

Admiral Thomas H. Collins  
NDRSMP Announcement  
September 24, 2002

**Good morning!**

**[Acknowledge dignitaries.]**

**Thank you all for coming this morning. It's another fine Coast Guard day!**

**On this same day in 1956, the first permanent trans-Atlantic telephone cable was completed from Newfoundland to Scotland. The cable could carry 32 overseas phone calls at a time. It was hailed as a technological marvel.**

**Before 1956, the only means of communication across the Atlantic was radio or telegraph.**

**Now, I'm not suggesting that the National Distress Response System Modernization Project will have the same impact on history that laying the first trans-Atlantic telephone cable did.**

**But I would suggest that we all think for a moment about how much communications systems have changed—even just over the past 46 years. It doesn't require much thought!**

**When we realize that much of the technology of our current national distress system is nearly thirty years old, it's not hard to understand that it's time for an update.**

**The urgency of that need is even more apparent when we consider that the lives of American citizens often depend on rapid, reliable, and clear communications among the first responders.**

**That fact was clearly demonstrated by the rescue operations in New York and Washington, DC on 9/11.**

**NDRSMP will update our 1970s technology to an integrated communications network that will greatly improve detection and location of emergency distress calls.**

**It will provide broader coverage in areas where we have known gaps.**

**It will help sort real emergencies from hoax calls.**

**It will strengthen our command and control capabilities.**

**These improvements will benefit not only the mission of Search and Rescue, but law enforcement and homeland security, as well.**

**Incidentally, if there is any question that the Coast Guard might be abandoning Search and Rescue due to our increasing homeland security mission, let this 600 million dollar contract be the clear answer to that question.**

**This new system will be the nation's maritime "911" system for the coastal waters and navigable rivers and lakes of the United States, Guam, and Puerto Rico.**

**Today, as we award the contract for Phase Two of the National Distress Response System Modernization Project, we will begin the process to build and deploy a world-class communication system that is worthy of a world-class maritime, multi-mission, military organization.**

**With this award, we are delivering 21st century capability to face America's 21st century challenges.**

**With this award, we are providing our personnel who safeguard Americans on the water with the assets and technology needed to perform our essential missions.**

**I'd like to thank everyone who had a part in making this day possible, especially Secretary Mineta.**

**It is now my pleasure to introduce him to you.**

**Of all the Secretaries of Transportation under whom it has been my honor to serve, Secretary Mineta stands apart.**

**I have been deeply impressed by his careful knowledge and comprehensive understanding of Coast Guard issues, by his personal involvement with our service, and by his long commitment to public service.**

**He is truly an example to us all.**

**Since our nation was sorely tried by the events of last September, no one has done more than he has to restore the confidence of the American people in our national transportation systems.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in offering a warm Coast Guard welcome to the Honorable Norman Y. Mineta.**