



Highlights of [GAO-09-497](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

As part of its more than \$24 billion Deepwater program to replace aging vessels and aircraft with new or upgraded assets, the Coast Guard is preparing the National Security Cutter (NSC) for service. GAO previously reported on Deepwater assets' deployment delays and the Coast Guard's management of the Deepwater program. GAO was legislatively directed to continue its oversight of the Deepwater program. As a result, this report addresses: (1) the operational effects, if any, of delays in the delivery of the NSC and its support assets of unmanned aircraft and small boats; (2) Coast Guard plans for mitigating any operational effects and any associated costs of these plans; and (3) the extent to which the Coast Guard has plans, to include cost estimates, for phasing in logistics support of the NSC while phasing out support for the High Endurance Cutter (HEC) it is replacing. GAO's work is based on analyses of the (1) operational capabilities and maintenance plans of the NSC and its support assets and (2) data on the HECs' condition; comparison of an NSC and HEC; and, interviews with Coast Guard officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that as the Coast Guard finalizes the Integrated Logistics Support Plan, it should ensure that the plan includes the required logistics support documents to be used and the time frames for completing them. The Coast Guard concurred with GAO's recommendation and is taking action to respond to it.

[View GAO-09-497](#) or [key components](#). For more information, contact Steve Caldwell at (202) 512-9610 or caldwells@gao.gov.

COAST GUARD

Better Logistics Planning Needed to Aid Operational Decisions Related to the Deployment of the National Security Cutter and Its Support Assets

What GAO Found

Delays in the delivery of the NSC and the support assets of unmanned aircraft and small boats have created operational gaps for the Coast Guard that include the projected loss of thousands of days in NSC availability for conducting missions until 2018. Enhancements to the NSC's capabilities following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the effects of Hurricane Katrina were factors that contributed to these delays. Given the delivery delays, the Coast Guard must continue to rely on HECs that are becoming increasingly unreliable. Coast Guard officials said that the first NSC's capabilities will be greater than those of an HEC; however, the Coast Guard cannot determine the extent to which the NSC's capabilities will exceed those of the HECs until the NSC's support assets are operational, which will take several years.

To mitigate these operational gaps, the Coast Guard plans to upgrade its HECs and use existing aircraft and small boats until unmanned aircraft and new small boats are operational, but because the mitigation plans are not yet finalized, the costs are largely unknown. Also, the Coast Guard has not yet completed operational requirements for the unmanned aircraft or new small boats. As a result, the Coast Guard has not determined the cost of the HEC upgrade plan or the operational gap created by the delay in fielding new support assets for the NSC.

The Coast Guard's logistics support plans for its transition to the NSC from the HEC are not finalized, and it has not yet fully determined transition costs. The contractor developed the initial NSC logistics plans, but Coast Guard officials said the plans lacked needed details, such as how the contractor would support the NSC after it becomes fully operational, and so, in 2007, the Coast Guard took over logistics planning. Coast Guard acquisition guidance states that an Integrated Logistics Support Plan should be completed by the time production of an asset is started. Although the first NSC has already been delivered, the Coast Guard has not yet finalized this plan, but expects to do so by October 2009. While the Coast Guard has developed an interim plan, it did not commit to including required logistics support documents to be used or time frames for completing them in the Integrated Logistics Support Plan because it is in the process of determining how to finalize the plan. Ensuring the plan includes these documents and time frames would better prepare the Coast Guard to support the NSC and aid it in making operational decisions given that the Coast Guard has not yet developed a deployment plan or completed cost estimates of the logistics transition from the HEC to the NSC.

National Security Cutter - *Bertholf*



Source: U.S. Coast Guard.