



## All Hands Messages

### *WHEC Sustainment*

To the Men and Women of the United States Coast Guard:

I want to update you on measures to address the declining readiness of our High Endurance Cutter (WHEC) fleet. Last July, the Atlantic Area Commander removed the GALLATIN from a patrol to resolve multiple casualties. Upon return to homeport, the cutter underwent an intensive inspection that revealed a high level of corrosion and structural deterioration. The damages were so severe that the Area Commander ordered GALLATIN to remain in its homeport. As GALLATIN was being repaired, DALLAS was completing an historic Black Sea deployment in support of the U.S. European Command. This mission involved delivering humanitarian supplies to the Republic of Georgia as part of Operation Assured Delivery following the South Ossetia conflict.

DALLAS' deployment was highly successful and lauded by the Department of Defense, but it came at a high cost. The crew overcame severe mechanical casualties, including several fires, just to complete the mission. While this reflects the crew's professionalism and dedication to duty, it was symptomatic of the deteriorating condition of the entire WHEC fleet. Upon its return to homeport, DALLAS underwent an inspection similar to GALLATIN's that also revealed excessive deterioration. Based on these findings, the Atlantic Area Commander directed both ships to remain pierside until full repairs are completed. I just finished a conversation with VADM Papp who has held an "all hands" meeting with both crews. I fully concur with this decision and want to outline our intentions moving forward.

Both DALLAS and GALLATIN are more than 40 years old and beyond their anticipated service lives. The structural deterioration, including excessive corrosion of the longitudinals and holes in the bulkheads behind insulation, has reduced the watertight integrity and structural strength of the vessels to the point where they need immediate repairs. While still operationally effective, we have known that the readiness of our WHEC fleet has been declining sharply during the past several years. This has been reflected in increasing maintenance costs and lost operational days. Since all of the WHECs are either over or close to 40 years old, we are reassessing the readiness of the entire class and developing a plan to keep these ships operational until the National Security Cutters (NSC) and Offshore Patrol Cutters (OPC) come on-line.

Our Coast Guard must be ready for all threats and all hazards. In my first SITREP as Commandant, I pledged that we would obtain the most capable fleet of multi-mission ships, aircraft, boats and command and control systems available. DALLAS and

GALLATIN no longer meet this standard. By making these urgent repairs, we will ensure both cutters are ready to deploy for operational missions in all sea states, all weather, world-wide. It will take approximately six months following contract award to complete. I have also approved the infusion of additional funding to better support the ten WHECs in Pacific Area. These urgent repairs to DALLAS and GALLATIN will be part of an integrated WHEC sustainment plan that will ensure we can meet our operational commitments until our fleet is recapitalized. We will be assessing several options for longer term sustainability in the coming weeks.

The hull corrosion and poor materiel condition of DALLAS and GALLATIN have been compounded over time. They represent symptoms of larger systemic problems we are addressing through the Coast Guard modernization effort. Our current logistics, budgeting and support processes have not kept pace with the increased operational demands of this aging fleet nor will they be adequate for our new assets being delivered to the field. We must commit to better business practices and I believe we are moving in the right direction.

In January 2009, we will stand-up both the Surface Forces Logistics Center (SFLC) and the 378' WHEC Product Line. Consistent with the stand-up of the Small Boat Product Line in October, these events will align the naval engineering community to directly support specific assets. This new product line approach will provide a single point of contact for mission support services, standardize business processes, and create clear lines of accountability. It will significantly limit the burden of asset support from our field operators and enable them to focus more directly on mission execution.

I appreciate all the hard work that Coast Guard men and women dedicate to the Nation every day. While we face many challenges in sustaining our current fleet and modernizing for the future, I am confident we can achieve our goals by working together. Thank you.

Admiral Thad Allen  
Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard

