



Delivering the Goods

News from the U.S. Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate

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Coast Guard Celebrates Completion of Coastal Patrol Boat Project, Looks Ahead to New Sentinel-class Patrol Boat

By Linda M. Johnson

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate recently celebrated the completion of the successful 87-foot Marine Protector-class Coastal Patrol Boat (CPB) project with a ceremony commemorating the pending delivery of the 75th and final CPB at Bollinger Shipyards in Lockport, La.

On hand for the ceremony were Rear Adm. Gary T. Blore, Coast Guard Assistant Commandant for Acquisition; Sen. David Vitter (R-La.); Rep. Charlie Melancon (D-La.); Bollinger Shipyards Inc. Chairman, President and CEO Donald 'Boysie' Bollinger; Bollinger Executive Vice President of New Construction Christopher B. Bollinger; and L.J. Adams, a structural foreman who has worked for Bollinger for more than 40 years.

"During the last three years, the Coast Guard has undergone an unprecedented reshaping of its acquisition enterprise and in particular, how we approach shipbuilding. It will come as no surprise to any of you that much of what we have done with Coast Guard acquisition is to emulate the superb procurement we have represented here today by the Coastal Patrol Boat project," Blore told the crowd.

"The Marine Protector-class Coastal Patrol Boat has been a proven and essential platform for completing Coast Guard missions through the past decade, and it will continue to do so in the future," Blore explained. "Each day, it enables



USCGC *Ahi* patrols the coast off of Waikiki Beach, Hawaii. The 87-foot Marine Protector-class cutters are designed to operate in heavy seas (up to sea state 5), and equipped to handle a variety of Coast Guard missions. *U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer First Class C.C. Clayton*

our Coast Guard men and women to successfully interdict illegal drugs and migrants, board and inspect commercial vessels, carry out critical search and rescue operations, and enforce marine and fisheries laws and regulations."

The Marine Protector-class boat has provided approximately 750,000 patrol hours since the first CPB was delivered in April 1998. With 69 now in Coast Guard service, CPBs are conducting daily patrols in or around every port in the United States. The vessel's performance, reliability and operational capability prompted the U.S. Navy to purchase four CPBs to support Navy escort missions and the Republic of Malta to purchase two CPBs for its Navy.

According to Allen Harker, the contracting officer at the Coast Guard Project Resident Office in Lockport for the past 13 years, CPBs have assisted in numerous high-profile search and rescue missions, including the search for the downed airplane of John F. Kennedy Jr. and the Hudson River landing of US Airways Flight 1549. The CPB

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has also been featured in several television shows and movies.

"The success of the Coastal Patrol Boat is no fluke. It comes as a result of the Coast Guard's commitment to a highly disciplined acquisition culture based on transparent, repeatable processes that deliver the right products to meet operational requirements. This patrol boat acquisition project benefited from a well-written contract, exacting requirements, a superb shipbuilding company and what is one of the finest shipyard workforces in the United States," Blore remarked.

"You've all read the headlines recently of federal acquisition projects that are over cost, behind schedule and in the end fail to meet the original requirements. Well here in Lockport, things are a little different. This project is under cost, on schedule and exceeds performance requirements. This community has every reason to be very proud," Blore said.

Sen. Vitter had nothing but kind words for the Coast Guard. "Day in

and day out they serve all of us—they serve our nation extremely well. Thank you, U.S. Coast Guard, for everything you do and thank you for this great project!" Sen. Vitter said. "These Coastal Patrol Boats will undoubtedly be vital to the Coast Guard's core missions for years to come."

"Today is about a celebration of success with our best customer, the United States Coast Guard," Donald 'Boysie' Bollinger exclaimed. "We have probably built more patrol boats than any other shipyard in the world. We've built every patrol boat owned by the Coast Guard and every patrol boat owned by the Navy."

"We met a good friend and a good neighbor called the U.S. Coast Guard," L.J. Adams recalled being told by company leadership when Bollinger was awarded the original contract in March 1996. That contract was expanded due to the new security challenges America faced after Sept. 11.

Sentinel-class Patrol Boat

"Word has gotten out that the Coast Guard and Bollinger are embarking on a new shipbuilding project together," Blore remarked. "Following a highly competitive process, which included the assessment of the most competitive designs put forth by industry, a full and open competition and demonstrating due diligence in the careful evaluation of proposals to choose the best value solution for the Coast Guard, Bollinger Shipyards has once again been selected as the Coast Guard's patrol boat provider. This time for the larger Sentinel-class patrol boat."

Blore continued, "Bollinger Shipyards won this contract the old-fashioned way — they earned it with a well thought-out proposal having the highest technical merit and providing the best value to the government."

Last September, the Coast Guard awarded Bollinger an \$88 million contract for the design and construction of the 153-foot Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutter (FRC), the successor to the 110-foot Island-class patrol boats. If all options are exercised, the Coast Guard could order as many as 34 patrol boats under this contract, for a total value of approximately \$1.5 billion over the next six to eight years.

"Building on lessons learned from the Coastal Patrol Boat, the Sentinel-class acquisition will again feature a parent craft strategy, meaning it will use an existing patrol boat design that has successfully performed equivalent missions. This acquisition strategy allows us to ensure that the operating forces will receive new patrol boats capable of performing the required missions as quickly as possible," Blore explained.



Rear Adm. Gary T. Blore addresses an audience at Lockport, La., attending the close-out ceremony for the Coastal Patrol Boat (CPB) project. Having recently delivered the 69th CPB to the Coast Guard, the project has proven to be one of the most successful acquisitions in the service's history. *U.S. Coast Guard Photo by PA3 Stephen B. Lehmann*

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"To do this, Bollinger again will be using a proven Damen design, as was the case with the Marine Protector-class, but the Sentinel-class patrol boat will exceed the capabilities of its predecessors in all areas and will become the most mission capable patrol boat the Coast Guard has ever operated," Blore concluded.

"We're excited to see the workmanship continue as we start the

next contract. We've lived through a whole generation of ships and are now building the replacements," Christopher Bollinger said.

He estimated it will take 18 months to build the first Sentinel-class boat and deliver it to Coast Guard District Seven in Miami in early 2011. After that, Christopher Bollinger expects the company to complete a new Sentinel every eight weeks.

"This is the beginning of the third era for the Bollinger Shipyard family," said Rep. Melancon. "This is the third construction of military vessels they've built over the last 30 years. It's a testament that the Coast Guard recognizes the skill and work ethic of south Louisianans." ■

Coast Guard Acquisition Principles Based on History of Lessons Learned

By Hunter Keeter

The Coast Guard's Acquisition Directorate has nearly completed a complex reform effort that has helped change the policies and processes at the heart of the Coast Guard's business culture. These improvements are part of a broader modernization effort, which seeks to update headquarters and field organizations, platforms and equipment to match current and future mission requirements. But the service's senior leadership says that acquisition reform, modernization and the transformation of the ways the Coast Guard does business are founded on principles nearly as old as the United States itself.

Speaking earlier this month at the Navy League of the United States' annual Sea-Air-Space Exposition just outside Washington, Assistant Commandant for Acquisition Rear Adm. Gary T. Blore told an audience that the fundamental principles of effective acquisition management were based on a history of lessons-learned.

"I don't believe that federal acquisition process is fundamentally broken, and I'm not sure why we feel like we have to reinvent it every few years," Blore said. "The same core values to properly acquire major assets 200-plus years ago are not that different for us today."



The Revenue Cutter *Massachusetts*, built in 1791, was one of the first cutters ordered by the then-new U.S. government. The cutter's design, development and construction provide several lessons learned that are applicable to modern acquisition projects. *U.S. Coast Guard illustration*

Blore made his point by recalling the acquisition of the first U.S. Revenue Service cutter, *Massachusetts*, in 1791. The Congress appropriated \$1,000 and the service contracted a Newburyport, Mass., shipyard to begin construction, on schedule. Shortly thereafter, the cutter's prospective master, Capt. John Foster Williams, went into the yard and directed changes to the original design.

The shipyard added 20 feet to the sloop's length and, by the time that change was worked into the design, *Massachusetts* was more than three months late and \$300 over budget. Also, because the hull design change didn't alter the ship's total sail area, the cutter ultimately proved to be too slow for its basic mission: to overtake merchant shipping and collect tariffs.

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on goods entering or leaving U.S. ports.

Ultimately, in 1792, just 15 months after her commissioning, the government sold the first cutter *Massachusetts* and rebuilt her namesake to the original design specification.

"The lessons from this experience are as relevant today as they were [then]," Blore wrote after the exposition. "The project was over cost, delayed, and, even more fundamentally, the ship didn't perform as expected. These facts point to the need for stable requirements, government oversight of engineering changes, clear contract parameters, and an effective testing and certification process."

The Coast Guard's business principles, in alignment with guidance from the leadership of the Department of Homeland Security, can be boiled down to some basic tenets, such as: having discipline in developing, vetting and stabilizing requirements; having skilled and certified professionals managing contracts, finances and project execution; and deferring to the resident agency technical authority, service experts who approve designs for platforms, electronic systems, human factors engineering, etc.

"We feel that in any agency there needs to be creative tension among these elements," Blore wrote. "They should not always agree. But they should come together at the end and determine what is affordable, and what is reasonable as far as design viability and essential requirements. We also see the value in having someone outside the agency overseeing the process, in our case the Department of Homeland Security."

Championing Modernization

On April 22, 2009, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Thad W. Allen told the House Appropriations Committee's Homeland Security panel that while "the Coast Guard ... are experts ... in managing an aging fleet to meet

mission requirements," the passage of time has made much of the fleet's legacy platforms and mission systems increasingly costly to operate and maintain.

In order to maintain the material readiness of the operational force, the Coast Guard is spending millions annually in unanticipated maintenance costs, Allen said. "In the past 12 months, we have spent over \$50 million on major unanticipated repairs to cutters and aircraft," he noted.

The Coast Guard plans to mitigate the block obsolescence of its fleet through the acquisition of new assets, and through other programs that modernize or refresh some of the costliest legacy platforms. With future mission readiness riding on the successful outcome of those programs, Allen and Blore have championed the modernization effort to continue the momentum of the last two years.

Building on successful acquisition reform, both Allen and Blore have noted, the Coast Guard has laid the foundations for a mission support organization that is capable of taking on the responsibilities of 'Lead Systems Integrator (LSI)' for the entire portfolio of 22 major acquisition projects.

A term borrowed from industry, LSI refers to the Coast Guard resuming the role of primary decision-maker, ensuring that products from industry meet operational and contractual requirements.

As the Coast Guard is the user-community for the platforms and mission systems the Acquisition Directorate delivers, the Coast Guard should be the certifying authority for these products, Allen told the Congress.

Though there is more work to be done to build and strengthen the Coast Guard's workforce to take on the full responsibility of the LSI role, already the service's acquirers and technical authorities work closely together, with

partners in other federal agencies and with industry, to ensure success.

For example, a Coast Guard-led multi-agency government and industry team recently completed the final acceptance process for the first National Security Cutter, *Bertholf* (WMSL 750). Additionally, the Coast Guard has initiated what promises to be a rigorous and disciplined approach to the acquisition of the Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutter. Similar examples of the Coast Guard's capabilities as LSI are evident in the aviation project portfolio and elsewhere within acquisition.

While acquisition reform has reintroduced the discipline of 'cost, schedule and performance' back into all Coast Guard projects, Blore is quick to point out that none of this would be possible without the steady and full support of the U.S. Navy's acquisition professionals at the Naval Sea Systems Command; the Naval Surface Warfare Centers; Program Executive Officer (PEO) Integrated Warfare Systems; PEO Ships; Supervisor of Shipbuilding, Conversion and Repair; the Board of Inspection and Survey; Naval Air Systems Command; Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR); the SPAWAR Systems Centers, and Commander, Operational Test and Evaluation Force.

"Simply put," Blore said, "without Navy acquisition support, Coast Guard recapitalization would be impossible."

As Blore prepares this summer for his transition to command Coast Guard's 13th District, Seattle, Wash., Rear Adm. Ronald J. Rábago is preparing to relieve him as chief acquisition officer. Both leaders remain focused on the top challenge facing the directorate (and many other federal government acquisition agencies) in the years to come: hiring, training, and retaining a skilled, properly certified and professional workforce with additional 'bench strength' in key disciplines, such as contracting, business and financial management, and program management. ■