



MEDIA RELEASE

Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Program



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DoD and DHS Work to Non-Lethally Stop Suspicious Vessels

By Nancy Koreen

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Marathon, FL – The U.S. Coast Guard and the Department of Defense's Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate (JNLWD) recently conducted a demonstration of a developmental non-lethal weapon designed to stop suspicious small boats. The program, referred to as "Boat Trap," involves dropping an entangling net from a helicopter into the path of a boat. The net entangles in the boat's propeller, forcing the vessel to a safe stop.



A helicopter drops the Boat Trap in the path of a small vessel during the demonstration.

DoD photo by Darrel Webb

According to Darrel Webb, Maritime Project Engineer at the JNLWD, potential applications of the Boat Trap device include port security; protecting large vessels by reducing vulnerability to terrorists' use of speed boats; and drug

interdiction activities. A representative from the Drug Enforcement Agency attended the demonstration and expressed interest in the Boat Trap and other non-lethal weapons.

"Non-compliant small boat threats have elevated the importance of less-than-lethal technology to stop non-compliant vessels," said Commander Eric Riepe, the Policy Division Chief for the Coast Guard Office of Law Enforcement. "Currently, the Boat Trap appears to have potential in stopping non-compliant vessels while executing Coast Guard law-enforcement missions."

The Coast Guard held the Boat Trap demonstration at Marathon Coast Guard Station in Marathon, Florida, in December. The demonstration included a series of four drops of the Boat Trap device from a helicopter into the path of a 33-foot Eduardono Go-Fast boat with twin 200-horsepower Yamaha outboard engines traveling at 30-40 knots. The demonstration mimicked real-life scenarios where the helicopter has no communication with the boat and the operator must successfully time the drop in the right spot and from the correct altitude. During the demonstration, the net successfully entangled the boat's propellers.



*The Boat Trap device ready for use.
DoD photo by Darrel Webb*

The JNLWD is now working with the manufacturer to develop the documentation and drawings required to move the program to the next stage of the DoD's formal acquisition process.