

# Trading Spaces – Coast Guard, CBP Style

*Story and photos by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.*

CHARLESTON, S.C. – Lt. j.g. Ron Nakamoto of Sector Charleston, S.C., never thought that he would be working for Customs and Border Protection when he joined the Coast Guard 12-years ago. Still in his Coast Guard uniform, Nakamoto has filled the shoes of Supervisory Officer Dan Johnson of Customs and Border Protection in the Port of Charleston since Jan. 8.

Nakamoto is participating in a professional exchange program along with numerous other Coast Guard officers across the nation. The program is part of an effort between the Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection to take steps to better understand each other's organizations for future collaborative efforts and to enhance maritime security.

Customs and Coast Guard officers at Coast Guard sector commands and Customs and Border Protection field operations offices across the country are participating in the exchange program to work together on the similar mission areas of the two agencies.

“It’s been a real eye opener to see CBP’s capabilities and their approach to similar operations. I’ve gained some real knowledge participating in the CBP missions that don’t involve the ports like screening a international airports for those trying to enter the United States,” said Nakamoto on his last day of the exchange before another Coast Guard officer takes his place.

The program was implemented by the Commandant of the Coast Guard, Adm. Thad Allen, and the commissioner of Customs and Border Protection, W. Ralph Basham in November 2006. Allen and Basham were tasked to create the program in a memorandum from the Secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, describing joint Coast Guard and Customs initiatives in June 2006.

In his first report to Sector Charleston and District Seven, Nakamoto cited numerous areas where Customs and the Coast Guard could improve their inter-agency cooperation



Coast Guard Lt. j.g. Ron Nakamoto of Sector Charleston and Customs and Border Protection Supervisory Officer Dan Johnson of the Port of Charleston are participating in the Coast Guard, CBP professional exchange program. The professional exchange program was created at the direction of the Secretary of Homeland Security and was implemented in a 90-day trial period Coast Guard wide Jan. 1. The goal of the professional exchange is for officers to discover ways the Coast Guard and CBP can become more effective in port security activities and create a nearly seamless working environment between the two agencies. Coast Guard photograph by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.

including the Coast Guard and CBP radiation detections programs and container inspections.

“Our radiation detection programs are very similar. If we used the same equipment and could collaborate together on operations, we’d probably cover more area,” said Nakamoto.



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commandant and the commissioner.

The professional exchange program is in a 90-day test period. The Coast Guard and CBP will evaluate the effectiveness and the value of the program in March.

The flow of information wasn’t one sided. Johnson spent over a month in Nakamoto’s position at Sector Charleston.

“It’s been a very informative experience for me, and I’ve learned a lot about the Coast Guard,” said Johnson, who’s been with CBP for about six years.

Johnson was also required to make a report to his superiors regarding his experiences. He cited many of the same issues Nakamoto did in his report.

“I think container targeting could be greatly improved if we worked more closely. We may be inspecting different aspects of a container, but we can accomplish more together than either one of us could do alone,” said Johnson.

That’s the ultimate goal of the professional exchange program to have officers participating in the program to provide input that may improve Coast Guard and CBP operations and effectiveness.

This professional exchange program is just one of five activities the Coast Guard and CBP were tasked to collaborate on by Secretary Chertoff. The Coast Guard and CBP were tasked to work together on vessel targeting, dual-agency vessel boarding teams, information sharing and training.

For each one of these activities, the local Coast Guard sectors and CBP offices must meet minimum goals outlined by the secretary, the

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