

CRS Report for Congress

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Homeland Security: Navy Operations — Background and Issues for Congress

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Summary

Potential Navy homeland security roles include defending the United States against ballistic or cruise missile attack, defending U.S. naval bases and naval computer networks against attack, searching for terrorists at sea, and assisting civil authorities in responding to terrorist attacks. The Navy's role in homeland security raises several potential issues for Congress. This report will be updated as events warrant.

Background

Navy and Coast Guard in Maritime Homeland Security. Navy and Coast Guard officials agree that the Coast Guard should be the lead federal agency for maritime homeland security operations because it is better suited in terms of equipment, training, linkages to civilian federal law-enforcement agencies, and because of its dual status as both an armed service and a law enforcement agency. Navy and Coast Guard officials agree that the Navy's role should be to support the Coast Guard, particularly in areas, like air defense, where the Coast Guard has little or no capability. Navy officials believe that the Navy, while contributing to maritime homeland security operations, should remain primarily focused on deploying naval forces overseas to provide a forward defense against threats to the United States.¹

Navy Concept for Homeland Security Operations. Navy officials view homeland security as comprising homeland defense activities and civil support operations (also called military assistance to civil authorities, or MACA). The Navy's homeland security approach includes three elements:

- forward-deployed naval forces, which Navy officials believe play critical roles in deterring, detecting, and defending against threats to homeland security before they can come close to the United States;

¹ For more on Coast Guard homeland security operations, see CRS Report RS21125, *Homeland Security: Coast Guard Operations—Background and Issues for Congress*, by Ronald O'Rourke.

- naval forces operating in support of the Coast Guard and the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) to provide capabilities for defending against sea and air threats in the vicinity of the continental United States; and
- naval forces providing support to civil authorities to respond to domestic crises, particularly in populated coastal areas.

Navy officials in 2003 and 2004 have spoken about creating a maritime analog to the North American Air Defense Command (NORAD) to help support maritime homeland security awareness and operations.²

In its report (H.Rept. 108-106 of May 16, 2003) on the FY2004 defense authorization bill (H.R. 1588), the House Armed Services Committee encouraged closer consultation between the Commandant of the Coast Guard and the DoD Joint Chiefs of Staff “on issues relating to the defense of our nation, both overseas and at home.” (Page 346).

Potential Homeland Security Threats Relating to the Navy. Potential homeland security threats that could relate to the Navy include attacks on the U.S. homeland by ballistic missiles or cruise missiles, particularly those that are launched from or fly over the seas, and so-called “asymmetric” attacks by terrorists or other parties on U.S. naval bases and installations and on ports and coastal areas using aircraft, truck or car bombs, mortars, suicide belt bombs, boat bombs, large commercial cargo ships, swimmers, limpet mines, and sea mines. These attacks could employ either conventional high explosives or nuclear, radiological, chemical, or biological weapons. “Cyberwar” attacks on naval computer networks are an additional homeland security threat of interest.

Ballistic Missiles. The Administration’s vision for missile defense includes the use of Navy systems (i.e., ship-based radars and interceptor missiles) as part of its overall architecture for defending the United States against ballistic missile attacks.³

Cruise Missiles. In the event of a cruise missile threat to the United States, a potential Navy role would be to intercept surface ships, submarines, and aircraft flying over the seas that are armed with land-attack cruise missiles before they come within launch range of the United States, and shoot down cruise missiles flying over the seas toward the United States. Navy systems for shooting down enemy anti-ship cruise missiles could be adapted and incorporated into a potential land-based system for shooting down land-attack cruise missiles (or aircraft) flying toward the United States. Some observers have called for strengthening U.S. capabilities for defending the homeland against air and cruise missile attacks.

² See, for example, Robert A. Hamilton, “Navy’s Top Officer Calls For A Global Naval Force,” *New London (CT) Day*, Oct. 28, 2003; Gidget Fuentes, “Maritime NORAD Command Urged,” *Defense News*, Feb. 9, 2004: 16. See also, Malina Brown, “DoD Must Extend U.S. Maritime Perimeter To Better Deter Attack,” *Inside the Navy*, Oct. 27, 2003; Malina Brown, “Navy, Coast Guard Leaders Call For A Global Maritime Partnership,” *Inside the Navy*, Nov. 3, 2003.

³ For more, see CRS Report RL31111, *Missile Defense: The Current Debate*, coordinated by Steven A. Hildreth.

Asymmetric Attacks on Naval Bases, Cities, and Ports. A primary Navy homeland security role is to defend the Navy's domestic installations against asymmetric attacks. An additional role is to support the Coast Guard and NORAD in defending U.S. cities and ports against such attacks.

Cyberwar Attacks on Naval Computer Networks. Navy officials state that they are incorporating strong defenses against cyberwar attacks into both new naval computer networks and existing "legacy" naval computer systems.

Recent and Current Navy Homeland Security Operations.

Immediate response to September 11 Attacks. In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Navy placed its installations on the highest state of alert and deployed numerous ships to the waters off the East and West coasts of the United States. On the East Coast, the aircraft carriers John F. Kennedy and George Washington, along with several cruisers and destroyers equipped with the Aegis air defense system, were deployed to the New York area to help protect the city against potential follow-on airborne attacks. The 1,000-bed naval hospital ship Comfort was also sent to New York, where it supported the disaster-response effort in lower Manhattan for more than two weeks. Additional Aegis-equipped ships were deployed to help protect Washington, DC against potential attacks. On the West Coast, several Aegis-equipped cruisers and destroyers, along with additional non-Aegis destroyers and frigates and support ships, were deployed to protect cities and ports against potential air and surface attacks. Additional ships patrolled the waters off Hawaii.

Assistance to Coast Guard in U.S. Coastal Patrols. In November 2001, the Navy assigned 6 of its 13 Cyclone-class patrol craft, which previously had been used primarily for drug-interdiction or special warfare operations, to coastal patrol and escort operations. In January 2002, the Navy expanded the operation to include all 13 Cyclone-class craft. The 170-foot craft are crewed by 28 Navy personnel but embark a detachment of up to 8 Coast Guard law enforcement officers who conduct boardings and inspections of commercial ships approaching U.S. ports. The operations of these craft release Coast Guard cutters and patrol craft for other operations.

In preliminary deliberations on its proposed FY2004 budget, the Navy reportedly had considered decommissioning the 13 craft because their operations supported "a Homeland Defense Mission rather than a core Navy mission." The Navy, however, decided against this option in its final deliberations on the FY2004 budget. As part of its proposed FY2004 defense budget, the Navy proposed keeping all 13 craft in operation through FY2004 and make 5 of them available to the Coast Guard. Under this plan, the Navy in FY2004 would pay the operation, manning, and maintenance costs for all 13 ships — a total of \$71.5 million, or about \$5.5 million per craft. Starting in FY2005, the Coast Guard would fund the operation and manning costs for the craft (about \$3 million per year per hull) while the Navy would fund the maintenance costs (about \$2.5 million per hull).⁴ The Navy has also assigned 300 additional personnel to the National Maritime

⁴ Malina Brown, "Navy Decides Against Decommissioning 13 Cyclone Patrol Craft," *Inside the Navy*, Feb. 10, 2003; Christopher J. Castelli, "Coast Guard: Ships Needed For Homeland Defense May Not Be Funded," *Inside the Navy*, Oct. 14, 2002.

Intelligence Center (NMIC), at Suitland, MD, which acts as a focal point for information on potential maritime security threats.

Searching for Terrorists at Sea. A dozen or more commercial cargo ships reportedly are owned or managed by people with ties to Al Qaeda.⁵ In addition, Al Qaeda terrorists are believed to have used commercial cargo containers loaded on other ships to smuggle themselves over long distances. Since late November 2001, forward-deployed U.S. Navy ships and aircraft, along with naval forces from about a dozen other countries, have been patrolling sea areas such as the Northern Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf, and the Mediterranean Sea in search of shipments of Al Qaeda weapons and supplies, goods intended to finance Al Qaeda operations, and Al Qaeda members attempting to flee Afghanistan by sea via Pakistan and Iran. Merchant ships and fishing vessels in these areas are frequently queried, and sometimes stopped and searched.

In April 2004, U.S. Pacific Command announced that it had launched a Regional Maritime Security Initiative that, as summarized in a press report, “is intended to prevent terrorists from seizing a vessel loaded with liquid natural gas from slamming into a pier and exploding in Singapore, from scuttling a tanker in the Straits of Malacca to close a vital waterway, or from exploding containers full of chemical fertilizer in busy ports such as Pusan, South Korea; Yokohama, Japan; Oakland, Calif.; or Los Angeles. The command hopes to prevent terrorists from joining criminals to smuggle illicit drugs, arms and humans who are sold into prostitution or brought illegally into North America. It seeks to crack down on piracy in the South China Sea. The initiative is especially aimed at terrorists plotting an attack with nuclear, chemical or biological weapons of mass destruction.”⁶

Security at U.S. Navy Bases and Facilities. Following the October 2000 Al Qaeda terrorist boat-bomb attack on the Navy destroyer Cole in the harbor of Aden, Yemen, the U.S. Navy began taking actions to improve security around U.S. Navy ships in foreign harbors and at Navy installations in the United States.⁷ Actions taken include increased perimeter security on land at Navy installations and the establishment of security zones in the waters around naval bases that are patrolled by Navy and Coast Guard patrol boats. The Navy has also reduced the amount of advance information it provides about arrivals and departures of Navy ships to and from U.S. ports, and about the current locations of Navy ships overseas.

Although this report focuses on the Navy, it can also be noted that the Marine Corps restructured its 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) into an antiterrorist organization that can, among other things, assist in port-security operations. The 4th MEB (Antiterrorist) combines the resources of existing units — the Marine Corps Security Force Battalion, the Marine Security Guard Battalion, and the Marine Corps Chemical

⁵ See, for example, John Mintz, “15 Freighters Believed To Be Linked To Al Qaeda,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 31, 2002: A1.

⁶ Richard Halloran, “Navy Launches Vast Maritime Security Plan,” *Washington Times*, May 10, 2004: 15. See also John Burton and Shawn Donnan, “US Plan To Guard Strait Of Malacca Not Welcome,” *London Financial Times*, Apr. 6, 2004.

⁷ For a review of the attack on the Cole, see CRS Report RS20721, *Terrorist Attack on USS Cole: Background and Issues for Congress*, by Raphael Perl and Ronald O'Rourke.

and Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF) — with a newly created Marine Antiterrorism Battalion. In April 2002, the 4th MEB (Antiterrorism) conducted a joint port-security exercise with the Coast Guard.

Issues for Congress

The Navy's current and potential contributions to homeland security operations raises several potential issues for Congress, including the following:

Definition of Navy Role. Is the Navy's role in homeland security sufficiently defined, particularly in terms of how the Navy should contribute to homeland security through forward (i.e., overseas) operations vs. operations close to the United States?

Changes in Law, Regulations, and Other Areas. What changes in law or regulations, or in Navy policies and procedures, doctrine, organization, training, equipment, and command and control arrangements, will be needed to facilitate the Navy's emerging role in homeland security?

Coordination With and Support For Coast Guard. What steps have the Navy and Coast Guard taken, or are planning to take, to improve coordination in maritime homeland security operations? Have the two services reached agreement on command relationships, doctrine, and tactics for maritime homeland security operations, particularly for instances involving ships approaching the United States that may pose a threat, possibly involving weapons of mass destruction, that Coast Guard forces might not be sufficient to counter? Are the two services conducting sufficient joint training in maritime homeland security operations? Is the Navy's idea for creating a maritime analog to NORAD compatible with the Coast Guard's concept for creating improved maritime domain awareness (MDA)? To what degree, if any, are the two concepts contradictory or redundant? Are Navy and Coast Guard systems sufficiently interoperable to reach desired levels of coordination? Is the Navy providing the right numbers and kinds of ships to assist the Coast Guard in performing maritime homeland security operations? Is the Navy providing adequate funding for the enhancement of Coast Guard national defense mission equipment?⁸

Coordination with Other Agencies. Other agencies with which the Navy might have to achieve closer coordination for homeland security include NORAD, the newly created U.S. Northern Command (or NORTHCOM, which has overall responsibility within the Department of Defense for defending the U.S. homeland against attack),⁹ the Department of Homeland Security (or DHS, which includes, among other entities, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA), and the Federal Aviation

⁸ For more on various aspects of Navy-Coast Guard coordination, see Malina Brown, "Navy, Coast Guard Redefining Relationship In Post-Sept. 11 World," *Inside the Navy*, Mar. 8, 2004; Chris Strohm, "Military Explores Greater Role In Maritime Security." *GovExec.com*, Mar. 3, 2004; Malina Brown, "Navy, Coast Guard Need Work On Providing Backup Forces In A Crisis," *Inside the Navy*, Nov. 17, 2003.

⁹ For more on NORTHCOM, see CRS Report RS21322, *Homeland Security: Establishment and Implementation of Northern Command*, by Christopher Bolcom, Lloyd DeSerisy, and Lawrence Kapp.

Administration (FAA). Potential questions here are analogous to those listed above for coordination with the Coast Guard.

Intelligence Coordination. What steps has the Navy taken to improve its ability to receive intelligence from, and provide intelligence to, other agencies involved in homeland security operations? Are there any organizational issues that need to be resolved to achieve desired levels of sharing? Is the Navy budgeting adequately for improving Navy capabilities in this area?

Ballistic and Cruise Missile Defense. Does DoD's program for developing systems to protect the United States against ballistic missiles place too little, too much, or about the right amount of emphasis on sea-based systems? What is the potential for incorporating Navy anti-ship cruise missile defense technology into a system for defending the United States against land-attack cruise missiles?

Security at U.S. Navy Installations. Has the Navy taken adequate steps to improve security at naval installations in the United States? Is the Navy conducting sufficient testing of these measures? Have lessons learned from the attack on the Cole been adequately incorporated into policies and procedures for protecting Navy installations? What new technologies or systems are under development that may improve future Navy capabilities for protecting its installations? Is the Navy budgeting adequately for improving installation security?

Cyberwar Attacks on Naval Computers. Potential questions here are analogous to those listed above for security at U.S. Navy installations.

Impact on Navy Forward Deployments. Navy officials have acknowledged that using Navy ships for homeland security operations close to the United States could affect training and maintenance schedules for ships preparing to deploy overseas. To what degree will operations close to the United States affect the Navy's ability to maintain forward-deployed naval forces overseas? What steps is the Navy taking to accommodate operations close to the United States while also maintaining overseas deployments?

Impact on Navy End-Strength Requirements. The Navy is expanding and upgrading its Master-at-Arms force, which helps to guard Navy ships and shore installations from terrorist attacks. The force is to be expanded from about 1,700 personnel to about 9,000 over the next few years. Is this expansion too small, too large, or about right? How will these and potential other additions of Navy personnel for homeland security operations be managed within the Navy's end-strength limits (i.e., the limits on the number of active-duty and reserve personnel the Navy is allowed to have at the end of the fiscal year)?¹⁰ What reductions in other Navy personnel does the Navy plan to make to absorb the increased need for personnel for homeland security operations?

Role of Navy Reserves. What are the Navy's plans for integrating naval reserve personnel into the Navy's homeland security efforts, and are these plans correct?

¹⁰ For FY2003, the Navy's end-strength limits are 373,800 active-duty and 85,900 reserve personnel. The Navy is proposing to reduce its active-duty end strength to 357,400 by FY2009.