

Restoring Readiness

sively pursuing the National Distress and Response System Modernization Project (NDRSMP).

The new system will provide numerous advantages including: enhanced VHF-FM coverage to close existing black holes where no radio coverage is in place; simple direction finding and pinpoint position locating; digital selective calling; digital voice recording with enhanced playback; multi-channel use; asset tracking; and protected communications. Maritime 9-1-1 calls will be answered by the U.S. Coast Guard more effectively than ever.

The Bottom Line

The bottom line: the Coast Guard must resolve its current predicament of an aging inventory of assets that have, and in some instances have long since, surpassed their projected service lives. Engines whose production lines closed in the early 1970s, spare parts that must be manufactured each time they are needed, and a host of other problems associated with aging and labor-intensive assets only begin to illumi-

nate the true scope of the Services growing dilemma. The Interagency Task Force on Roles and Missions recently validated the roles and missions of the Coast Guard and identified the Deepwater Project as the best vehicle to ensure that the Coast Guard can meet the growing demand for our services well into the 21st century.

In addition to the asset-related issues, several other readiness challenges must also be resolved. These include workforce challenges such as training, recruiting and retention issues. Recruiting and retention of our military and civilian workforces is critically important in this period of robust economies. To correct the drop in experience levels, the Coast Guard must focus on keeping its talent pool by creating an enviable quality of life through a system of improved compensation, strong leadership, and increased job satisfaction.

The irony of this situation is growing in intensity: Americas demand for the Coast Guard versus the obsolescent assets available to dedicated Coast

Guard men and women who lack effective tools with which to perform their missions. Investing in innovative technology to more efficiently sustain capability; use of less costly commercial-off-the-shelf products; and acceptance of best practices from across government and industry will partially alleviate these issues.

More than ever before, Americas national security interests mandate the need for our nation's maritime guardian the U.S. Coast Guard. America will need safe, efficient, and reliable waterways. We will need a guardian of maritime safety and a law enforcer at sea. We will need protection of our marine resources on the high seas, along our maritime borders, and on our coasts. America will need a Coast Guard capable of operating alongside the other U.S. Armed Services to support the nation's security strategies and policies.

Charting a proper course for restoring readiness and recapitalizing our service will help to ensure that the Coast Guard continues to meet the



We play a vital role in national defense with our capabilities in maritime interception operations, military environmental response operations, port operations, security and defense and peacetime military engagement.