

## Homeland Security — The Course Ahead

The renaissance of interest in homeland security is directly related to the need for U.S. maritime security the hallmark of Coast Guard operations since its birth as the Revenue Cutter Service in 1790. Until very recently, Americans have not worried about direct attacks within the U.S. homeland apart from the risk of nuclear war. The bombings of New York's World Trade Center and the federal building in Oklahoma City dramatically showed that a few determined terrorists can cause enormous destruction almost anywhere in the U.S. Moreover, the ease by which smugglers can clandestinely infiltrate U.S. borders to bring in drugs, illegal migrants, other contraband goods potentially including weapons of mass destruction chemical, biological, or nuclear devices, gives pause for grave concern. In some future crises, or even in non-crisis situations, when the U.S. would least expect it, terrorist cells armed with weapons of mass destruction could infiltrate America's ports and cities and cause widespread damage and disruption. The potential for a tragic attack in U.S. waters similar to the recent suicide bombing of USS Cole is not outside the realm of possibility.

In the autumn of 1999, the U.S. Commission on National Security/21 Century (Hart-Rudman Commission) outlined a future of crisis, terror and conflict that will directly affect America in ways that traditional military superiority cannot entirely deter or protect against. For the first time since the War of 1812," the Commission noted, Americans will die on continental American soil, potentially in substantial numbers, as a result of hostile foreign action. Terrorists and other disaffected groups will acquire weapons of mass destruction and mass disruption, and they will use them. The psychological impact of that could be

more dramatic than the physical damage."

The Coast Guard working with numerous local, regional, national and international agencies and organizations safeguards domestic security and tranquility. Indeed, as the National Defense Panel underscored in 1997, protecting the territory of the United States and its citizens from all enemies both foreign and domestic is the principal task of government. More to the requirements for the Coast Guard, the National Defense Panel concluded that coastal and border defense of the homeland is a challenge that again deserves serious thought."

Confronting and preventing this new class of threats before they reach our land, maritime, aerospace and cybernetic borders are not simple tasks. They require a balance between security imperatives and the need for a fast and efficient U.S. marine transportation system, a key contributor to

the country's overall economic prosperity. In the simplest terms, the goal becomes letting in the good and keeping out the bad and rapidly identifying which is which. Doing so means ensuring that the right forces, agencies, and users have access to the right information at the right time. Foundational to that goal is domain awareness, which is the effective understanding of all the activities and forces that threaten the safety, security and the environment of the United States and its citizens. This means obtaining knowledge of those threats that could manifest themselves at our land, maritime, aerospace and cybernetic borders a daunting but not impossible task. It requires a well-integrated data-collection system of assets; fusion centers to store, interpret and disseminate the data to appropriate operating agencies; and multi-agency engagement and cooperation through the entire spectrum of effort from data



The CGC Manitou (WPB 1302), a 110-foot island-class patrol boat, is a modification of a highly successful British-designed patrol boat. With excellent range and seakeeping capabilities, the island class, all named after U.S. islands, replaced the older 95-foot cape-class patrol boats. These cutters concentrate on law enforcement — mainly drug and illegal alien interdiction duties. They are also involved in port security, search and rescue and defense readiness operations. Built in the late 1980s they are equipped with advanced electronics and navigation equipment.