

Strategic Insight

Homeland Defense: Ramping Up, But What's the Glide Path?

by [James Russell](#) and [Iliana Bravo](#)

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Background

The attacks of September 11, 2001 have brought about massive increases in spending for homeland security and have established defense of the homeland as a primary responsibility of the Defense Department. DoD's most recent Quadrennial Defense Review clearly states that defense of the continental United States has become a top priority for the military: "The highest priority of the United States military is to defend the nation from all enemies. The United States will maintain sufficient military forces to protect the U.S. domestic population, its territory and its critical defense-related infrastructure against attacks emanating from outside U.S. borders as appropriate under U.S. law."¹

The Defense Department launched OPERATION NOBLE EAGLE - the direct defense of the continental United States - in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The operation consisted initially of NORAD assuming control over active forces with air and anti-air capabilities to ensure the security of U.S. airspace. After the attack, DoD moved aggressively to enhance civilian and government site security using reserve and active forces. The most visible of these forces have been the 7200 National Guard troops augmenting security at 444 airports around the country. The United States also requested and received assistance from NATO partners under article 5 of the NATO treaty, freeing up U.S. E-3 Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft to support OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM, the offensive operations against Al Qaeda in the Afghan theater.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers told Congress in early February that DoD is in the midst of modifying the Unified Command Plan to establish a combatant command for homeland security.² Likely to be called NORCOM, or the Northern Command, details are still being worked out over the nature and structure of the command.

The Budget

The Bush Administration's Budget for 2003 - the Federal government's first post-September 11 budget - reflects the emphasis now accorded to achieving a more secure homeland. The FY 2003 Budget directs \$37.7 billion to homeland security, up from \$19.5 billion in 2002. The budget supports four functional areas: supporting first responders to a terrorist attack; defending against bioterrorism; securing America's borders; and using 21st century technology to secure the homeland.

Of interest to the naval community, the FY 2003 Budget increases funding for the Coast Guard's homeland security related missions (protecting ports and coastal areas, as well as interdiction activities) by \$282 million, to an overall level of \$2.9 billion. After September 11, the Coast Guard's port security mission grew from approximately 1-2 percent of daily operations to between 50-60 percent today. In addition, the Coast Guard will continue to pursue missions that existed before September 11, such as illegal immigration and drug interdiction and maritime safety.

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The FY 2003 budget requests \$7.8 billion for homeland security-related activities of the Department of Defense and Intelligence Community. The largest portion of the total request (\$4.6 billion) is dedicated to the physical security of Department of Defense facilities and personnel inside the United States, while the second largest is for maintaining combat air patrols within U.S. airspace (\$1.3 billion). The FY 2003 budget also requests significant funding for research and development related to combating terrorism, as well as for several specialized response teams such as the National Guard's Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams.

Navy Issues

Like the other military departments, it is uncertain what role the Navy will play in this mission, though naval aircraft and surface combatants have capabilities that could be applied in securing airspace and maritime borders.

As a primary economic resource, U.S. ports are the most vulnerable to terrorist attacks and often, the least protected of all U.S. entry points. Currently, the U.S. Coast Guard is responsible for protecting more than 360 of these ports and 95,000 miles of U.S. coastline.³ It is the lead agency for maritime homeland security. The Coast Guard has recently joined forces with the U.S. Navy to improve efforts to protect our coastlines from potential threats.

Following the September 11th attacks, the Atlantic components of the Navy and Coast Guard announced the assignment of six Cyclone-Class Navy Patrol Coastal (PC) ships to support OPERATION NOBLE EAGLE.⁴ Four of these PCs will be assigned to the Atlantic Coast, and two to the Pacific Coast. It is the first time U.S. Navy ships have been used to support the maritime protection efforts of the Coast Guard. The ships will be used for coastal patrol, interdiction efforts, and providing anti-terrorism/force protection for naval ships. The PCs will also be used to escort commercial vessels in and out of U.S. ports. The Atlantic Fleet PCs will be under tactical control of the Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command, while operational control will lie with the Atlantic Fleet Navy commands.

Normally, U.S. Navy personnel are prohibited from participating in law enforcement activities characteristic of the Coast Guard. Under the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878, the U.S. military is forbidden to search, seize, or arrest people in the United States. The Coast Guard, however, is exempt from this law. Therefore, Coast Guard personnel aboard these Navy ships will be allowed to board incoming vessels in order to enforce U.S. law. This type of arrangement has existed in the past when Coast Guard detachments have deployed aboard U.S. Navy ships in the Persian Gulf and Southwest Asia for purposes of port security and maritime interdiction operations.⁵

Having this type of joint force cooperation for maritime security comes at a time when maritime threats to the United States are prevalent. Experts monitoring 23 ships considered to be part of the al-Qaeda network tagged for transporting heroine and hashish from Afghanistan to the West, say that these vessels could provide the most effective way of entering a weapon of mass destruction into the U.S. Without having to declare what is in your cargo until you reach your port of entry, a container from one of these vessels could easily make its way into the continental United States. Often these containers make their way onto U.S. railways, on their way to their port of entry. Therefore, a container coming into California's Long Beach Harbor could be in Chicago before its contents were known. Since September 11th, ships are required to give 96 hours notice prior to their arrival. This gives maritime security enough time to prepare for the inspection of incoming ships, and the ability to interdict these ships at a further distance from the homeland than the standard three miles.

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For related links, see our [Homeland Security & Terrorism Resources](#).

References

1. [Quadrennial Defense Review Report](#), Department of Defense, September 30, 2001, p. 18
2. Posture Statement of General Richard B. Myers, USAF, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before the 107th Congress Senate Armed Services Committee 5 February 2002.
3. [Navy, Coast Guard Join Forces for Homeland Defense](#), Joint Media Release, Nov 5, 2001
4. *ibid.*
5. *ibid.*