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The Coast Guard Is Maritime Security

By Admiral James M. Loy, U. S. Coast Guard

The Coast Guard needs multimission capabilities to meet U.S. hemispheric maritime security challenges—here, a Coast Guard HH-65 A Dolphin responds to an oil spill off Puerto Rico—in an ever-increasing area of responsibility.

For more than 200 years the Coast Guard has provided the United States with a unique blend of humanitarian, law enforcement, and military capabilities. From the earliest duties of the Revenue Cutter Service in 1790, our core roles have expanded to include protecting the public, the environment, and U.S. economic and security interests in any maritime region in which U.S. interests may be in jeopardy.

The complexity of the tasks and the seriousness of the threats that confront us on the cusp of our next century of service are daunting: tight budgets, aging platforms, and constrained personnel force structure, along with increasing requirements. Although we are mindful of our core philosophy—Semper Paratus, Always Ready—perhaps at no other time in our history have we been asked to do more with less. More than simply “guarding the coast,” the Coast Guard has broad responsibilities for safeguarding the global commons and brings unique humanitarian, law enforcement, and military capabilities to respond to the nation’s hemispheric maritime security needs.

U.S. Maritime Security Interests...

Waterborne trade is the lifeblood of the U.S. economy. Ships carry raw materials and finished goods to and from every corner of the world, with key ports along the Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific coasts serving as our gateways to the world. One quarter of all domestic goods is shipped by water, and half of all oil consumed in the United States arrives by sea. In 1997, some 90% of U.S. foreign trade by tonnage—valued at nearly \$1.7 trillion—moved by ship. U.S. oceanborne exports have increased 50% since 1990, a trend that is expected to continue. Ironical for a country so tied to the sea and dependent on sea power to protect national interests, the U.S. merchant marine is ranked only 15th in the world, and it carries no more than 3% of U.S. oceanborne foreign trade.

This has potentially grave implications for U.S. military readiness, in addition to global economic competitiveness. Almost all of the equipment, ordnance, and supplies needed to support any sizable projection of military power must move by sea. During the Gulf War, nearly 95% of all material sent to the combat theater—and returned to the United States once peace was restored—was carried on ships. Efficient ports are critical to U.S. military combat operations, as well as to crisis response and humanitarian missions. They also are crucial if the U.S. strategy of engagement is to succeed.

Increased use of the oceans for recreation, fishing, minerals development, and transportation guarantees greater stresses on the marine environment and can pose grave risks to U.S. interests. Globally, critical fish stocks are under great pressure, as overfishing and habitat destruction continue. Living marine resources support a \$20 billion commercial industry. Tourism and marine recreation—alone worth millions of dollars to state and local economies each year—likewise demand clean shorelines and marine environments. At the same time, new technologies are permitting more remote exploration and development of minerals and petroleum resources, in ever greater depths. Millions of barrels of oil and cubic feet of natural gas are pumped daily to the shore or offshore gathering platforms through pipelines. We should not discount the vulnerability of these offshore systems to sabotage or the environmental damage that an attack or accident might cause.

Petroleum shipped to the United States from overseas sources also presents a target for environmental terrorists. For waters under U.S. jurisdiction, the challenge will be to ensure the safety and seaworthiness of increasingly large ships, many of which will not be able to berth at U.S. ports because of draft limitations. This will drive the need for more offshore lightering, more offshore facilities, and the transshipment of

hazardous materials through long and exposed pipelines. The prevention and response implications for the Coast Guard are obvious.

In addition, we must not underestimate the vulnerability of the maritime transport system to interruption, whether from natural or man-made disasters, piracy, or terrorist attack. The susceptibility of ships and key infrastructure elements is a problem that begs for a multifaceted solution.

... and Threats

The Department of Transportation's Strategic Plan 1997-2002 recognizes that "we must be prepared to face global markets, environmental challenges, transnational security threats, and a communications and information revolution." Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater, warning of "terrorist threats, the increasing dependence on high-technology transportation systems and communications networks, and increasing illegal immigrant transportation and smuggling," has underscored the need to scrutinize—and be able to counter—a broad range of threats to U.S. hemispheric maritime security. In this regard, the "Outcome Goals" identified by the Secretary will shape operational requirements for all Coast Guard assets:

- Goal 1. Reduce vulnerability to and consequences of intentional harm to the transportation system and its users.
- Goal 2. Ensure readiness and capability of all modes of commercial transportation to meet national security needs.
- Goal 3. Ensure transportation physical and information infrastructure and technology are adequate to facilitate military logistics during mobility, training exercises, and mobilization.
- Goal 4. Maintain readiness of resources, including operating forces and contingency resources owned, managed, or coordinated by the Department of Transportation necessary to support the President's National Security Strategy and other security-related plans.
- Goal 5. Reduce flow of illegal drugs and illegal aliens.

The influx of illegal drugs is one of the nation's foremost national security problems. The Coast Guard is the lead maritime agency in the counterdrug effort, and despite the fact that interdiction occupies and consumes a tremendous amount of assets, this task is performed with little extra allocation. Drug interdiction remains difficult because it is assigned to multiple agencies; smugglers have high mobility; and there is a need for more vessels, aircraft, and personnel to patrol the vast U.S. coastlines and the six-million-square-mile Caribbean/eastern Pacific transit zone.

The Coast Guard has established Campaign Steel Web a multiyear strategy aimed at reducing the supply of drugs to the United States. In 1997, Coast Guard cutters and aircraft deployed off South America and in the transit zone interdicted more than 103,600 pounds of cocaine, keeping more than 500 million "hits" off America's streets and out of our schools. The street value of the cocaine seized, estimated at \$3.65 billion, exceeded the Coast Guard's entire 1997 operating budget by half a billion dollars. Still, this represents only an estimated 32% of the cocaine that entered the transit zone, pointing to the critical need for more effective intelligence, surveillance, and interdiction assets.

The influx of illegal drugs will become more difficult to counter as advanced equipment and technology increasingly are employed by drug cartels. In response to Coast Guard efforts, smugglers have begun investing in high-speed craft and low-observable/radar-evading vessels—even semisubmersibles—and aircraft in an attempt to avoid detection. Other capabilities include sophisticated counterinformation technologies that will enable criminals to challenge U.S. and world law enforcement organizations with greater boldness and daring.

Another of Secretary Slater's national security goals is to reduce the flow of illegal aliens entering the United States. For the Coast Guard, migrant interdiction operations are as much humanitarian efforts as they are law enforcement missions. Migrants typically take great risks and endure significant hardships in their attempts to flee their countries and enter the United States; their vessels often are overloaded and unseaworthy, lack basic safety equipment, and are operated by inexperienced mariners. The majority of alien migrant interdiction cases handled by the Coast Guard actually begin as search and rescue missions on the high seas.

Alien smuggling threatens the United States from all sides—along the East and West Coasts, in Hawaii, Guam, and Puerto Rico. Between 1980 and mid-1998, the Coast Guard interdicted 288,000 migrants from 43 countries. Economics and quality of life continue to be the primary factors driving people to brave the seas in the hope of reaching America. We have seen a marked increase in organized alien smuggling, especially from Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and the People's Republic of China.

In 1980, Coast Guard personnel stemmed a mass migration from Cuba, interdicting 125,000 illegal migrants who flooded toward Florida; U.S. Navy surface forces played key roles in supporting our afloat operations. In 1990-1991, Coast Guard deepwater assets responded to another mass migration, interdicting more than 37,600 Haitian migrants attempting to enter the United States illegally. In 1994, our cutters and aircraft responded to two nearly simultaneous mass migrations, working closely with Navy and other DoD assets. An afloat Coast Guard task force commander directed operations for the largest fleet of cutters since World War II, interdicting more than 25,300 Haitian migrants in Operation Able Manner and nearly 38,600 Cuban migrants in Operation Able Vigil.

The expected increase in the number of illegal migrants will create difficult social, economic, and political issues—including public discontent, strain on health care and social assistance systems of coastal states, and the overwhelming of detention facilities—which, in turn, will generate demands for effective Coast Guard interdiction operations farther out to sea. The need is great, therefore, for a cost-effective capability to interdict and preferably deter, illegal migrant attempts.

These are just two of the threats to U.S. maritime security. Many others (see Table 1) are equally important and demand the same amount of attention. In response, the Coast Guard has envisioned a far-reaching program for the modernization and replacement of current cutter, aircraft, command-and-control, and shoreside infrastructure that will enable us to maintain a credible presence in key maritime regions to deter potential threats to U.S. sovereignty, to exercise sea control, and to project law enforcement action should deterrence fail.

Maritime Security Roles, Missions & Functions

The U.S. Coast Guard's roles and missions today touch on virtually every facet of the nation's maritime life. We are tasked with protecting U.S. citizens and interests in inland waterways, territorial seas, and exclusive economic zones under U.S. jurisdiction, as well as with detecting, deterring, and defeating threats to U.S. sovereignty that might arise on the high seas. The range of possible threats is likewise very broad, spanning economic, environmental, humanitarian, political, and military interests.

Throughout our history, however, the Coast Guard's core role has remained constant—to protect and defend U.S. citizens, interests, and friends, in waters under national jurisdiction as well as in overseas areas of importance to national security interests. This role, at its most fundamental level, has four elements:

- A humanitarian element dedicated to the preservation of lives and property at risk on the seas
- A policing element focused on national sovereignty and homeland defense, resource management, safety, and the maintenance of law and order at sea
- A diplomatic element in which Coast Guard people and platforms become instruments of U.S. foreign policy
- A military element in which Coast Guard assets link with other U.S. armed forces, as well as foreign militaries, in direct support of defense operations

We will continue to provide credible presence in and conduct surveillance of critical maritime regions; to detect, identify, and sort targets of interest; and to intercept and engage those targets. These core tasks must remain the basis for hemispheric maritime security throughout the 21st century, whether the mission is to rescue the distressed, to ensure safe maritime transport, to protect America's marine resources and environment, to uphold the law on the sea, or to safeguard U.S. diplomatic and military interests in regions around the world.

Deepwater Capabilities and Future

Unlike Coast Guard operations in coastal and inland waterways, deepwater missions typically call for a long-term, continuous presence away from home stations. They require the ability to operate in severe environments—from Arctic to tropical climates—24 hours a day, every day, wherever the demands of national security require the Coast Guard's presence. The operational demands of our deepwater missions and tasks can be satisfied only with systems and platforms designed and engineered for this environment. That said, the adaptable and multimission character of deepwater cutter, aircraft, and command-and-control systems allows them to make significant contributions in virtually all operating areas. For example, deepwater cutters and command-control-and-communications system played key roles in the nation's responses to the Exxon Valdez (Prince William Sound, Alaska) and Argo Merchant (Nantucket, Massachusetts) oil spills in 1989 and 1976, as well as to the 1996 TWA Flight 800 disaster off Long Island.

The Coast Guard's existing deepwater systems that carry out current—let alone future—missions in support of hemispheric maritime security. are reaching the end of their expected service lives. Performance increasingly is hampered, even as the threats we must counter are becoming more sophisticated and capable and the implications of poor Coast Guard mission performance grow more dire. The deepwater demands are compelling, calling for a multidimensional capability to carry out many diverse tasks simultaneously, across vast areas of ocean space (see Tables 2 and 3).

Recognizing the block obsolescence confronting much of the Coast Guard's deepwater force and the growing inability to meet our deepwater requirements effectively and efficiently, we have initiated the Integrated Deepwater Systems Capability Replacement Project, to upgrade, modernize, and replace aging ships, aircraft, and command-and-control infrastructure. This project is by far the largest acquisition project ever undertaken by the Coast Guard. Also, it is the first time that a federal agency has approached an acquisition program from an integrated, system-of-systems approach that embraces today's and tomorrow's sensors, command-and-control systems, shoreside facilities, boats and cutters, aircraft, and people in an innovative network-centric concept of Operations.

A National Fleet for America

On 21 September 1998, Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Jay Johnson and I signed a joint Navy/Coast Guard policy statement on the National Fleet concept. In it, we commit to tailored operational integration of our multimission surface combatants and cutters, to reduce overlap and maximize our effectiveness across the range of naval and maritime missions. This partnership will allow us to coordinate surface ship planning, information systems integration, and research and development, as well as to expand joint concepts of operations, logistics, training, exercises, and deployments. As a result, we will be able to acquire and maintain future ships that both support and complement each service's roles and missions.

The benefits of such a coordinated and integrated approach already are apparent. They include meeting operational support and upgrade requirements more efficiently and economically; reduced acquisition costs; standardized training and crosstraining in service-specific operational specialties; improved operational planning, integrated doctrinal and tactical development; much-enhanced force and unit interoperability; and, where it make sense, interoperability of technologies, systems, and platforms.

Admiral Johnson and I recognize the need to work together more effectively to ensure that the CNOs and commandants of 2010 and beyond have the means to accomplish the tasks at hand. Though much work lies ahead, I look forward to making this concept a reality.

The Course Ahead

The Coast Guard rarely has had to seek missions, especially in our deepwater operating area. Tasks have been mandated, usually in response to some specific national policy need and often without the allocation of additional resources. Fortunately, the Coast Guard has the spirit and discipline of a military service, combined with flexibility, readiness, and a commitment to civilian law enforcement, humanitarian service, and safety. This powerful blend has contributed to the Coast Guard's success during our first two centuries of service and is the tradition that will enable us to meet the demands of tomorrow.

Admiral Loy is Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Table 1: Maritime Security Challenges and Threats

- Smuggling of Narcotics, Illegal Aliens, Unauthorized Technology Transfers, and Import of Untaxed Cargoes
- Growing Complexities of Multiflagged, Multinational Maritime/Shipping Corporations
- Violations of Sanction Restrictions Placed by the United Nations or Other International Bodies
- Destabilizing Arms Trafficking
- Illegal Transmission of Key Components or Precursors for Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Disruption in Maritime Trade Access
- Illegal Exploitation or Contamination of the Maritime Food Supply
- Circumvention or Violations of Environmental Protection Laws
- Piracy, Terrorism, and Crime and Violence at Sea

- Sudden, Uncontrolled Mass Migration
 - Direct Military Threats to Sealift Support and Port Security Needed to Sustain Military Operations
- Source: World Maritime Challenges, 1997. Office of Naval Intelligence.

Table 2: U.S. Coast Guard Deepwater Operations

- 50 Nautical Miles or More from U.S. Shores
- Long Transit Distance to Operating Areas
- Extended On-Scene Presence Independent of Support
- Sustained Operation in Sever Weather/High Seas
- Forward-Deployed, Often with Other U.S. and Allied/Friendly Forces

Table 3: Deepwater Missions and Tasks, 1998

- Search and Rescue
- International Ice Patrol
- Humanitarian Response
- General Law Enforcement
- Protection of Living Marine Resources
- Maritime Pollution Enforcement and Response
- Foreign Vessel Inspection
- Lightering Zone Enforcement
- Alien Migrant, Drug, and Maritime Interdiction
- Forward-Deployed Support to Unified Commanders
- Environmental Defense
- U.S. Homeland Defense
- Port Security and Force Protection
- Joint/Combined Combat Operations