

# Developing New Future Scenarios for the U.S. Coast Guard's Evergreen Strategic Foresight Program



ABBIE TINGSTAD, MICHAEL T. WILSON, KATHERINE ANANIA, JORDAN R. FISCHBACH, SUSAN A. RESETAR, SCOTT SAVITZ, KRISTIN VAN ABEL, R. J. BRIGGS, AARON C. DAVENPORT, STEPHANIE PEZARD, KRISTIN SEREYKO, JONATHAN THEEL, MARC THIBAUT, EDWARD ULIN

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## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What lessons (good and bad) from the Coast Guard's Evergreen strategic foresight initiative's 20-year history can shape future analytic support to service strategy making and planning?
- How can scenario development be structured to better posture the Evergreen initiative to meet broader Coast Guard strategy-making and planning needs?
- What types of scenarios bridge the gap between future challenges and near-term plans, which typically focus on the urgent needs of the present?

## KEY FINDINGS

- Lessons from prior Evergreen activities can illuminate what has historically been valuable and what could be improved in the future. Generally speaking, Evergreen participants value the experience of considering the implications of longer-range future scenarios for Coast Guard operations. Because of the perpetual urgency of immediate operational needs, Evergreen scenarios and foresight activities have historically been limited in their ability to foster deliberation about long-term issues. Products and findings from Evergreen activities have not historically been directly used in some Coast Guard decisionmaking because of differences in planning time horizons. In many circumstances, this has also made it challenging to trace Evergreen's effects.
- The purpose, inputs, and outputs of Coast Guard planning (as part of Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution) and the service's strategic library can shape Evergreen scenarios. Identifying potential needs for continued or additional decision support from Evergreen analyses helps focus scenario content. The lack of a robust bridge between slow-burning or emerging

future problems and decision points in the near term represents both a challenge and an opportunity for Evergreen and speaks to the need for scenarios that enable discussion of trade-offs relevant in the near term even if the motivating problems might be longer range. Strategies cover some stressors and shocks less densely than others, which can form important scenario inputs to stress-test current plans.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Frame Evergreen scenarios with the decisions they are intended to support.
- Use a stressors-and-shocks framework, which has its conceptual roots in a large body of academic and applied resilience work, to systematically compile, review, and update information about future trends and contingencies that could stress the Coast Guard in decision-relevant ways.
- Employ the concept of scenario families to summarize different types of futures subject to changes along a common set of trends; distinct families can be combined to create a richer scenario narrative.
- Add various types of compatible shocks to scenario narratives that present additional challenges for the Coast Guard and, in particular, simulate the tension between day-to-day demands resulting from stressors with sudden resource-consuming perturbations.
- Consider opportunities for incorporative quantitative, along with qualitative, information into Evergreen scenarios.