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## In My View

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## IN MY VIEW

### A SOUND INVESTMENT

Sir:

Regardless of the merits of Capt. Mark Johnson's well-written piece, "The Coast Guard Alternative" (*NWCR*, Winter 2000), the fact remains that the Coast Guard is unable to keep up with the missions it already has, because of a lack of funds and decrepit equipment.

It is sad that while the United States ponders financial and military aid to Colombia and arms deals to Taiwan, the Coast Guard is relegated to plying America's coastal waters in thirty-year-old cutters and aging aircraft. The situation has deteriorated so much, in fact, that Coast Guard commanders have cut back their operations by as much as 10 percent in an effort to save wear and tear on equipment and personnel, both of which have been stretched to the limit.

Perhaps the Coast Guard's capabilities should be modernized before its mission is expanded any further. In fact, the Coast Guard has undertaken its largest acquisition effort, to do just that. Called the Deepwater Program, it will provide the service with upgraded equipment and a means to tap into the technology it needs. For example, Bath Iron Works, part of the industry team in the Deepwater effort, is one of the nation's premier shipbuilders and the lead designer and builder of the Navy's Aegis-equipped *Arleigh Burke*-class destroyers. Such advanced radar systems would give back to the Coast Guard its edge in the drug-interdiction effort.

While any recapitalization effort is expensive, the Coast Guard has proven time and again that it is a sound investment for the nation. In 1999 alone, the Coast Guard seized more money in drugs than its own annual budget of four billion dollars. Syracuse University's Maxwell School recently named the Coast Guard one of the best managed and most fiscally responsible federal agencies.

But the bottom line is this: the Coast Guard is one of the nation's most visible means of defense along American borders, and as such it deserves a financial—and moral—commitment from the Congress and the White House to ensure it remains fully mission capable in the years ahead.

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