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DEEPWATER

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News

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USCG Accepts Delivery of the CGC Matagorda

“XO: Have the crew man the rail and bring the Matagorda to life.”

With that time-honored command at Bollinger Shipyards, Lockport, La., on March 5, the CGC Matagorda’s Commanding Officer, LT John Driscoll, marked an important milestone in the cutter’s 18-year service life and in the Integrated Deepwater System (IDS) Program’s transformation of the Coast Guard.

The Matagorda—known as the “Stingray of the Straits” in her Seventh District homeport of Key West, Fla.—is the first 123-foot Island-class cutter to be delivered by Halter Marine and Bollinger Shipyards working in partnership with Integrated Coast Guard Systems, the Deepwater Program’s systems integrator. Commandant of the Coast Guard Adm. Thomas H. Collins described the delivery ceremony as a special occasion for several reasons.

“‘Firsts’ are always defining moments,” Admiral Collins told the more than 300 guests who gathered on a windy morning under an overcast sky to observe the ceremony. “Today marks the delivery of the modernized cutter the Matagorda, the very first product delivered by the Deepwater Program—the largest, the best, and one of the most innovative systems approaches ever.”

Generally considered to be a workhorse in the Coast Guard’s fleet, the Matagorda was the first cutter in the 110-foot Island class to enter Bollinger’s Lockport facility in 2003 for conversion and modernization. During the past year, the cutter’s hull was lengthened by 13 feet to accommodate a new stern ramp and Short Range Prosecutor small boat, a lar-



The crew of the upgraded 123-foot Island-class cutter CGC Matagorda line the rail following the cutter’s delivery to the Coast Guard by Integrated Coast Guard Systems as part of the Deepwater recapitalization program.

United States Coast Guard/PAC Dennis Hall

ger pilot house with a 360-degree bridge and C4ISR suite were added, interior spaces and hull sections were renovated, and a new digitized system for engine control, alarm, and monitoring functions was installed in the engine room.

Conversations with the Matagorda’s CO and crew made it plain that the cutter’s new C4ISR suite and Short Range Prosecutor were two of the most popular Deepwater upgrades. “It’s unbelievable,” said LT Driscoll of his new command-and-control capabilities. “I now have the systems I would only

expect to find on a larger cutter—yet with Deepwater, I have them on my patrol boat.” Multiple touch-screen displays allow the bridge team to maintain a common operating picture and transmit data, information, and voice communications through multiple secure and non-secure HF, VHF, and UHF channels. New digitized systems also simplify navigation and piloting.

“I love the design and the ship,” said Boatswain’s Mate 3rd Class Evan Sanborn, one of the Matagorda’s quartermasters of the watch and a prospective underway

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Matagorda, *cont.*

officer of the deck. “We have a lot more capability compared to an old 110—or even a 270-foot medium endurance cutter in many respects.”

The Matagorda’s new SIPRNET (Secure Internet Protocol Router Network) installation will be a critical enabler in providing seamless interoperability and a common tactical picture during operations with larger Coast Guard cutters and Navy units. “I never imagined that I would command a ship of this size with such a capable system,” said LT Driscoll.

The cutter’s new Zodiac seven-meter, 315-horsepower Short Range Prosecutor (SRP), designed for launching and recovery from the cutter’s stern ramp, drew equally positive reactions from its coxswains.

“It’s awesome,” said Machinery Technician 2nd Class Lance Huff-

ford. “It’s very maneuverable, more stable, and quick out of the hole; you can turn on a dime.” the Matagorda’s stern ramp shaves the time for launches and recoveries to just two to three minutes—with added safety and fewer people required for the evolutions. The SRP’s installed radios and navigation equipment also add to the safety and effectiveness of small-boat operations.

Chief Machinery Technician Wilfredo Florez, the Matagorda’s executive petty officer and a 16-year veteran, looks forward to the days ahead. “It’s exciting to serve on the most modern patrol boat in the Coast Guard with a good crew,” he said. “We go from high to low in terms of experience, but our young men will be learning about the future—right now.”

Following its delivery, the Matagorda will complete additional post-delivery maintenance availabilities before returning to its homeport in Key West later this summer. Technical discrepancies, common to any “first-of-class” conversion, and new operating



Machinery Technician 2nd Class Lance Hufford (left) shares a light moment with LT John Driscoll, Commanding Officer of the CGC Matagorda. The cutter’s conversion included installation of a stern ramp for the launch and recovery of a new seven-meter, 315-hp Short Range Prosecutor small boat, shown here.
United States Coast Guard/Gordon I. Peterson

procedures will be worked out during the months ahead.

“My crew notices events in Haiti and the Straits of Florida,” LT Driscoll said, “and they want to get back to where the action is.” The Matagorda has now completed a major step toward that goal.

Upon entering his cutter’s mess deck recently, the ship’s cook greeted Driscoll with a snappy, “Hello, Captain!”

“It felt so good to be back on board and have the cook greet me like that,” LT Driscoll related. “*All right,*” I thought. “We are really here!”

by Gordon I. Peterson

Of Note...

ICGS and Lockheed Martin are planning a grand opening ceremony for the Maritime Domain Awareness Center (MDAC)—formerly known as Development Integration and Test Center (DITC)—in mid April. This 46,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility is used to develop, test and integrate assets and systems being produced to support the U.S. Coast Guard’s Deepwater Program.

Bell Eagle Eye VUAV Completes PDR Milestone

The Bell Eagle Eye vertical take off and landing unmanned aerial vehicle (VUAV) for the Coast Guard’s Integrated Deepwater System (IDS) Program passed a critical milestone with the completion of its Preliminary Design Review (PDR).

The PDR demonstrated that the preliminary design of the Eagle Eye meets the functional, performance, and interface requirements of the VUAV system. It also established the allocated baseline and resulted in the approval to begin detailed design of the asset.

The Integrated Product Team, with representatives from Integrated Coast Guard Systems (ICGS), from air domain lead Lockheed Martin, manu-



facturer Bell Helicopter Textron Inc., and U.S. Coast Guard Deepwater repre-

sentatives, achieved all objectives for the PDR.

“This team, and especially Bell Helicopter Textron, met this significant milestone efficiently and with excellent results for the Coast Guard and Integrated Coast Guard Systems,” said Gerry Moorman, President of ICGS.

“This is a very important milestone within the Deepwater Program and we are pleased to be able to turn the page and move on to the next step needed to bring this new capability into reality.”