Cruise Capital of the World
Hosting 4.8 million cruise passengers and 1,348 cargo vessels last year alone, the Port of Miami is known as both the “Cruise Capital of the World” and the “Cargo Gateway of the Americas”.

The Port includes seven cruise terminals, with most modern cruise ships hosting approximately 5,000 passengers. Security is a top priority.

“In the mid-2000s, we hosted approximately 3 million passengers each year,” says Louis Noriega, former port operations official at the Port of Miami. “Now we’re at 4.8 million passengers each year, and the number continues to rise.”

Dock Dilemma
Due to the large volume of activity taking place on a daily basis, the Port of Miami faced a number of security and operational issues ranging from theft to “slip and fall” passenger lawsuits.

Additionally, security personnel struggled to monitor the Port at night – darkness made it difficult to identify who or what was approaching the docks. Luxury boats often tied up to restricted docks, stealing water space reserved for cruise and cargo vessels and delaying the flow of vessel traffic.

The Port of Miami needed to find a way to ensure the safety of civilians and maximize efficiency on both land and sea.

Chaos Control
To update their surveillance system, the Port of Miami partnered with UNICOM Government under the U.S. Communities contract – a government purchasing cooperative that provides world class procurement resources and solutions to state and local government agencies, school districts (K-12), higher education, and nonprofits. UNICOM Government, a division of UNICOM Global, works with Federal, state, and local government organizations to deliver the IT solutions, services, and financial options that support mission success.

Leveraging the U.S. Communities contract, the Port of Miami expedited project planning and outsourcing without compromising quality – completing a 14-month process in 45 days.

“For a typical grant-funded project, you must navigate through several stages and departments before you can start work,” says Noriega. “You choose a bidder then play a back-and-forth game of timeline extension, budget expansion, and scope of work alteration. Couple this with lack of communication and you have a chaotic, confusing process.”

The U.S. Communities contract eliminated the need for multiple vendor contract procurements, allowing the Port of Miami to select tried-and-true U.S. Communities’ subcontractors in a hassle-free, efficient manner. Working under one contract allowed for UNICOM Government and subcontractor accountability throughout the duration of the project, streamlining the process without complications typically found in the traditional RFP process.
Intrusion Interception
Valued at $6 million, the project expanded the Port’s existing video surveillance system from 450 cameras to 1,000 cameras, and integrated an advanced video management system (VMS) into security controls.

New facilities and terminals were built with newly manufactured mounts and poles, power cabling infrastructure, and network video recording (NVR) software integrated within the control system. The U.S. Communities contract accelerated the process of acquiring electrical permits for underground boring and trenching prior to physical construction of the terminals. UNICOM Government installed state-of-the-art radar technology and a coastal automatic identification system (AIS) to provide domain awareness of the waterway that surrounds the Port of Miami.

In addition to these installations, UNICOM Government partnered with NICE Systems, whose NiceVision Net IP video surveillance solutions upgrade analog video surveillance systems to help secure all of the Port’s facilities. The NICE solution enables Port officials to remotely monitor and manage pre-existing analog cameras and newly-installed IP video surveillance cameras.

Waterside surveillance was a significant task – from physical construction to technology integration. When small vessels like jet skis or canoes approach the port, the coastal tracking system detects incoming signals, allowing officials to see vessels that may encroach or violate the secured area. Geo-scanners track the target and then notify a security officer, who is dispatched to investigate the area. The radar technology helps prevent unauthorized port intrusions.

Waterway Watch
The physical security alarm and water surveillance system is monitored on the nation’s largest port security video wall. Integrated with the Port’s physical security alarming systems, Barco’s video-wall solution, and NICEVision’s video management matrix, the wall enables officers to control and modify everything placed on the system. The video wall is designated for alert systems, intercom use, analytics, and cabling, however most importantly was configured to multi-task – operators are able to modify and view specific sections of the wall, while the remaining layers stay untouched. With this purpose in mind, the wall was configured to prevent overload and serve as a foolproof, user-friendly system for operators.

With ships coming in at all times of the day and night, the video wall is accessible 24/7 – a mission-critical component of the Port’s operational and security functioning.

Lessons Learned
With annual passenger and cargo counts on the rise, the Port of Miami continuously strives to improve security measures.

“We are learning every day,” says Noriega. “Thanks to the new surveillance solutions, we are able to re-visit past footage from old analog cameras to inspect our internal security processes and identify areas for improvement.”

The ability to retrospectively access and analyze footage enables the Port of Miami to constantly improve upon procedures. Learning from the past, the Port can now ensure its internal security measures are up to speed.

Miami Momentum
The Port of Miami and UNICOM Government worked together to find a security solution that mitigates many of the significant risks the Port previously faced – from unauthorized intrusions to false “slip and falls.”

Thanks to these solutions, Port officials are now able to monitor and maintain security control of the vast area, allowing for smooth operation through one of our nation’s busiest ports. The team continues to monitor and update security processes and tools to keep passengers on their cruises safe, and cargo en route to its destination.

About UNICOM Government
UNICOM Government is the first information technology solutions provider offering a Technology Lifecycle Management (TLM) approach to IT infrastructure solutions delivered through industry-leading professional and financial services. UNICOM Government employs a proactive, strategic methodology that streamlines technology lifecycle management, from initial assessment to acquisition, implementation, refresh, and disposal. TLM allows government agencies to implement solutions of national and local significance quickly and cost-effectively.

UNICOM Government’s certified engineers and project managers leverage strategic partnerships with technology innovators. These experts use proven, repeatable processes to design, deploy, manage, and support simple to complex solutions, to meet governments’ current and future requirements and business objectives. UNICOM Government is headquartered in Northern Virginia, outside of Washington, D.C.

2553 Dulles View Drive, Suite 100, Herndon, VA 20171-5228 · 800.999.4874 · UNICOMGov.com

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