



Letter to the Editor:

The U.S. Coast Guard's Integrated Deepwater System will play an important role in improving U.S. maritime security

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To The Editor:

Barry S. Zellen's informative description of the wide range of post-9/11 initiatives now in motion to enhance U.S. border and port security ("[Preventing Armageddon](#)," November 2004) serves many valuable purposes. Beyond his comprehensive assessment of evolving policies, programs, and technologies he reminds us of the complexities surrounding the federal government's efforts to strike an appropriate balance between the requirement for improved maritime security with the need to minimize unnecessary disruptions and delays to maritime commerce.

As Mr. Zellen makes clear, the U.S. Coast Guard is actively engaged in this collaborative effort with the maritime industry, port authorities, and other agencies here in the United States and abroad—including, most importantly, other agencies within the Department of Homeland Security. Unstated in his article, however, is the important role that the U.S. Coast Guard's Integrated Deepwater System will play in improving U.S. maritime security.

The Deepwater Program intersects with numerous mission areas relating to ports, waterways, and coastal areas. By recapitalizing today's technologically obsolete, increasingly unsafe, and less ready assets with Deepwater's three classes of new cutters, manned and unmanned aircraft, and improved C4ISR systems, the Coast Guard will be postured to help close today's security gaps in the maritime sector. Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Thomas H. Collins has described this sector as "...the most valuable and vulnerable components of our transportation system."

Deepwater's more capable, sustainable, and interoperable platforms and systems will contribute significantly to the Coast Guard's ability to improve maritime domain awareness and to deter, defeat, or respond to maritime security threats closer to our shores. In this sense, the Integrated Deepwater System will deliver the means to perform many additional vital security missions beyond those commonly associated with "deepwater" operations extending more than 50 nautical miles from shore. Make no mistake; such deepwater operations are an integral aspect of the Coast Guard's layered, defense-in-depth Maritime Security Strategy. We must thwart

maritime security threats as far from U.S. shores as possible, but the Coast Guard's expanding security requirements also point to the Deepwater Program's critical role in providing the operational capability and capacity needed to ensure safe, secure, and efficient navigable waterways in the U.S. Marine Transportation System. If, as currently estimated, our nation's adversaries will seek to circumvent our strengths and exploit our weaknesses, maritime security assets must be adaptive, dynamic, and flexible—all key attributes of the Deepwater Program.

Deepwater's transformational system-of-systems acquisition is well-aligned with the principles of maritime security operations. A Coast Guard modernized and recapitalized with the right number of Deepwater cutters and aircraft—linked seamlessly with multiple agencies through improved C4ISR systems—will possess the capabilities and capacity necessary to increase maritime domain awareness and enhance security operations by having the right assets and capabilities at the right place and time. Deepwater's mobile, multimission platforms are ideally suited for the wide range of homeland security and defense operations encountered in ports and coastal areas.

The design of Deepwater's cutters and their associated small boats, for example, will provide better sea keeping and higher sustained transit speeds, greater endurance and range, and the ability for launch and recovery, in higher sea states, of improved small boats, helicopters, and unmanned aerial vehicles—key attributes in enabling the Coast Guard to implement increased security responsibilities, including jurisdiction over foreign-flagged ships, more effectively. Deepwater's more capable cutters will be important players in the screening and targeting of vessels before they arrive in U.S. waters, onboard verification through boardings, and, if necessary, enforcement-control actions—more quickly, safely, and reliably.

Deepwater's total-aviation solution of manned and unmanned aircraft, at completion, will deliver 80 percent more flight hours than today's legacy systems and provide improved airborne use of force and vertical-insertion capabilities. These improvements will be of inestimable value to operational commanders in remedying today's tremendous burden of balancing the mismatch between inadequate resources to growing mission requirements. The inventory of HH-60J and HH-65 helicopters will be progressively modernized with new avionics and system upgrades. New maritime patrol aircraft, helicopters, and unmanned aerial vehicles will significantly improve our coastal and surface-surveillance capabilities.

In the context of maritime homeland security and defense, particularly in ports and coastal areas, one of Deepwater's most significant capability enhancements will be its robust C4ISR system. Deepwater's C4ISR is a fundamental building block in improving our ability to maintain maritime domain awareness focused on meeting the needs of decision makers directing operations at sea, ashore, and in the air. This network-centric system is being designed to ensure we will possess and maintain seamless interoperability with the forces and agencies of the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense, and other federal and regional agencies—a true force multiplier in the fullest sense.

Deepwater also is playing an important enabling role in the Coast Guard's collaborative work with the U.S. Navy to develop the common technologies, systems, and processes needed to attain to National Fleet goals. A well-integrated, interoperable, and optimally manned National Fleet ensures the United States will be better able to meet the full spectrum of 21st-century maritime defense and security requirements. This collaboration will provide our nation with the highest level of naval and maritime capability for its investment.

When Deepwater is fully implemented, the Coast Guard's cutters and aircraft will no longer operate as relatively independent platforms with only limited awareness of their surroundings in the maritime domain. Instead, they will have improved capabilities to receive information from a wide array of mission-capable platforms and sensors—contributing directly to improved levels of maritime domain awareness. Deepwater assets will share a common operating picture as part of a network-centric force operating in tandem with other cutters, boats, and both manned aircraft

and unmanned aerial vehicles—as well as with the U.S. Navy, an important factor in executing the shared responsibilities common to the intersection of the homeland security and homeland defense mission areas.

In short, the Deepwater Program is a key enabler in achieving the Coast Guard's strategic goals for improving maritime and port security. As Adm. Collins said recently, "Deepwater is the future for the Coast Guard."

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