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“In a post 9/11 and post KATRINA environment as part of DHS the good news is the Coast Guard has never been more relevant or visible. The bad news is that the Coast Guard has never been more relevant or visible!”

Adm. Thad W. Allen, Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard.
(Photo: Courtesy USCG / Telfair H. Brown, Sr.)

‘ALL THREATS, ALL HAZARDS’

PLOTTING A COURSE TO SUSTAIN MISSION EXCELLENCE: U.S. COAST GUARD COMMANDANT HITS THE DECK RUNNING

NAVAL FORCES: *It has been three years since the Coast Guard was realigned under the Department of Homeland Security [DHS]. How has the reorganisation progressed?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: From the Coast Guard perspective, this is the right department for us. There have been significant advantages. Our

relationships with other DHS organisations have only been strengthened by our collocation within the department, and we’re all better organisations for it.

From the department standpoint, it would have been nice if there had been time to do some institution building, but it was created under a

tight timeline and did not have a great deal of flexibility to put a transition team together before having to perform immediately in a zero-tolerance-for-failure environment. We have made significant progress during the past three years, but I think everyone understands we’re also trying to build an institution.



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Many successes have been overshadowed by other events. Within 18 months of the establishment, the department did a unified handgun acquisition for every agency in the department – something that would have been inconceivable earlier across so many federal law-enforcement agencies. The Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection [CBP] are buying small boats off the same contract. We share maintenance contracts for repair of outboard motors. We're recapitalising our high-frequency radio system on a CBP contract. There is greatly improved port-security coordination with our partners in Homeland Security. We have made significant progress consolidating our IT [information technology] infrastructure to take the best from the different agencies to create a consolidated IT backbone.

There needs to be some understanding that this is a department that is growing and will mature. It is a wise move for the country. If you take a look at the progress the department has made in three years, it is an impressive record.

NAVAL FORCES: *Do you see areas where collaboration could be improved?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Everyone understands the need to do that, and I think progress is being made. As the former Chairman of the depart-

ment's Joint Requirements Council, I place a very high priority on consolidating our IT infrastructure. You can't do it overnight because we have multiple data centres, networks, service centres, and call desks. Consolidation is underway and, very shortly, we are going to have an integrated IT system. Those things are not very visible, but they are instrumental in laying the groundwork for information sharing and collaboration in a more effective department. We'll get there.

NAVAL FORCES: *During your first day as Commandant you issued a strategic vision that calls for improving and sustaining the Coast Guard's mission execution. Can you elaborate on your reasons for doing so?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: In a post-9/11 and post-KATRINA environment as part of DHS the good news is the Coast Guard has never been more relevant or visible. The bad news is that the Coast Guard has never been more relevant or visible! We arguably have finished one of the finest operational years in the history of the service in the post-WW II era. As extraordinary as our response was during Hurricane KATRINA, there is now a raised expectation of what we are capable of doing as an organisation. I want to make very clear to our people from the outset

that we should always focus on the value proposition we have with the American people – how we execute our mission.

That mission focus must not diminish. Everyone needs to understand that we will never back off from that – it is our *raison d'être*. You are only as good as your last success. I know it will be hard to sustain the tempo and level of operations indefinitely. How do you make the Coast Guard better, knowing that much more is expected of us? You start with mission execution and work everything back from there.

Fig. 1: Admiral Allen and his U.S. Navy counterpart, Chief of Naval Operations Adm Michael G. Mullen, plan even closer levels of collaboration to achieve the National Fleet Policy's goals. Allen envisions a similar level of increased cooperation with international Navies and Coast Guards around the globe. Here, during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in 2003, the white-hulled Coast Guard Cutter "Boutwell" operates in company with the USS "Tarawa" Expeditionary Strike Group. (Photo: Courtesy U.S. Navy / JOC William Polson)



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NAVAL FORCES: *The Coast Guard achieved another record year in its counter-drug mission last year, but how long can that last?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: We may not make it this year. There are some indications that we may not have the same level of cocaine seizures as last year. There are some reasons for that, and it's not necessarily assets. Criminals are getting smarter regarding our enforcement patterns. We need to be mindful of that and stay inside their decision loop. We have made the price very high for them, but they will continue to adapt. We must adapt with them.

NAVAL FORCES: *What is your plan to expand the Coast Guard's deployable-force capability?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: The creation of Coast Guard sectors beginning in 2004 was the first major internal reorganisation made without a resource or budget gun being held to our head. We didn't do it to save money – we did it because it was the right thing to do. We had the courage to believe ourselves.

Fig. 2: During his first day as Commandant, Admiral Allen issued a strategic vision that calls for improving and sustaining the U.S. Coast Guard's mission execution – in part because of the American public's heightened expectations following the Coast Guard's rescue of more than 33,500 following Hurricane KATRINA in 2005. Here, Petty Officer 1st Class Steven Huerta hoists two children into a Coast Guard rescue helicopter from their flooded New Orleans neighbourhood August 29, 2005. (Photo: Courtesy U.S. Coast Guard / Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Niemi)



With our sector organisation, a realignment of the Coast Guard's field structure to create unity of command in U.S. ports and improve operational effectiveness, we have locked in, from a doctrinal standpoint, how we are going to conduct shore-based operations. Those operations entail anything that is tethered by a range of operations fixed to a geographical area of responsibility – the distance you can take a small boat, for example. We've locked that force structure in now – the shore-based force structure for the Coast Guard.

Similarly, back in June 2002, we awarded the DEEPWATER Programme's contract. Our off-shore maritime patrol presence and interdiction capabilities are incorporated in the concept of operations embedded in the DEEPWATER acquisition.

The only thing that is not captured in this coherent force structure is our collection of deployable units suitable for surge operations to respond to an incident. Over the past 20 years, for various reasons, these units have originated in various programmes – port security units, reserve components, oil and hazardous material strike teams, they have all been extremely effective for us, especially in a post-9/11 environment. Subsequent to 9/11 we also created Maritime Safety and Security Teams for a specific threat or mission.

When you look at how you are going to manage resources and 'source to the strategy' for a layered defence for maritime security, including the ability to surge these deployable units into a port for either an incident or an increased readiness-security posture, it made sense to me to reorganise the remaining forces in the Coast Guard. We will create a 'three-pronged force'

ADMIRAL THAD W. ALLEN

was sworn in as the 23rd Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard May 25th, 2006, after serving as Chief of Staff at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, D.C. In September 2005, he gained international prominence as the principal federal official responsible for response-and-recovery operations following Hurricane KATRINA's devastation of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Coast Guard units, working closely with other federal, state, and local agencies, rescued more than 33,500 people in the wake of the deadly storm. Four years earlier, as Commander of the Coast Guard's Atlantic Area command, Admiral Allen led the Coast Guard's Atlantic Area forces in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Admiral Allen was raised with a great deal of love and respect for the Coast Guard; his father was a career Coast Guard Chief Damage Controlman who enlisted at 16 during WW II. "It has always been a maxim of the Coast Guard that as you grow up as a junior officer, you learn from your chief petty officers", Admiral Allen told NAVAL FORCES. "I just started when I was born!"

Early in his assignment, Admiral Allen has moved forcefully to plot a clear course for the Coast Guard. He will define strategic intent to guide all of the multi-mission service's operations, programmes, policies, and budget matters. His initial emphasis is to improve and sustain the Coast Guard's mission execution. He also places a high premium on advancing the DEEPWATER Programme's modernisation and recapitalisation of ageing legacy assets to close operational gaps. Soon after assuming his watch, he launched plans to expand the Coast Guard's deployable-force capabilities, issue a new Coast Guard maritime strategy by autumn, and foster a national discussion on what constitutes a maritime security regime for a coastal nation state. Admiral Allen also enthusiastically advocates a close partnership with the U.S. Navy to operationalise the National Fleet Policy and to expand collaboration with international maritime partners. Admiral Allen discussed these and other issues with NAVAL FORCES North America Editor **Gordon I. Peterson and Dr. Scott C. Truver** during a recent interview in his office at Coast Guard Headquarters overlooking the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers in Washington, D.C.

that is shore-based, maritime patrol and presence, and surge- or incident-response based. This will truly align our force structure with the strategy of layered defence.

NAVAL FORCES: *You also will align better with the Northern Command's mission for homeland defence and the expeditionary needs of other U.S. combatant commanders, correct?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Yes. The Navy has created an Expeditionary Command with riverine and other units assigned. Our new structure allows

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us to increase our interoperability with the Navy and is an extension of the National Fleet concept. I have already discussed this with Admiral Mullen [Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. Michael G. Mullen]. What I would like to see is for this to be included within the scope of the National Fleet Policy.

I tried to come up with a way to describe the Coast Guard's force structure that is cohesive and allowed us to look at different packages and capabilities, but also that is aligned with our maritime security strategy and the creation of a layered defence. You start with DEEPWATER forces that are able to project boarding capability a thousand miles at sea to meet the threat as far from shore as possible. That is consistent with our conversations with DOD [Department of Defense] on the maritime operational threat response as part of the *National Strategy for Maritime Security*.

Then you have the ability to conduct a higher level of presence, coverage, and deterrence within our ports and waterways with the expanded resources we have given to our shore-based commands and sectors with a unified command for every port. The third option is to surge for an incident or respond to a higher threat level. I think this concept of a 'three-pronged force' marries up very nicely with port and maritime security for a coastal nation.

NAVAL FORCES: *You emphasised the need for the DEEPWATER Programme to "cut steel and float boats" during recent congressional testimony. How important is the programme to the Coast Guard?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: If you look at our force structure as a trident, DEEPWATER constitutes one of three major components. We can't have an adequate layered defence to project offshore

and do the missions the country expects of us unless we recapitalise these assets and deploy them through DEEPWATER.

NAVAL FORCES: *Some members of Congress are calling for the programme to be accelerated to 15 years. Are you satisfied with the programme's funding today, or could more be done to advance it faster?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: I'd be disingenuous to say that I am not satisfied to see such support, because when we started the programme it was supposed to be a 500-million-dollar-a-year programme. We're now approaching a billion-dollar-a-year programme. We've never had that level of support in the history of the Coast Guard, so it's difficult to say we have not had support for increased funding both within the administration and the Congress. The question is, "What is enough?"

Fig. 3: A member of the Coast Guard Cutter "Sherman" stands guard over 11.5 tons of cocaine at a pier in Alameda, Calif., in November 2005. The drugs were seized in the Eastern Pacific in three separate operations. The U.S. Coast Guard achieved another record year in its counter-drug operations in 2005, but a combination of factors may make it difficult to do so in 2006. The Coast Guard lacks sufficient platforms to prosecute all actionable intelligence, and drug smugglers continue to adapt to counter more aggressive U.S. counter-drug operations. (Photo: Courtesy USCG / Petty Officer Brian N. Leshak)



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When I talk to members of Congress about this during testimony, I focus on my near-term gaps and requirements, and where I have mature asset designs suitable to accelerate production. It's tough to accelerate something that has not been designed. We're approaching the date when we will float [i.e. launch] the first National Security Cutter and lay the keel for the second one. We have the CASA maritime patrol aircraft in production. Once you have a mature design and can move into production you have the opportunity to close gaps faster. While it may be nice to discuss accelerating the entire programme, you need to pick your platform surgically based on where it is in the life cycle of its design and construction. This is the best approach to close the gaps in capability as soon as you can.

The FRC [Fast Response Cutter] is a good example. Right now I need patrol boat hours. While we're trying to determine whether a composite-hull design for the FRC will be suitable for our requirements, we need to look at an off-the-shelf buy of a patrol boat already in service to fill the patrol-boat-hour gap. When the FRC is ready for production we can back off buying an off-the-shelf design, but in the meantime I need to fill the gap.

NAVAL FORCES: Speaking of operational gaps, the Coast Guard testified to Congress earlier this year that it has insufficient assets to prosecute all actionable intelligence in its counter-drug mission area. How worrisome is that?

ADMIRAL ALLEN: It is somewhat worrisome, but it also has to do with the opportunity costs of what we're not doing right now. The two elements that would help us in the counter-drug mission right now that will come about ultimately are increased maritime patrol aircraft [MPA] hours and airborne-use-of-force capable helicopters. The ship becomes the lily pad from which you launch the boarding team or the helicopter, but they're just drilling holes in the

ocean unless they are cued by intelligence and possess the air surveillance to be able to locate the vessel to be boarded.

Once that happens, the armed helicopter facilitates the end game. Unless there is a problem with fuel exhaustion, we're nearly 100 percent successful if we find a drug smuggler's 'go fast' and have a helicopter on top with airborne-use-of-force capability. We stop them. The question is one of putting enough surveillance out there to find them and to have the armed helicopters to stop them. To the extent that you don't have the MPA you need, or armed helicopters, or a

ship without a helicopter, you have a less-effective force package.

NAVAL FORCES: Do you see expanded opportunities for cooperation with the U.S. Navy?

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Admiral Mullen and I are joined at the hip moving the National Fleet Policy forward. I first met him when he was the N8 [Navy Staff's Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Resources, Requirements, and Assessments], and we had corresponding jobs. My first significant interaction was to negotiate the temporary



Fig. 4: The Integrated DEEPWATER System acquisition programme remains the Coast Guard's top capital priority to modernise and recapitalise its ageing legacy fleet. Here, in Pascagoula, Miss., in July, the 39 tons mast for "Bertholf" - lead ship in the DEEPWATER Programme's new class of National Security Cutters - is hoisted and welded into place at Northrop Grumman Ship Systems' Pascagoula Operations shipyard. The lift marked the 45th and final unit erected aboard the first-in-class cutter, which is now more than 50 percent complete and scheduled to launch and be christened later this year. (Photo: Courtesy Northrop Grumman Ship Systems)

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transfer of the WPC patrol craft from the Navy to the Coast Guard, knowing that at the end of fiscal year 2008 the Navy might have another need for them. That interaction started both a professional and personal relationship that extends to today. He's a great friend, and I look forward to working with him during the years ahead.

We'll try to take the National Fleet Policy as far as we can. It ultimately bears on nearly every facet of Coast Guard-Navy operations and interoperability, and it may extend further into the joint community. A good example is the intelligence world, where we have been collocated at Suitland, Maryland, at the National Maritime Intelligence Center for well over 10 years now. The synergy derived from having Navy and Coast Guard intelligence operations at the same location manifests itself in improved maritime domain awareness but, more importantly, global maritime intelligence integration – one of the supporting plans under the new *National Strategy for Maritime Security*.

I might add that I have had discussions with Ambassador Negroponte [Amb. John D. Negroponte, the U.S. Director of National Intelligence], and we are prepared to assign a Coast Guard flag officer to be the first Director for Global Maritime Intelligence Integration.

NAVAL FORCES: *Do similar collaborative opportunities exist within DHS?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Yes, and this was evident to me when I performed my duties in New Orleans following Hurricane KATRINA and watched the large number of DHS deployable units that arrived. It occurred to me that if you could force package these disparate deployable elements inside the Department of Homeland Security you could go a long way toward meeting requirements for an incident or natural disaster

– either before or after it occurred. If you were able to do that, you might be able to raise the bar before you reached the point where you would need other resources from DOD or another agency.

I discussed this with Secretary Chertoff [Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff], but before I offer this concept to him formally, I first need to organize the Coast Guard's force structure of deployable units internally in a cohesive manner. Once we've done that, I can offer that deployable force for adaptive force packaging with other deployable units inside DHS to match an incident.

One can imagine Coast Guard C-130 aircraft lifting a Maritime Safety and Security Team into a port along with FEMA [Federal Emergency and Management Agency] assets provided to help with response and recovery in terms of urban search and rescue, medical assistance, and other duties. That becomes a pretty compelling force package that you could put together without turning to DOD for support. I think this would be a win-win for everybody.

If you talk to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary at DHS, they're looking at between 15 to 20 basic scenarios to do advance planning and have it on the shelf so you can identify the force package to support the plan. That's exactly where the department is and should be going. We're creating a Coast Guard to support this collective mission.

NAVAL FORCES: *Before KATRINA the Coast Guard reviewed and exercised its hurricane-response plans. Do you see similar opportunities in DHS to engage senior decision makers?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: We did an exercise like that in late June – the maritime operational threat response war game at the Naval War College in Newport. DHS, DOD, and DOJ [Department of

Justice] were represented. It was not the first one, and we are learning how to work and use existing infrastructure and leverage the critical mass in DOD. It is significant to be able to game out scenarios under the maritime operational threat response.

NAVAL FORCES: *What is your take of Admiral Mullen's concept of a '1,000-ship Navy' comprising Navies and Coast Guards from around the world.*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: When you look at the experiences around the world of the last 15 or 20 years in terms of trans-national threats and conflicts, you move fairly quickly from operations that are U.S. joint [i.e., multi-service], to joint and interagency, and finally to both joint-interagency and coalition. Given the need for coalitions to achieve mission effectiveness around the globe, one can easily see how you can move from a U.S. National Fleet concept to an international fleet concept. It's happening already in the counter-drug world, and an Italian admiral is leading a coalition task force in the Arabian Sea. In a resource-constrained environment in a globalized world with trans-national threats, nobody can do it alone. This is the way to go internationally. We have proved that in NATO for more than 50 years. If you extend the concept of the National Fleet to the international realm, it is easy to see how you get to the 1,000-ship Navy.

NAVAL FORCES: *How do you assess your relationship with the Coast Guard's international partners?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Excellent. We're not involved with everyone around the world, but where we have equities and are involved it is working very well. In the Caribbean, Latin America, and in the Andean ridge area of South

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America we have longstanding and maturing relationships. It started before the drug war with search and rescue. I remember serving as a lieutenant junior grade working in the rescue centre in San Juan, Puerto Rico, coordinating rescues down island with the Dutch Navy and the Trinidad-Tobago Coast Guard.

Thanks to the work of my predecessor, Admiral Tom Collins, we now have an annual meeting with Coast Guard agencies representing the Northwest Pacific region. We discuss ways to communicate more effectively, exchange ship riders, and make port calls in these countries. Later this fall I'll be going to the annual meeting of this organisation in Beijing to represent the Coast Guard and the United States.

The Coast Guard continues to be a very relevant maritime model for many countries in the world. The majority probably need more of a Coast Guard than a Navy, because their focus is on living marine resources, enforcing customs laws, migration issues, and things like that. International engagement is an important aspect of our work.

NAVAL FORCES: *The Navy is developing an operational concept that emphasises the Navy and Marine Corps with some Coast Guard participation. Then there's maritime strategy - where the Coast Guard must be more involved, correct?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Admiral Mullen and I have discussed this. I don't want to speak for him, but what we're talking about is the maritime strategy with a capital 'M'. What is the current paradigm? Looking at the broad spectrum of today's maritime threats, opportunities, and challenges, how should we orient ourselves as a nation in the maritime environment? This discussion is not inconsistent with the *National Strategy for Maritime Security* that was issued last year. We have active discussions going on right now about how we can best partner.

In a recent speech on maritime security I said, "The water is different." Without being too glib, if you look at the world today nearly all of the land masses, with the exception of Antarctica, have been divided up into claims called borders. People will argue and maybe fight over them, but none the less you can pick up a map and see a line. You know where one country ends and another begins. Space and the aviation domains are restricted by technology and safety issues.

The water is very different. You have intertwined legal constructs that have evolved over many years. They don't produce geographic borders with a line on a map; they produce interlocking layers of legal structures - territorial seas, contiguous zones, exclusive economic zones, the continental shelf, and the high seas.

The real challenge for us in terms of the maritime security strategy for this country is where we are going with the incremental changes we have made since 9/11? What is the end state regarding a maritime security regime for a coastal-nation state in the current threat environment? That is the question the Coast Guard and I must answer over the next four years. We must lay out a coherent structure for national discussion and debate.

I plan to issue a Coast Guard maritime strategy this autumn that becomes a capstone document to guide my tenure. It will create the overarching goals relating to legislation, rule making, interaction at IMO [International Maritime Organisation], partnering with international partners, all the way down the line - including how we're going to interact with the Navy strategically.

The Coast Guard maritime strategy that we will produce will support, in part, the *National Strategy for Maritime Security*, but it also most support all of the operations that the Coast Guard conducts. There will be three major sections in this strategy - one on maritime security, a second on safety, and a final section on stewardship of the oceans.

The strategy will address three key tenets in each of these three areas of emphasis. The first is the pertinent regimes - the relevant legal frameworks, laws, rules, and agreements. The second is awareness - maritime domain awareness and intelligence. The last is operational capabilities - the people, equipment, and organization. The latter will include our trident force of shore-based, maritime patrol, and deployable forces).

My goal is to create strategic intent and a process for regenerating our potential futures and how we want to position ourselves against those futures on a four-year cycle that is offset by one year so the new Commandant coming in has one year to regenerate the process, taking the output from the previous Commandant.

We will source to the strategy. It will drive budget, legislation, rule making, our IMO agenda, and so forth. We're talking about a compass - we're talking about a heading.

NAVAL FORCES: *How will you assess the success of your time as Commandant given the initiatives you've set in motion?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: First of all, in the mission areas that are encompassed by the three general areas of maritime security, maritime safety, and stewardship of our oceans and waterways we will sustain excellence in mission execution. The public will say, "not only did you do it during the year of the KATRINA response, you did it for four more years."

NAVAL FORCES: *What are your principal challenges - what keeps you awake at night?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: We must sustain excellence in mission execution, and the input to that are platforms and people. We are nothing without our people, and our people are nothing without the right tools. So the issue before me is getting the tools right and getting the people right in terms of competencies, and then beyond that to optimise the command-and-control and mission-support structures that enable mission execution.

When you worry about things in the security realm, you must take an even-handed look at threats, vulnerabilities, and consequences. We must employ a risk-based approach to dealing with 95,000 miles of navigable waterways. As much as there is a justified concern with shipping containers right now and weapons of mass destruction, you can't be so container-centric that you lose track of the fact that we must contend with many other threats in the maritime domain.

We must optimise our ability to deal with threats and vulnerabilities. This gets back to the Coast Guard's collaborative role in building out a maritime security regime.

NAVAL FORCES: *Is there anything we have not asked that you would like to discuss?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: I am frequently asked what's different in the new Department of Homeland Security, and I tell everybody that the Coast Guard moved with our mission set intact, by law. What we sometimes don't understand - and where we may need to be more insightful - is that we may not have changed, but the environment around us has radically changed. Therefore, the expectations of us as an agency have radically changed. This is true not only in terms of integration within the Department of Homeland Security, but in what I call an 'all hazards, all threats' environment.

We must be concerned with everything from a weapon of mass destruction in a port to what the next hurricane may do, or the next earthquake, or a tsunami, or the threat of a pandemic. This is generalised in the Coast Guard's multi-mission, dual-character nature as a law-enforcement agency and military service going back more than two hundred years, but today there is a wider continuum of threats. **NAFO**

¹ **Capt. Gordon I. Peterson, USN (Ret.)** is North America editor of *NAVAL FORCES* and a Senior Technical Director with General Dynamics Information Technology. **Dr. Scott C. Truver** is Group Vice President for National Security Programs, General Dynamics Information Technology, and directs its Center for Security Strategies and Operations.