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Coast Guard Modernization Is Integral to the Success of the Secure Border Initiative

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In November 2005, Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff announced the Secure Border Initiative (SBI), the department's five-year plan to secure America's borders. The SBI seeks to achieve this goal by increasing border patrols, technology, and infrastructure at the borders; expanding detention and removal capabilities to end "catch and release" practices; and enhancing interior enforcement efforts, including worksite enforcement.

The SBI provides a strong starting point for border security strategy, but securing America's borders will also require strengthening its coastal borders. A successful land border enforcement strategy will cause those seeking to enter the United States illegally to turn to other routes of entry, including U.S. coasts. Thus, Coast Guard modernization should be a crucial component of the SBI.

A Good Start. Under the SBI, Secretary Chertoff has outlined a plan to gain operational control of the northern and southern borders within the next five years. It seeks to strengthen all aspects of border security, including human resources, technology, enforcement programs, and infrastructure. Congress has appropriated funds for hiring 1,000 additional Border Patrol agents and has provided an increase of \$3.9 billion in the 2006 budget for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to

add 250 criminal investigators, 400 ICE agents, and 100 deportation officers.

The SBI offers a comprehensive set of requirements for new technologies, policies, and procedures to provide an integrated system of capabilities. The SBI's goal is to provide a "system of systems" that gets the right information to the right person at the right time to do the right thing for effective security.

Looking at More Than Just Land Borders. The SBI seeks to strengthen enforcement and security along America's northern and southern borders. The SBI components focus mostly on land border assets and capabilities. Once the SBI is fully in place, it will be significantly more difficult to cross the land borders illegally.

Just as a free market quickly adapts to new conditions, those involved in human smuggling, drug trafficking, and other criminal activities will explore other vulnerabilities and find new ways to

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- Congress's 30-year timeline for Coast Guard modernization will not meet post-9/11 needs or support the SBI's goals.
 - Congress should appropriate funding for the Coast Guard's Deepwater program and Command 2010 plan to provide the critical maritime component for the SBI.
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enter the United States illegally. The sea coasts provide a wealth of opportunities for such exploitation. As land borders become increasingly impenetrable, criminals will shift to smuggling humans and goods by sea, using boats and shipping containers. This would undermine the integrity of America's borders just as much as smuggling by land does.

The SBI cannot afford to focus resources only on the land borders. It must also include the strengthening of maritime and air approaches to U.S. territory. Allocating resources to land-only solutions will lead to a failed border security strategy. A more comprehensive border security strategy should include a major role for the U.S. Coast Guard.

The Need for Coast Guard Modernization. Since 9/11, demands on the U.S. Coast Guard's homeland security responsibilities have expanded greatly. The service still fulfills its traditional missions of search and rescue, ensuring the safety and security of commercial shipping, safeguarding U.S. fisheries, and interdicting smuggling of drugs, arms, and humans. Today, the Coast Guard also plays a prominent role in every aspect of maritime security, from inspecting ports overseas and overseeing the security at U.S. ports to checking ships and cargo and stopping illegal immigration.

With its increased responsibilities since 9/11, the Coast Guard is wearing out its equipment faster than ever. Deepwater, the Coast Guard modernization program funded by Congress before 9/11, envisioned retiring the service's aging inventory of ships and planes over 30 years, gradually replacing them with an integrated set of assets including new vessels and sophisticated communications, computers, and sensors.

As the SBI makes progress on its five-year timeline of securing U.S. land borders, the sea border will certainly become an attractive route for smugglers. Congress's 30-year timeline for Coast Guard modernization simply will not meet post-9/11 needs or support the SBI's goals.

Speeding up Deepwater would make America safer by introducing more capable assets sooner. A faster modernization would also save as much as \$3 billion. Buying units at a faster rate would reduce costs per unit, and more quickly retiring older equipment that is more expensive to operate and maintain would save money as well.

The Coast Guard has also developed the Command 2010 plan to transform command and control to increase maritime domain awareness. The specifics of the program include deploying sensors to track cooperative and non-cooperative vessels; fusing vessel tracks with historical data, law enforcement information, and intelligence through the Common Operational Picture; and increasing interoperability among all echelons of command. The Coast Guard's Command 2010 should interface with the SBI to provide a system of systems that provides land and sea domain awareness.

What Congress Should Do. Congressional support for Coast Guard modernization plans is crucial to homeland security. Specifically, Congress should:

- Approve an annual appropriation of \$1.6 billion for Deepwater funding to accelerate modernization and
- Appropriate funds for the Coast Guard to implement Command 2010.

Conclusion. Securing the borders will require more than an investment in land border assets. It will also require strengthening sea and air borders. The Coast Guard plays a central role in immigration control along the U.S. coasts. Thus, its modernization program should be a priority component of the Secure Border Initiative, and Congress should fully fund Coast Guard modernization programs to enhance homeland security.

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