2007 Coast Guard Innovation Expo:
Improving Mission Execution and Sustainment
by CDR Andrea Palermo

The Coast Guard's 2007 Innovation Expo goes Cajun!

With the city of New Orleans the stage, the U.S. Coast Guard held its 2007 Innovation Expo Oct. 29 – Nov. 1, which attracted more than 1,500 attendees. As part of the Expo, Coast Guard Commandant, Adm. Thad Allen, recognized the 2007 Neils P. Thomsen Innovation Award winners. Established in 2003, the award recognizes the exemplary efforts of individual Coast Guard members or teams that have created or implemented innovation solutions to the challenges faced by the Coast Guard. Since this time, the Innovation Council has awarded over $8 million in seed money for Coast Guard projects.

Those attendees and exhibitors were welcomed to the city of New Orleans on the first full day of the Innovation Expo by Mayor Ray Nagin. Following a warm welcome and introduction by Adm. Allen, Nagin welcomed all those in attendance to the unique city of New Orleans – the birthplace of Jazz, the home of the New Orleans' Saints, the home of the Sugar Bowl – a city where things are done on a grand scale! He noted that many people did not think the city would come back following Hurricane Katrina but the city is on the rise and on behalf of the citizens of New Orleans, the Mayor thanked the Coast Guard for all the support shown in the past, is currently showing, and the support the Coast Guard will show in the future. Nagin stressed that the men and women of the Coast Guard should be proud to be a member of such a fine organization. And with that, he issued an order to have fun and enjoy the fine city of New Orleans!

This year's Innovation Expo coincided with the Senior Executive Leadership Conference. Attendees and exhibitors were excited to see the senior leadership of the Coast Guard on the floor visiting the various booths. And the leaders of the Coast Guard were able to meet and speak with many of the young innovators in attendance.

Wandering through the Exhibit Hall, one couldn't help but wonder how some of the products and ideas could benefit the Coast Guard during its time of change. Many attendees visited the IdeaFactory booth. The Idea Factory was launched by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) in April 2007. It is a blog-based tool designed to enable participatory innovation and organizational collaboration. More than 50,000 TSA employees are empowered to submit their innovative ideas that address any challenges faced by the organization. Representing all parts of the organization, the IdeaFactory's Innovation Team review and evaluate all ideas based on a standard set of decision criteria. Team members are able to determine approval guidelines, including legality, duplication of effort, strategic fit, cost and stakeholder impact, making recommendations and selections.

How about empowering the citizens of the United States, enabling them to ensure the safety of the communities in which they live?

The Commandant visits with the CAN Team

The 13th District's Citizens Action Network (CAN) Program does just that. Started in 1999, CAN has over 350 members throughout the 13th District and an international flavor with another 250 members on the Canadian side. These proactive volunteers assist the Coast Guard by being the eyes and the ears on the water where the Coast Guard can not always be. The Coast Guard can dispatch these volunteers on demand via a Coast Guard to CAN member phone call or by sending regional automated telephone alerts. CAN received the Department of Homeland Security Secretary's Award for Excellence in May 2006 for its innovation and implementation of a program that improves maritime security awareness. It was recently selected as one of five finalists for the 2007 Kennedy School of Government/Noblis Innovations Award in Homeland Security that honors the best programs from across the nation that help keep America safer.

Attendees were able to listen to guest speakers and panels discuss the future of the Coast Guard as well as hear from successful innovators – successful because of the partnerships that were formed and because of their passion, their drive. In addition to a booth, the Deployable Operations Group hosted a panel. The DOG was established not because something was broken but in order to align the units of the DOG – Maritime Security Response Team (MSRT), Maritime Safety and Security Teams (MSSTs), the National Strike Force (NSF), Port Security Units (PSUs), Tactical Law Enforcement Teams (TACLET), and the Coast Guard personnel assigned to U.S. Navy Naval Coastal Warfare (NCW) Squadrons – to ensure standardization of training, tactics and procedures that will dictate how the Coast Guard responds in the future to man-made disasters as well as the wrath of Mother Nature.

The Coast Guard's Acquisition transformation and insights panel session was well attended as RADM Gary Blore, Assistant Commandant for Acquisition, and other members of his team discussed the consolidation of the Acquisition Directorate, the Integrated Deepwater System Program, the Head of Contracting Activity (HCA) and the procurement policy staff as a result of the Coast Guard's modernization.

It seems appropriate that this year's Innovation Expo was such a huge success in honor of Captain Neils P. Thomsen who passed away on 2 January at the age of 99. Thomsen was born in Denmark, the great-grandson of a Count, grew up in Fresno, California. At the age of 15 and the desire to sail around the world, he ran away from home and jumped a pacific freight train heading up to the Northwest coast. Once there, he joined a commercial sailing ship, the *Forest Dream*, a five-masted Barkentkine. Following a 14-month journey from Puget Sound to the Island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean, the *Forest Dream* was destroyed in gale, with Thomsen as the sole survivor. Following ten years of perseverance, Thomsen became an officer in the Merchant Marine. During World War II, Thomsen entered the Coast Guard and served in the Pacific. One of his accomplishments was when he and his USS YP-251 crew sank a Japanese combatant submarine RO-32, earning a legion of merit and a battlefield promotion. In addition to his field successes, Thomsen was also an inventor. He is credited with developing the chain stopper, which is used by Coast Guard buoy tenders today to secure and safely release the chain and sinker for swiveling anchors. CAPT Thomsen's heroism, devotion to duty, and innovative thinking advanced the Coast Guard and the lives of the men and women who proudly serve today, as well as that of all Americans.

Approximately 85 submissions for this prestigious award were received by the Innovation Council. After long hours of reviewing each submission, the Council narrowed down the field to three finalists in each of the four categories – Science and Technology; Operations or Readiness; Administration, Training or Support; and the CDR Joel Magnussen Innovation Award for Management.

Admiral Allen with the Enlisted Innovators

In late May 2007, each finalist or team was given five minutes to make a phone presentation on his or her project to the members of the Innovation Council with an additional five minutes for questions.

Five of the twelve finalists were selected as winners based on four criteria:

1. provides an innovative approach to solving a Coast Guard challenge,
2. successfully implemented at the local, District/Area, or national level,
3. proves to influence an increase in efficiency – reduced cost in personnel hours or resources, increase in productivity – increased capability or effectiveness, increase the ability to share information or coordinate resources, or other tangible or intangible process improvements, and
4. ability to improve or sustain mission execution.

2007 Innovation Award Winners

The 2007 Innovation Award winners were:

<u>**Operations or Readiness**</u>
Cell Phone Blue Force Tracking (Assistant Commandant for Capabilities, Office of Command and Control Capabilities – CG-37RCC)

<u>**Science and Technology**</u>
Biometrics-at-Sea: Mona Passage Proof of Concept (Assistant Commandant for Response, Office of Law Enforcement – CG-3RPL)

<u>**Administration, Training or Support**</u>
Procurement Request Tracker (Headquarters Support Command)

<u>**CDR Joel Magnussen Innovation Award for Management**</u> – (two winners)
♦ Mission Requirements and Boat/Personnel Allocation (PAC Area – MLCPAC fpb)
♦ CFO Act Compliance Tools (LANT Area – LANT Api)

Each recipient will receive $10,000 in AFC-30 funds to use at the unit's discretion that will assist in creating an environment that encourages the men and women of the Coast Guard to challenge the status quo, to take responsible risks, and to implement solutions to improve the productivity and efficiency of the workplace and the Coast Guard.

About the Award Winners

<u>**Science or Technology**</u>: **Biometrics-at-Sea: Mona Passage Proof of Concept**
Assistant Commandant for Response, Office of Law Enforcement – CG-3RPL
Named as the 2007 Government Computer News Award, this biometric identification solution has proven successful in slowing the flow of illegal immigrants through the Mona Pass, a 90-mile stretch of the Caribbean Sea between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Many of these immigrants have criminal records, terrorist connections or a history of violating immigration laws. Now, when a Coast Guard cutter intercepts a boat with illegal migrants, Coast Guard personnel are able to electronically fingerprint and digitally photograph all migrants using a rugged commercial off-the-shelf handheld device. This data is then electronically sent to the US-Visit (Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Visitor and Immigrant Status Indicator Technology program) database where each record is compared to all the records, some 90 million prints which includes files on 3.2 million people on watch lists, found in the database. The database then returns a match/no match response, providing Coast Guard personnel with the necessary information to take appropriate action against illegal migrants that are identified as felons, terrorists or other persons of interests. Illegal immigration has slowed 50% since this program was implemented last November with 20% of the 1,000 biometrics collected matching criminal records. Of the 70 persons detained for prosecution, there have been 50 convictions and 20 pending trials.

<u>**Operations or Readiness**</u> - **Cell Phone Blue Force Tracking**
Assistant Commandant for Capabilities, Office of Command and Control Capabilities – CG-37RCC)
To best facilitate immediate and coordinated response to security threats, search and rescue, and law enforcement efforts, Sector Commanders must be constantly aware of the status of all blue forces, both Coast Guard and other government agencies, in their area of responsibility and have the capability to exchange tactical data with them. This award winning team developed a way to track deployable forces, as part of the Coast Guard Common Operational Picture, by means of their issued cellular phone using installed Java applet. Cell phones transmit an encrypted message with a phone ID, current position, and current time through an existing cellular network through the Coast Guard Data Network firewall to a server located at OSC, Martinsburg. The server decrypts the message, calculates the speed over ground and course over ground delivers that information to the Coast Guard Common Operations Picture.

<u>**Administration, Training or Support**</u> – **Procurement Request Tracker**
Headquarters Support Command
An access database was developed that tracks each procurement request from assignment to a buyer through the creation of purchasing document signed by a contracting officer, has resulted in reduced processing time. By creating this database and putting a "search" link on the Headquarters Support Command website, phone calls and office traffic has been reduced by at least six hours per day for all buyers and contracting officers; a significant improvement. Another feature of the database allows staff to see how each buyer and contracting officer is performing compared to the others in the office and against the Procurement Administration Lead Time standards.

<u>**CDR Joel Magnussen Innovation Award for Management**</u> (two winners)
Mission Requirements and Boat/Personnel Allocation
PAC Area – MLCPAC fpb
As a result of not having a process to determine Mission Requirements or allocate boats or personnel to its multi-mission units, LANTAREA chartered a Shore-based Boat Working Group. This Mission Requirements and Boat/Personnel Allocation team developed a process to evaluate mission requirements and determine the appropriate boat resource hours and types of boats needed, and equitably allocate resources to all 170 boat units.

CDR Joel Magnussen Innovation Award for Management
CFO Act Compliance Tools
LANT Area – LANT Api

The Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act of 1990 marked the beginning of a new era not only in federal management and accountability, but also in efforts to gain financial control of government operations. This award-winning team developed a number of innovative applications designed to bring the Coast Guard into compliance with CFO Act requirements, including: an open obligation validation application, a property metrics tracking system, and a financial pipeline certification application. The Coast Guard's Open Obligation Validation Application (OOVA) is an application that provides compliance with CFO audit for management reviews of open obligations, potential efficiencies from loss of funds and instills financial management accountability. The OOVA pulls from the Coast Guard Core Accounting System, open obligations that is transformed into a user friendly format that is broken into ATU, region, and program element levels. It requires entry by the responsible unit, to list the transaction as one of the following: valid, no longer required, problematic disbursement, or a financial error. This application instills track ability of obligations as well as allows the user to enter comments on action taken, or of future intentions. The Coast Guard Financial Pipeline Certification Application instills accountability at all command levels through a web-based process that is simple to access and requires a minimum amount of effort. This application will identify potential errors and bring improved stewardship and accountability. It will provide the Coast Guard with major improvements in Financial Management as well as contribute to the passing of the Chief Financial Officer's Audit. Lastly, the Property Metrics Tracking System utilizes a friendly reporting format comprising of six critical measures of personal property accountability. It also allows for comparison across similar unit types.

Closing Remarks and Presentation of Honorary Degree

Adm. Allen provided the closing remarks (audio file of Adm. Allen's closing remarks can be found on CGVI) at the Innovation Expo, focusing on the Coast Guard's efforts to move forward while dealing with the challenges of the present and protecting its future. Allen indicated it was time to start listening to the Coast Guard's innovators, time to remove the barriers and stop holding our organization back.

In addition to the presentation of awards to the finalists, Adm. Allen was presented with an honorary degree, the Doctorate of Science in Quality Systems Management, from The National Graduate School. He was unanimously nominated for this honor for his commitment to education among members of the Coast Guard, his commitment to continuous improvement and transformation among core Coast Guard processes, and his leadership and operational achievements during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

The 2008 Innovation Expo will be held November 17-20 in Virginia Beach, VA. Attendees can count on seeing new technology, new initiatives that will assist the Coast Guard become better prepared to meet the unknown challenges of the future. And we will see how ingenious our Coast Guard men and women are as they think outside the box in order to support improved mission execution.

2007 Innovation Award Finalists

Science or Technology:
- Biometrics-at-Sea: Mona Passage Proof of Concept
- Secure Mobile Communications Initiative
- Large File Transfer System

Operations or Readiness:
- Cell Phone Blue Force Tracking
- Port Risk Book
- SPS-73 Positioning Accuracy Verification

Administration, Training, or Support:
- Procurement Request Tracker
- CG Netflix
- Cutter Systems Learning Program

CDR Joel Magnussen Innovation Award for Management:
- CFO Act Compliance Tools
- Mission Requirements and Boat/Personnel Allocation
- Open Access Appointing System