

**MONDAY MORNING GROUP OF WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY
ANNUAL ADVOCACY TRIP – WASHINGTON, DC
APRIL 25 – 27, 2023**

HOMELAND SECURITY’S “ARGOS” TACTICAL MARITIME SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM (TMSS)

ISSUE: The Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) multi-agency federal law enforcement requires expanded maritime surveillance capabilities to combat increasing levels of smuggling and national security threats in key maritime borders regions, particularly the southern California littorals.

ACTION: The Monday Morning Group urges federal leaders to support the “Argos” Tactical Maritime Surveillance System (TMSS), a proven DHS Custom and Border Protection (CBP) maritime surveillance capability, to keep pace with the threats confronting the homeland and to pursue and “Argos” TMSS deployment to southern California.

BACKGROUND: Transnational criminal organizations are increasingly transporting migrants and narcotics from Mexico into the United States via ocean routes because detection systems and law enforcement personnel are less concentrated in the maritime domain than along the land border. To illustrate the increasing quantity and frequency of the illicit maritime activity, BP observed nearly 200 events in 2016 and more than 1,250 in 2020. DHS today provides maritime domain awareness through routine patrols with aircraft, boats, shore-based radars and cameras, and agent/officer-led investigations. This patrol-based capability provides maritime surveillance in numerous high-risk, high-traffic sea lanes and near major seaports, however DHS cannot keep pace with the magnitude and frequency of events in several high threat regions.

CBP, DHS, and the U.S. Coast Guard are addressing this shortfall by developing and deploying a relocatable, near-shore persistent maritime surveillance system called the “Argos” TMSS to complement the patrol capability. The Argos system includes an aerostat with a sea surveillance radar, a day-night capable camera, an automatic identification system, and the Minotaur Mission Management System that offers persistent maritime surveillance out to 90 nautical miles from the shore. Argos detects and tracks a wide array of large and small watercraft conducting smuggling activities and enables sharing of surveillance information across DHS command centers and patrol platforms in the border region.

During 2017-2022, CBP, U.S. Coast Guard, and state and local police organizations partnered to demonstrate Argos systems in Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico. In Texas specifically, the Argos capability provided an 84% improvement in persistent surveillance to detect smugglers, a 78% increase in the probability of detecting illegal activities, and a 97% decrease in the time needed to determine whether an observed activity was suspicious or not. In 2022, CBP demonstrated similar performance in Puerto Rico, and in the first six months of operations, Argos detected and supported DHS law enforcement operation’s by yielding seizures and apprehensions of over three (3) tons of cocaine, \$2 million in criminal proceeds, over 100 illegal migrants, and over 20 smuggling crew and vessels.

An Argos TMSS deployment to southern California would find the same success as demonstrated previously in other highly trafficked regions. Given the escalating rate of illegal maritime activities in the region, the Argos deployment would significantly enhance DHS’s ability to locate and negate these threats. DHS assessed deployment options in southern California and determined an Argos deployment to the U.S. Navy’s range on San Clemente Island offers the best opportunity for counter-smuggling, counter-narcotics success. DHS is seeking Defense Department concurrence in southern California and Washington, D.C., for deployment approval, system operation and logistics support, and transportation support for the deployment.

Beyond California, DHS is pursuing resources and opportunities to deploy the Argos TMSS maritime surveillance capability to the Florida Keys to counter today’s unprecedented migration surge, and to other strategic Caribbean locations experiencing high levels of illicit migration and human/narcotics smuggling. The DHS resourcing plans include partnering with other federal and state agencies and ensuring sufficient system equipment is available for 24/7 operation in these high-risk regions. The Argos TMSS program is a new line item in the Homeland Security FY23 budget (in the Omnibus appropriation).