

The National Strategy  
for  
Maritime Security

*September 2005*

The safety and economic security of the United States depends upon the secure use of the world's oceans. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Federal government has reviewed and strengthened all of its strategies to combat the evolving threat in the War on Terrorism. Various departments have each carried out maritime security strategies which have provided an effective layer of security since 2001. In December 2004, the President directed the Secretaries of the Department of Defense and Homeland Security to lead the Federal effort to develop a comprehensive National Strategy for Maritime Security, to better integrate and synchronize the existing Department-level strategies and ensure their effective and efficient implementation.

Maritime security is best achieved by blending public and private maritime security activities on a global scale into an integrated effort that addresses all maritime threats. The new National Strategy for Maritime Security aligns all Federal government maritime security programs and initiatives into a comprehensive and cohesive national effort involving appropriate Federal, State, local, and private sector entities.

In addition to this Strategy, the Departments have developed eight supporting plans to address the specific threats and challenges of the maritime environment. While the plans address different aspects of maritime security, they are mutually linked and reinforce each other. The supporting plans include:

- National Plan to Achieve Domain Awareness
- Global Maritime Intelligence Integration Plan
- Interim Maritime Operational Threat Response Plan
- International Outreach and Coordination Strategy
- Maritime Infrastructure Recovery Plan
- Maritime Transportation System Security Plan
- Maritime Commerce Security Plan
- Domestic Outreach Plan

Development of these plans was guided by the security principles outlined in this National Strategy for Maritime Security. These plans will be updated on a periodic basis in response to changes in the maritime threat, the world environment, and national security policies.

Together, the National Strategy for Maritime Security and its eight supporting plans present a comprehensive national effort to promote global economic stability and protect legitimate activities while preventing hostile or illegal acts within the maritime domain.

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## Section I

# Introduction – Maritime Security

*“In this century, countries benefit from healthy, prosperous, confident partners. Weak and troubled nations export their ills -- problems like economic instability and illegal immigration and crime and terrorism. America and others ... understand that healthy and prosperous nations export and import goods and services that help to stabilize regions and add security to every nation.”*

President George W. Bush  
November 20, 2004

The safety and economic security of the United States depend in substantial part upon the secure use of the world’s oceans. The United States has a vital national interest in maritime security. We must be prepared to stop terrorists and rogue states before they can threaten or use weapons of mass destruction or engage in other attacks against the United States and our allies and friends. Toward that end, the United States must take full advantage of strengthened alliances and other international cooperative arrangements, innovations in the use of law enforcement personnel and military forces, advances in technology, and strengthened intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination.

Salt water covers more than two-thirds of the Earth’s surface. These waters are a single, great ocean, an immense maritime domain<sup>1</sup> that affects life everywhere. Although its four principal geographical divisions – Atlantic, Arctic, Indian, and Pacific – have different names, this continuous body of water is the Earth’s greatest defining geographic feature.

The oceans, much of which are global commons under no State’s jurisdiction, offer all nations, even landlocked States, a network of sea-lanes or highways that is of enormous importance to their security and prosperity. They are likewise a source of food, mineral resources, and recreation, and they support commerce among nations. They also act as both a barrier to and a conduit for threats to the security of people everywhere. Like all other countries, the United States is highly dependent on the oceans for its security and the welfare of its people and economy.

In today’s economy, the oceans have increased importance, allowing all countries to participate in the global marketplace. More than 80 percent of the world’s trade travels by water and forges a global maritime link. About half the world’s trade by value, and

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<sup>1</sup> The maritime domain is defined as all areas and things of, on, under, relating to, adjacent to, or bordering on a sea, ocean, or other navigable waterway, including all maritime-related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo, and vessels and other conveyances. Note: The maritime domain for the United States includes the Great Lakes and all navigable inland waterways such as the Mississippi River and the Intra-Coastal Waterway.

90 percent of the general cargo, are transported in containers. Shipping is the heart of the global economy, but it is vulnerable to attack in two key areas. Spread across Asia, North America, and Europe are 30 megaports/cities that constitute the world's primary, interdependent trading web. Through a handful of international straits and canals pass 75 percent of the world's maritime trade and half its daily oil consumption. International commerce is at risk in the major trading hubs as well as at a handful of strategic chokepoints.

The infrastructure and systems that span the maritime domain, owned largely by the private sector, have increasingly become both targets of and potential conveyances for dangerous and illicit activities. Moreover, much of what occurs in the maritime domain with respect to vessel movements, activities, cargoes, intentions, or ownership is often difficult to discern. The oceans are increasingly threatened by illegal exploitation of living marine resources and increased competition over nonliving marine resources. Although the global economy continues to increase the value of the oceans' role as highways for commerce and providers of resources, technology and the forces of globalization have lessened their role as barriers. Thus, this continuous domain serves as a vast, ready, and largely unsecured medium for an array of threats by nations, terrorists, and criminals.

Defeating this array of threats to maritime security – including the threat or use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)<sup>2</sup> – requires a common understanding and a joint effort for action on a global scale. Because the economic well-being of people in the United States and across the globe depends heavily upon the trade and commerce that traverses the oceans, maritime security must be a top priority. Maritime security is required to ensure freedom of the seas; facilitate freedom of navigation and commerce; advance prosperity and freedom; and protect the resources of the ocean. Nations have a common interest in achieving two complementary objectives: to facilitate the vibrant maritime commerce that underpins economic security, and to protect against ocean-related terrorist, hostile, criminal, and dangerous acts. Since all nations benefit from this collective security, all nations must share in the responsibility for maintaining maritime security by countering the threats in this domain.

A strong world economy enhances our national security by advancing prosperity and freedom in the rest of the world. Economic growth supported by free trade and free markets creates new jobs and higher incomes. It allows people to lift their lives out of poverty, spurs economic and legal reform, and the fight against corruption, and it reinforces the habits of liberty. We will promote economic growth and economic freedom beyond America's shores.

Ignite a New Era of Global Economic Growth through Free Markets and Free Trade

Goal VI of the *National Security Strategy of the United States*

<sup>2</sup> The term "weapon of mass destruction" (WMD) is defined in 18 U.S. Code § 2332a(c) as including any destructive device as defined in [18 U.S. Code] section 921...; any weapon that is designed or intended to cause death or serious bodily injury through the release, dissemination, or impact of toxic or poisonous chemicals, or their precursors; any weapon involving a biological agent, toxin, or vector (as those terms are defined in [18 U.S. Code] section 178...); or any weapon that is designed to release radiation or radioactivity at a level dangerous to human life.

## Section II

# Threats to Maritime Security

*“America, in this new century, again faces new threats. Instead of massed armies, we face stateless networks; we face killers who hide in our own cities. We must confront deadly technologies. To inflict great harm on our country, America’s enemies need to be only right once. Our intelligence and law enforcement professionals in our government must be right every single time.”*

President George W. Bush  
December 17, 2004

Complexity and ambiguity are hallmarks of today’s security environment, especially in the maritime domain. In addition to the potential for major combat operations at sea, terrorism has significantly increased the nature of the nonmilitary, transnational, and asymmetric threats in the maritime domain that the United States and its allies and strategic partners must be prepared to counter. Unlike traditional military scenarios in which adversaries and theaters of action are clearly defined, these nonmilitary, transnational threats often demand more than purely military undertakings to be defeated.

Unprecedented advances in telecommunications and dramatic improvements in international commercial logistics have combined to increase both the range and effects of terrorist activities, providing the physical means to transcend even the most secure borders and to move rapidly across great distances. Adversaries that take advantage of such transnational capabilities have the potential to cause serious damage to global, political, and economic security. The maritime domain in particular presents not only a medium by which these threats can move, but offers a broad array of potential targets that fit the terrorists’ operational objectives of achieving mass casualties and inflicting catastrophic economic harm. While the variety of actors threatening the maritime domain continues to grow in number and capability, they can be broadly grouped as nation-states, terrorists, and transnational criminals and pirates. Defeating the threat of the widely dispersed terrorist networks that present an immediate danger to U.S. national security interests at home and abroad remains our foremost objective.

### **Nation-State Threats**

The prospect of major regional conflicts erupting, escalating, and drawing in major powers should not be discounted. Nonetheless, in the absence of inter-state conflict, individual state actions represent a more significant challenge to global security. Some states provide safe havens for criminals and terrorists, who use these countries as bases of operations to export illicit activities into the maritime domain and into other areas of the globe. The probability of a hostile state using a WMD is expected to increase during the next decade.<sup>3</sup> An alternative danger is that a foreign state will provide critical advanced

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<sup>3</sup> Mapping the Global Future, National Intelligence Council, Washington, DC: December 2004.

conventional weaponry, WMD components, delivery systems and related materials, technologies, and weapons expertise to another rogue state or a terrorist organization that is willing to conduct WMD attacks. WMD issues are of the greatest concern since the maritime domain is the likely venue by which WMD will be brought into the United States.

## **Terrorist Threats**

Non-state terrorist groups that exploit open borders challenge the sovereignty of nations and have an increasingly damaging effect on international affairs. With advanced telecommunications, they can coordinate their actions among dispersed cells while remaining in the shadows. Successful attacks in the maritime domain provide opportunities to cause significant disruption to regional and global economies. Today's terrorists are increasing their effectiveness and reach by establishing links with other like-minded organizations around the globe. Some terrorist groups have used shipping as a means of conveyance for positioning their agents, logistical support, and generating revenue. Terrorists have also taken advantage of criminal smuggling networks to circumvent border security measures.

Terrorists have indicated a strong desire to use WMD.<sup>4</sup> This prospect creates a more complex and perilous security situation, further aggravated by countries that are unable to account for or adequately secure their stockpiles of such weapons and associated materials. This circumstance, coupled with increased access to the technology needed to build and employ those weapons, increases the possibility that a terrorist attack involving WMD could occur. Similarly, bioterrorism appears particularly suited to use by smaller but sophisticated groups because this tactic is exceedingly difficult to detect in comparison to other mass-effects weapons.

Terrorists can also develop effective attack capabilities relatively quickly using a variety of platforms, including explosives-laden suicide boats<sup>5</sup> and light aircraft; merchant and cruise ships as kinetic weapons to ram another vessel, warship, port facility, or offshore platform; commercial vessels as launch platforms for missile attacks; underwater swimmers to infiltrate ports; and unmanned underwater explosive delivery vehicles. Mines are also an effective weapon because they are low-cost, readily available, easily deployed, difficult to counter, and require minimal training. Terrorists can also take advantage of a vessel's legitimate cargo, such as chemicals, petroleum, or liquefied natural gas, as the explosive component of an attack. Vessels can be used to transport powerful conventional explosives or WMD for detonation in a port or alongside an offshore facility.

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<sup>4</sup> The *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> This maritime mode of terrorist attack has been established, tested, and repeated. The terrorist group al-Qaida in October 2000 successfully attacked *USS Cole* in Yemen with an explosives-laden suicide small boat and 2 years later attacked the French oil tanker *M/V Limburg*.

The U.S. economy and national security are fully dependent upon information technology and the information infrastructure.<sup>6</sup> Terrorists might attempt cyber attacks to disrupt critical information networks, or attempt to cause physical damage to information systems that are integral to the operation of marine transportation and commerce systems. Tools and methodologies for attacking information systems are becoming widely available, and the technical abilities and sophistication of terrorists groups bent on causing havoc or disruption is increasing.

However, the nature and motivations of these new adversaries, their determination to obtain destructive powers hitherto available only to the world's strongest states, and the greater likelihood that they will use weapons of mass destruction against us, make today's security environment more complex and dangerous.

Prevent Our Enemies from Threatening Us, Our Allies, and Our Friends  
with Weapons of Mass Destruction  
Goal V of the *National Security Strategy of the United States*

## **Transnational Criminal and Piracy Threats**

The continued growth in legitimate international commerce in the maritime domain has been accompanied by growth in the use of the maritime domain for criminal purposes. The smuggling of people, drugs, weapons, and other contraband, as well as piracy and armed robbery against vessels, pose a threat to maritime security. Piracy and incidents of maritime crime tend to be concentrated in areas of heavy commercial maritime activity, especially where there is significant political and economic instability, or in regions with little or no maritime law enforcement capacity. Today's pirates and criminals are usually well organized and well equipped with advanced communications, weapons, and high-speed craft. The capabilities to board and commandeer large underway vessels – demonstrated in numerous piracy incidents – could also be employed to facilitate terrorist acts.

Just as the world's oceans are avenues for a nation's overseas commerce, they are also the highways for the import or export of illegal commodities. Maritime drug trafficking<sup>7</sup> generates vast amounts of money for international organized crime syndicates and terrorist organizations. Laundered through the international financial system, this money provides a huge source of virtually untraceable funds. These monetary assets can then be used to bribe government officials, bypass established financial controls, and fund additional illegal activities, including arms trafficking, migrant smuggling, and terrorist operations. Further, these activities can ensure a steady supply of weapons and cash for terrorist operatives, as well as the means for their clandestine movement.

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<sup>6</sup> The *National Strategy to Secure Cyberspace* is part of our overall effort to protect the Nation. It is an implementing component of the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* and is complemented by a *National Strategy for the Physical Protection of Critical Infrastructures and Key Assets*.

<sup>7</sup> The *National Drug Control Strategy* outlines U.S. goals in this area.