

Deepwater Contracts Awarded for Two Maritime Security Cutters

by Captain Gordon I. Peterson, USN (Ret)



An artist's concept of the Maritime Security Cutter, Large — Northrop Grumman Ships Systems

The Coast Guard's multiyear, multibillion-dollar Integrated Deepwater System (IDS) gained momentum in June with the award of contracts for two new cutters to Integrated Coast Guard Systems (ICGS), a joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman — the Deepwater Program's system integrator and partner in industry.

On June 24, the Coast Guard awarded ICGS a contract to start the design and final requirements work for the Maritime Security Cutter, Medium (WMSM), formerly known as the Offshore Patrol Cutter. The contract will advance the medium-sized cutter's original 2012 planned delivery schedule by a full three years — a compelling reminder of the need to deliver new and more capable platforms to the Coast Guard's inventory as quickly as possible. Four days later, a contract totaling \$140 million also was awarded to ICGS for the production and delivery of the first Maritime Security Cutter, Large (WMSL), formerly known as the National Security Cutter.

"The contract award for the Maritime Security Cutter, Large, is a significant milestone in the Deepwater Program," said Rear Adm. Patrick M. Stillman, Program Executive Officer for the Integrated Deepwater System. "It begins the process that will, in several years, culminate in the delivery of the Coast Guard's first 21st century cutter — a highly capable ship designed to satisfy the Coast Guard's multimission responsibilities in homeland security, national defense, marine safety, and environmental protection. In addition

to enabling the Coast Guard to fulfill its commitment to the National Fleet Policy, this class of cutters will play an important role in restoring the Coast Guard's operational readiness, capacity, and effectiveness at a time when the demand for its services has never been higher."

The Deepwater Program is key to sustaining the Coast Guard's operational excellence in all of

its military, multimission, and maritime homeland-security responsibilities. Although originally conceived with "deepwater" missions in mind, including forward-deployed expeditionary operations with Navy component commanders, mobile multimission platforms like the Maritime Security Cutter are ideally suited for the wide range of homeland security operations encountered in ports, waterways, and coastal areas.

"Integrated Coast Guard Systems is very pleased to be developing these new ships, along with our capable partners on the ICGS team," said Jamie Anton, executive vice president of the joint venture. "We are developing and delivering new systems and capabilities to the Coast Guard so it can better perform the important work of guarding our coastlines and protecting U.S. maritime interests."

The design of the WMSL 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 — all key attributes in enabling the Coast Guard to implement increased security responsibilities. Such duties include exerting more effective jurisdiction over foreign-flagged ships transiting U.S. waters. Deepwater's more capable maritime security cutters, for example, will enable the Coast Guard to screen and target vessels faster, more safely, and reliably before they arrive in U.S. waters — to include conducting

onboard verification through boardings and, if necessary, taking enforcement-control actions.

The Maritime Security Cutter, Large, is expected to serve as an integral part of the Coast Guard's strategy for achieving maritime domain awareness and ensuring the safety of the American public and sovereignty of U.S. maritime borders. Fabrication of this first-in-class cutter will start this fall, and the keel laying is scheduled for spring 2005. The lead ship is slated for delivery to the Coast Guard during the second quarter of 2007.

Northrop Grumman Ship Systems will lead the production effort for both cutters, with Lockheed Martin responsible for the design, manufacture, and integration of their systems for C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance). The Maritime Security Cutter, Large, will be manufactured in Pascagoula, MS. Its design calls for a 421-foot hull with a 4,112-ton displacement at full load when delivered in 2007. Propulsion for the twin-screw cutter will be provided by a combined diesel and gas propulsion plant, designed for a maximum speed of 28 knots.

The notional design of the medium-sized Maritime Security Cutter anticipates a 341-foot vessel with similar capabilities and equipment as its larger counterpart. Each of the cutters will be designed to incorporate a stern ramp for the launch and recovery of new rigid hull inflatable boats, a flight deck to accommodate a range of rotary wing manned and unmanned aircraft, and modern command-and-control systems critical to the Coast Guard's ability to develop a common operating picture and acquire maritime domain awareness.

The Deepwater Program is the largest recapitalization effort in the 214-year history of the Coast Guard. Since the June 2002 award of Deepwater's multiyear contract to ICGS, the need to advance the progressive modernization and recapitalization effort with an appropriate sense of urgency has assumed heightened dimensions as demand grows for Coast Guard services.

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