



U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes praises the work of the Coast Guard Yard at a ceremony to conclude the Mission Effectiveness Program and start the In-Service Vessel Sustainment project at the Coast Guard Yard Sept. 26, 2014. The programs include major system replacement and renovation to keep older assets in service until new ones are delivered. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Luke Clayton.

Acquisition Update: Coast Guard Yard Completes Medium Endurance Cutter Rehab; Transitions to Other Cutters

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CURTIS BAY, Md. – The Coast Guard entered a new phase in its long-term strategy to sustain its in-service fleet with a ceremony marking the completion of renovation projects on the service’s Medium Endurance Cutters at the Coast Guard Yard Sept. 26, 2014.

The event marked completion of the Mission Effectiveness Project and commencement of the In-Service Vessel Sustainment project. MEP’s modernization work began in 2005 as a bridging strategy to keep the service’s Medium Endurance Cutters safe and operationally effective until they can be replaced with newer vessels, such as the Fast Response Cutter and Offshore Patrol Cutter. ISVS is an outgrowth of the success of MEP and will enhance other vessels, many nearing or beyond their designated service lives, by renewing the hull, mechanical, electrical and electronic systems most susceptible to failure.

“It doesn’t solve our need for new cutters,” said Rear Adm. Bruce Baffer, assistant commandant for acquisition, in his keynote address. “But it helps us maintain maximum capabilities with the assets that we have.”

Through the replacement of obsolete and increasingly insupportable systems through MEP, the Coast Guard plans to operate its 210-foot and 270-foot cutter fleets for a decade or more. The service’s fleet of 110-foot patrol boats previously received similar system

refreshments at the Yard.

Capt. George Leshner, commanding officer of the Coast Guard Yard, summarized the scope of MEP: “Collectively, the work included replacement of more than a hundred acres of steel hull plating, tens of thousands of feet of piping and structural steel, enough wiring to stretch from here to Pennsylvania, replacement of hundreds of pieces of auxiliary equipment, electronics systems and other critical upgrades designed to improve reliability.” He likened replacement of the machinery plant control and monitoring system on the 270-foot cutters with “going from late-1970s Atari technology to current-day technology.”

MEP has had a measurable impact on operation of the Medium Endurance Cutter fleet, according to an analysis by Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, U.S. Department of Transportation. The percent of time free of major casualty reports for the 270s has increased 91 percent since MEP. The increase for the 210s is 77 percent. In addition to cutters being available on a more regular basis, MEP has caused a reduction in maintenance costs on the vessels that have gone through the program. The increased level of readiness came at the modest investment of \$6 million to \$13 million per hull, depending on type of cutter.

“These are quite impressive accomplishments considering the tremendous technical risk inherent in performing extensive renovations on ships that range from 20 to 45 years old,” Leshner said.

Another significant achievement: “MEP was completed three months early and \$14 million under budget,” said U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes of the 3rd District of Maryland. He noted that more than 4 million labor hours were needed to complete the work on those 44 cutters that now operate in 13 states and territories.

“But no statistics can capture the heart, dedication, service and pride of the people of the Coast Guard Yard,” Sarbanes said. He praised the Yard for “the incredible dedication that the men and women who work here have to their jobs, their deep commitment to service and their incredible pride in workmanship.”

Sarbanes reminded the crowd that the ceremony also honored the commencement of the In-Service Vessel Sustainment project. “This is not just about sustaining the U.S. Coast Guard fleet,” he said. “This is sustaining the pride of the dedicated Coast Guard Yard for years to come.”

Former U.S. Sen. Paul Sarbanes, who was present the day MEP was launched, echoed the praise for the Yard, saying MEP was successful because the workers at the Yard “understood their mission and were determined to carry it out with great skill and determination.” During 30 years in the Senate and six in the House of Representatives, “I always rated the Coast Guard Yard at the top of the assets in this state that we had to protect and sustain,” he said.

The new ISVS project will perform mid-life renovation on select cutters to extend their service life. The first category of vessels in the new ISVS program is the 140-foot Icebreaking Tug, with the Coast Guard Cutter Morro Bay already at the Yard, along with the Coast Guard Cutter Barque Eagle. Other vessels identified for the ISVS program are the 225-foot Seagoing Buoy Tenders and 47-foot Motor Lifeboats, with other classes to follow.