

Underwater ‘Robots’ Search the Depths

Security Submersibles Add Eyes Under the Sea

The Port of Long Beach’s security efforts don’t stop at the water’s surface. The Port is getting a much clearer picture these days of what’s going on underwater thanks to the addition of some new members to the security team.

Small, submarine-like devices equipped with video cameras, known as remotely operated vehicles (or ROVs), now allow security personnel to easily and quickly examine the underside of vessels, piers and other structures without sending a diver into the water.

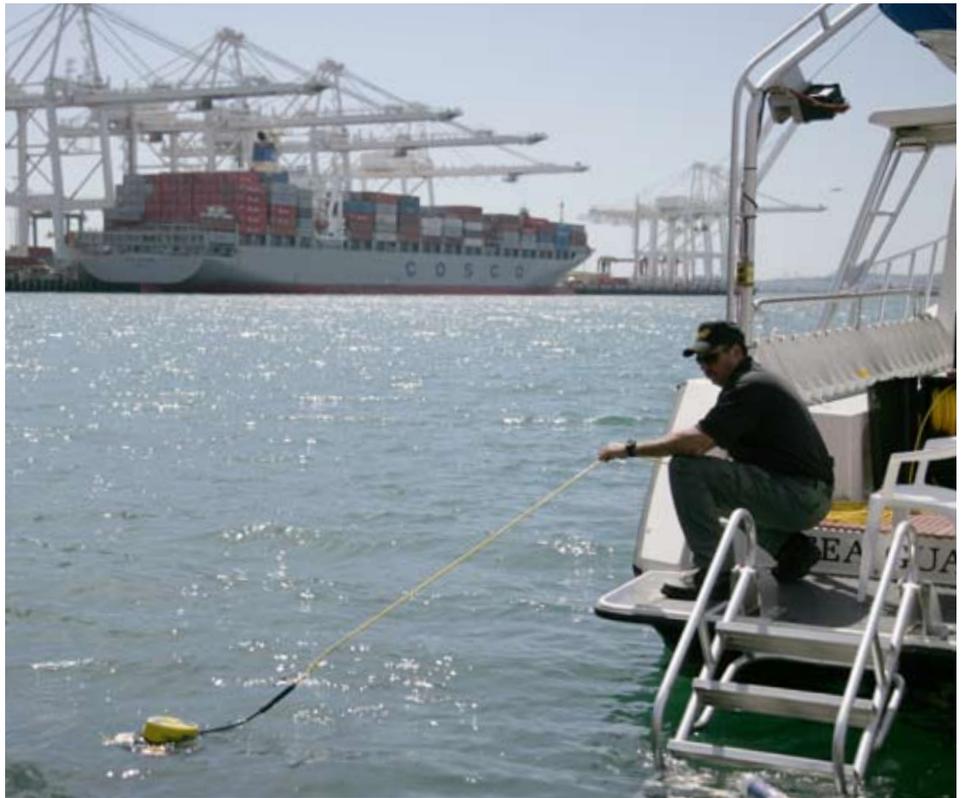
The Port’s Security Division and Harbor Patrol personnel began training with the \$30,000 VideoRay ROVs in April. Two units were put into service full-time in May, enhancing underwater surveillance capabilities at the Port.

The ROVs add to what Port Security Director Cosmo Perrone calls “domain awareness” – the ability to know what’s going on in the water and on land at all times. The submersibles help security personnel to more quickly investigate anything that seems suspicious.

“The faster we dispel the suspicion that something is awry, the faster we can get the goods moving in a normal fashion,” Perrone says.

The portable units are lightweight – about 8 pounds – and aren’t much bigger than a toaster. Tethered by a long yellow cord, the VideoRay is guided from dockside or boat by an operator who stays high and dry, watching the video feed from a distance.

The ROVs have spread widely throughout maritime security programs around the country



The submarine-like devices equipped with video cameras are giving Port security officers an improved ability to monitor conditions underneath harbor waters.

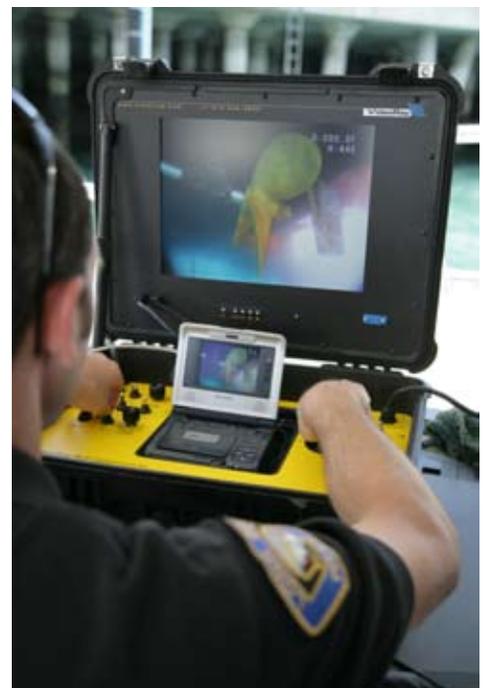
in recent years. They are also extensively used by engineering firms for inspections of underwater equipment such as pipelines.

In addition to the ROVs’ underwater video cameras and halogen lights, the units can be equipped with sonar detectors, radiation detectors and ship hull inspection systems.

“We’re continually looking at new ways to improve security, particularly with technology, and the ROVs give us another useful tool,” Perrone said.

On the Web

See the aquatic security robots in action — visit the Port’s web site, www.polb.com, for a video program on the ROVs.



Video monitors connect security officers to the underwater cameras down below.