

As Delivered

Admiral Thomas H. Collins  
Acceptance Ceremony for the  
RESCUE 21 Facility, Atlantic City, NJ  
Tuesday, 20 December 2005

Good Morning!

Congressman Lobiondo ...

Mr. Jerry DeMuro (Exec VP, Info Systems & Technology Group,  
General Dynamics) ...

Distinguished guests ...

Mark Freed

Ron Taylor

Fellow Sailors ...

My special thanks to each of you for joining us here this morning for  
this history-making occasion ...

Today marks the beginning of a new era of capabilities for the Coast  
Guard. We are switching off the signal which feeds our vintage 1970's-era  
marine search-and-rescue communications apparatus. And, we are  
delivering better performance. The current system is hampered by its  
coverage gaps and by its lack of direction-finding ability.

In its place, we are taking a quantum leap forward in our coastal  
command-and-control distress communications capabilities. RESCUE 21 is  
a state-of-the-market digital communications system which will undoubtedly  
save countless lives, but is also a vital tool for enhanced interoperability with  
other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and the national  
intelligence community.

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Today we'll sign the acceptance agreement with our industry partner, General Dynamics, the architect and systems integrator for this innovation, and then we'll cutover to the new system.

While the goal of RESCUE 21 is to provide us the tools to conduct all of our missions, it first transforms the Coast Guard's ability to protect boaters and locate, assist and save lives at sea.

Let me share a real-life scenario with you that illustrates just how powerful this new system is.

Just after 1 o'clock in the afternoon on Sunday, the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, our Sector Field Office Eastern Shore received a "*Mayday*" call on Channel 16 VHF, reporting that a fishing vessel was taking on water at Ocean City Inlet in Ocean City, Maryland. Two Coast Guard vessel crews were dispatched to search the inlet and a helicopter crew prepared to launch and assist in the search.

But, at first, the boaters couldn't be located.

Our watch standers used the enhanced direction-finding capabilities of the new RESCUE 21 System to facilitate the search. The equipment immediately pinpointed a latitude and longitude which placed the vessel nearly three miles away from the boat captain's last broadcast location. And, within minutes, the boat crews were on scene and able to safely rescue the fishermen. One, a man in his 70's who happens to also be a survivor of the massive 1954 explosion aboard the USS Bennington, was plucked shivering from the water, moments before the onset of hypothermia.

Petty Officer Second Class Jeremy Moore, one of the watch standers at Sector Eastern Shore who used RESCUE 21 equipment for the first time during this incident said it best when he concluded, and I quote,

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"If it weren't for RESCUE 21, this case could have taken much longer and had a terrible outcome. The direction finding equipment was accurate and we got the men out of the water quickly. This is good stuff!"

This marked advancement in search and rescue technology will ensure we continue our longstanding tradition of standing the watch, protecting boaters and locating, assisting and saving lives at sea.

But, I should again note that the overall goal of RESCUE 21 is to improve communications and provide us the tools needed to conduct all of our missions. And in this respect, also, RESCUE 21 is already proving itself.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, full VHF maritime communications were restored for the Coast Guard in the Gulf coastal region using a RESCUE 21 prototypical Disaster Recovery Asset, or DRA. The self-sufficient system has its own generator and satellite connectivity to the Coast Guard's Operations Systems Center, in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

Clearly, this system represents a great leap forward in our country's readiness to ensure safety and security at sea.

We are anxious to get on with the build-out.

We've – General Dynamics and the Coast Guard – put in much work to get to this point.

I'd like to thank the Coast Guard crews of Sector Field Offices Atlantic City and Eastern Shore for your patience and can-do spirit exhibited throughout the operational testing and evaluation stages of bringing this system to life. Your feedback was instrumental in its development and delivery.

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Clearly, the critical partnership in building the system is with General Dynamics, are another key to our success. Thank you, Mr. DeMuro, for all that you and General Dynamics have done to help us advance our goals.

And, productive, effective partnerships with other government entities are critical to our achievement.

We have such a partner in our supporter and friend, Congressman Frank LoBiondo.

As the Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, he maintains a vigilant watch and is an avid champion of the unique position the Coast Guard occupies within the federal government as both a military and humanitarian service ... in this regard, he is our earnest advocate and ensures our voice is heard.

Chairman LoBiondo has always recognized that our recapitalization in the form of not only our RESCUE 21 system, but also our Integrated Deepwater System, are essential to increase our operational capabilities and capacities.

Because of Chairman LoBiondo's leadership, the choices Congress has made for our future will surely yield maritime safety and homeland security benefits far into the future.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce him to you this morning.

Please help me to welcome Chairman Frank LoBiondo.