

INTRODUCTION OF THE GUN-FREE
HOSPITAL ZONE ACT

HON. MARTIN T. MEEHAN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 9, 1999

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the "Gun-Free Hospital Zone Act." A bill that will provide protection and peace of mind to doctors, nurses, patients, and administrative staffs of hospitals throughout the country.

The need for this legislation was brought to my attention by my constituent, Bernadett Vajda, whose father, Janos, was tragically murdered at the Holy Family Hospital in Methuen, MA.

Janos was simply visiting a hospital patient, Dr. Suzan Kamm, when he was attacked and shot to death by the estranged husband of Dr. Kamm.

It is very easy to imagine how this bill would have saved Mr. Vajda's life. Had the gunman, Dr. James Kartell, been aware of the prohibition of firearms in a hospital, he would have not carried one with him that fateful day. And when Dr. Kartell reached the fourth floor of the hospital and approached the room where his estranged wife had been admitted, he would have been unarmed.

What happened next, the chance encounter between Dr. Kartell and Mr. Vajda, would still have been emotional, potentially even resulted in violence, but without a gun at the scene, it almost certainly would not have resulted in murder.

Unfortunately, we witness frustration expressed in workplace violence increasingly in our country. Whether it be the tragic shooting recently in Hawaii, the murders this summer in Atlanta, or the all too numerous acts of violence at post offices, we have become accustomed to seeing the image of the emotional employee who resorts to violence.

Emotions run high at hospitals on a daily basis. Life and death decisions are made constantly in emergency rooms and hospitals throughout our country. In this atmosphere of heightened emotion and decreased logic, unthinking acts of violence are more likely and less preventable.

This legislation deals with a very real issue, but do not just take my word for it, look at the statistics on workplace violence at hospitals. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, health care and social service workers have the highest incidence of injuries from workplace violence. Further, health care workers rank only behind convenience store clerks and taxi cab drivers in terms of workplace risk of homicide.

Emergency room physicians and nurses are at special risk. According to the Emergency Nurses Association, 24 percent of emergency room staff are exposed to physical violence with a weapon 1-5 times a year. The rate of violence is increasing annually.

In 1997, 7 percent of emergency room nurses reported that they have been subjected to between 1 and 10 physical incidents involving firearms in the workplace during the past year. One nurse from the Colorado Nurses Association reported that "no hospital unit and

no hospital—large or small, urban or rural—is immune" from violent gun attacks.

It is my goal to not only to make it less likely that tragic deaths like Mr. Vajda's occur, but also that nurses and doctors feel safer to do their jobs without worrying about whether the next person to walk in the emergency room door has a gun. For that reason, this legislation is supported by the medical professionals at Holy Family Hospital who hope never to experience a tragic incident like Mr. Vajda's death ever again.

THE U.S. COAST GUARD: MAY
THEY ALWAYS BE READY

HON. DAVID M. McINTOSH

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, November 9, 1999

Mr. McINTOSH. Mr. Speaker, I submit for the RECORD, the following article about the U.S. Coast Guard's Deepwater Mission Project. "Moving Into the Next Century: Recapitalization Will Ensure That the Coast Guard Remains Semper Paratus" was written by Ernest Blazar of the Lexington Institute and appeared in the August 1999 edition of Sea Power magazine. I call this article to your attention because I feel it is one of the best articles about the Coast Guard's need to modernize their fleet of cutters and aircraft for the 21st century.

[From Sea Power, Aug. 1999]

MOVING INTO THE NEXT CENTURY

(By Ernest Blazar)

In 1969, the Coast Guard's high-endurance Hamilton-class cutter USCGC *Dallas* sailed the waters of South Vietnam, executing seven combat patrols. She provided naval gunfire support more than 150 times, firing over 7,500 rounds of five-inch ammunition. She destroyed 58 sampans and attacked 29 enemy supply routes, base camps, or rest areas.

On 22 June 1999, the same 378-foot-long ship—which was commissioned in 1967—left her homeport (Charleston, S.C.) for yet another overseas patrol. Assigned to the Navy's Sixth Fleet for three months, *Dallas* is helping to patrol the Adriatic Sea after NATO's successful air campaign against Yugoslavia.

The durable cutter's three decades of service clearly demonstrate the Coast Guard's ability to wring the last ounce of usefulness from its aging ships—but it also underscores the fact that the Coast Guard has been forced, primarily for budget reasons, to carry out its military, maritime-safety, law-enforcement, and other missions with outdated resources that are badly in need of replacement and repair. Some Coast Guard ships were in active service during World War II.

It is not just ships, though. The Coast Guard's 190 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters also need replacement, and often need repairs to sustain acceptable readiness and safety levels. Exacerbating the problem is the fact that these air and surface platforms were purchased piecemeal over decades, so they were never properly integrated with the right communication and data links or fitted with proper sensors. (One problem afflicting today's fleet is that the Coast Guard's HH-60J Jayhawk helicopters are too large to land on any but the largest of the service's cutters.)

CASUALTIES UP, AVAILABILITY DOWN

The overall situation has caused numerous problems for the Coast Guard, and also has degraded the service's "ability to manage the tactical picture," said Rear Adm. Ernest Riutta, assistant commandant for operations.

The end result is a steady decline in readiness and in the availability of Coast Guard ships and aircraft to perform their missions. Machinery and electronics casualties have increased 45 percent in 10 years, for example, and the nonavailability rate for HU-25 Falcon medium-range search aircraft has doubled since 1996.

To remedy these problems the Coast Guard has developed a plan to replace and modernize its current ships, aircraft, and command, control, and communications (C3) network. That plan is called "Deepwater." One of its main aims is to ensure that the new ships, aircraft, and C3 equipment the Coast Guard will be buying in the future are fully interoperable from the start, instead of knitted together haphazardly, as has been the case in the past.

To ensure that the proposed fleet recapitalization is well-planned and can be carried out in a cost-effective manner the Coast Guard has issued contracts to three industry teams:

Avondale Industries—Newport News Shipbuilding—Boeing—Raytheon.

Science Applications International—Bath Iron Works—Marinette Marine—Sikorsky.

Lockheed Martin—Ingalls Shipbuilding—Litton—Bollinger Shipyards—Bell Helicopter Textron.

Each member of each team possesses expertise in areas of operational importance to the Coast Guard. Lockheed Martin's Government and Electronic Systems Division in Moorestown, N.J., for example, has long supplied the Navy with such important systems as the highly successful Aegis SPY-1 radar system, the Mk92 fire-control radar carried on Perry-class guided-missile frigates, and the Mk41 vertical-launch system. The company also has a strong reputation for successfully integrating varied naval communications and combat systems.

SHORTFALLS AND STATISTICS

To fully understand Deepwater, one must first examine the shortfalls in platforms and equipment currently affecting the Coast Guard. One telling statistic: Seven of the service's nine classes of ships and aircraft will reach the end of their originally projected service lives within the next 15 years.

The Coast Guard relies upon three classes of cutters for its long- and medium-range surface missions: the 378-foot Hamilton-class high-endurance cutters (WHECs); the 270-foot Famous-class medium-endurance cutters (WMECs); and the 210-foot Reliance-class WMECs.

All of these ships are aging—some were built as long ago as the late 1960s—and are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. They also are technologically obsolescent. The diesel engines of the Reliance-class cutters are so old, in fact, that they are used elsewhere only on the locomotives in South Africa.

These ships also impose a heavy personnel burden on the Coast Guard. The *Dallas*, for example, normally carries a crew of 19 officers and 152 enlisted personnel, more than twice the number required to operate highly automated modern cutters of similar size. The Danish Thetis-class offshore patrol vessel is 369 feet long, displaces 3,500 tons, and has a 90-day endurance—but operates with a crew of only 90 personnel. A larger crew