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***The Delightfully Brief, Pithy and Wholly
Idiosyncratic Words from John A C Cartner***

To view Dr. Cartner discussing the TWIC please click [here](#). The transcript is provided below.



A Billion Here or There

Now that the President has another four years and the budget chasm is before the country. The so-called fiscal cliff comes. Of the many ways to save money, the Congress has chosen the meat cleaver approach. There are others -- such as rooting out waste, fraud and abuse. After all, as the late Everett Dirksen of Illinois said, "A billion here and a billion there and pretty soon it adds up to real money." One program comes to mind immediately under that heading: the TWIC.

The detested Transportation Worker Identification Credential or TWIC is a waste, a fraud on the people and abusive to every party ever having to deal with it. Let me be specific.

There are two propensities in politics which come to the fore in times of national stress. The first is panicked overreaction. The TWIC was the outcome of a Congressional herd panicked about their seats being lost if they did not do something –

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anything – after September 11, 2001. We must recall that the largest man-made disaster on the mainland prior to the New York affair was the Johnstown Flood of 1889 where 2209 souls perished, if we do not include the Dust Bowl which was even more devastating if not so dramatic. Here was Johnstown again and right in Pennsylvania, too. Oh yes, there was New York and Arlington.

The second propensity is to burden those who will protest least – usually from a profound ignorance of the true situation. Hence, the Congressional teenage staffers decided that a whole group of people about whom they knew little and cared less could be burdened in a show of security theater to Make the Nation Safer. Thus, all those truck drivers and seafarers and longshoremen – socially clearly inferior to the fresh-faced Capitol Hill weenies --could be used in a perversion of security which might even lead to a national identification card partially fulfilling Mike Hayden's dream of Total Information Awareness! The Fool All the People Some of the Time Machine was dusted off.

Voila! The TWIC!

Even the name is laughable. So began the Billion Dollar Waste Security Program. That was aided and abetted by Lockheed Martin, a company equally at home in the free-spending Department of Defense. It brought the DoD mentality to a civil program and created a revenue machine for itself. After all, it helped too to fan the flames of panic in Congress with its army of lobbyists.

So waste came. These people could not get out of their own underwear in devising and then running the TWIC program. They of course were not helped at all by having the entire lash up place in the Transportation Security Administration – those wizards of petty theft and baggage searches. After all, maritime is transportation and transportation is in the name of the administration therefore it should go in the TSA! Where does the government come up with things like this? The Coast Guard cagily distanced itself from the looking disaster. It could smell it coming.

As Lockheed got paid, the pabulum sop of TWIC applicants having to pay to make the matter break even was passed around. It did not matter. Lockheed made the profits, government money was wasted by the bucketfuls and a program which was to cover 750,000 people discovered more

than two million people in the business who suddenly had to have one of these silly cards which one Congressman called about as useful as a library card for national security purposes. When Lockheed came back to the trough on cost overruns for more money in a blatant DoD style weapons program holdup, they were partially denied. Some sense it seemed had crept into the army of government boobs. That was short-lived.

Now the fraud. The TWIC is a fraud on the American people. It is a fraud on the transportation industries. It is a fraud at a time we cannot afford smoke and mirror frauds. For a program whose object is the security of the port system it could not, will not and cannot work efficiently. The American public has been deluded by the TWIC and defrauded of a billion dollars of tax money by it. A TWIC can be bought for \$200. Some 26,000 of the cards were wholly defective when issued by the TSA's contractor. Want a TWIC? Tell the government you have a card reader and you can get one and its codes. The TWIC will not even get you on an airplane policed by the same agency running the program. The TWIC cannot be read and so it serves as a flash pass. Even the subways systems are better than that! The TWIC is a billion dollar fraud which should be stopped now for the lie which it embodies.

Now let us get to the abuses. They have been legion. The TSA, remember, brought us genital groping in airports with Airport Johnny Pistole's "We Will Not Back Down" speech complete with rhetorical flourishes and twisted visage. There have been reports of Lockheed Martin employees assaulting and battering a TWIC applicants for asking questions about the program. If the TSA did not like an applicant's name it made one up. The reports of denials of TWIC cards – which has become the de facto employment card of a whole class of people – are legion. One man was denied because he came to the country at the age of two and was reared by two naturalized parents. One man was denied because his name was similar to someone on a secret list the TSA twits keep. Applications were lost. The silliest of rules were emplaced such as the requirement that one had to apply in person for the TWIC and then return to the same place to pick up the library card. The rules were so convoluted that it required an act of Congress to change that one. As Congress gives it is now time for Congress to take away.

The TSA has wanted to show how tough it is – and yes, it is tough. It is tough much as any organization of thugs, punks

and wannabees roughing up the unprotected is tough. Petty, tough and gutless. This is the same outfit which sported armbands just after it was formed until someone had sense enough to see the likeness to their German counterparts of an earlier generation.

So if we want to save a billion, put the TWIC out of its misery and get the TSA out of the port business. Our ports will be no less secure and our people will be a lot happier – including the companies which have to deal with the implementation of this the stupidest of all unaffordable programs.

Urgings

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If you like good law reporting, sign up for [Maritime Advocate](#) put out by my good friends Sam Ignarski and Humphrey Hill in London. They also include funny stories from time to time which we all need the current shipping vale of tears.

Smooth sailing, fair winds and a following sea.

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Cartner & Fiske, LLC consults in maritime and related law, naval architecture and marine engineering and maritime economics and trade.

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