waterways. They are the quintessential asymmetric naval weapons, used for more than two centuries by weak naval powers against the strong. If left unaddressed, they could constitute an Achilles' heel for U.S. homeland security. Until very recently, naval mines and UWIEDs, if included in domestic maritime threat assessments at all, have usually been relegated to the status of a lesser included problem. If the United States can deal with what planners believe are the more likely maritime threats, especially vessel-borne devices, it can certainly handle mines and underwater IEDs. But the history of naval and terrorist mining since 1945 challenges this assumption, and the stakes are high if it turns out to be wrong. Indeed, the assessments and planning that have focused on the M/UWIED threat underscore critical weaknesses in how federal, regional, state, and local actors charged with ensuring America's maritime security -- as well as private entities whose assets are at risk -- must respond to weapons that can easily be deployed in U.S. ports and waterways.

Descriptors : *THREATS , *EXPLOSIVES , *WATERWAYS , *HOMELAND SECURITY , *UNDERWATER MINES , *PORTS(FACILITIES) , *IMPROVISED WEAPONS , REPRINTS , MILITARY HISTORY , COASTAL REGIONS , NAVY , PROTECTION , TERRORISM , ASYMMETRIC WARFARE , SEALIFT OPERATIONS , LIMPET WEAPONS , BOOBY TRAPS , MINE WARFARE , COAST GUARD , SHIPPING , LEGISLATION , SHIPBOARD , MINE COUNTERMEASURES , UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT , STRATEGY , PREPARATION

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