

By CAROL HARVAT

A high-tech U.S. Navy surveillance system, whose data will be shared with law enforcement and federal and state agencies, was dedicated and activated Wednesday at Dominion Cove Point Liquefied Natural Gas Plant.

The SureTrak Maritime Surveillance System, designed by Navy contractor CSC Applied Technology Group, which has an office in Lexington Park, will transmit data through radar and GPS technology from both the sky and waters of the Chesapeake Bay covering north to Sandy Point and the northern restricted areas of the Atlantic Test Range and south past Cedar Point. The system, which will be operated from a work station at the LNG plant, will be able to identify all vessels by name and what they are carrying through the Automatic Identification System, and calculate the speed of a vessel, as well as monitor air traffic, explained Russ Miller, program manager for CSC.

"Today's a great day for safety here at Dominion and for people around the bay," said U. S. Navy Rear Adm. Randolph L. Mahr at the ceremony. The system can detect a threat to the environment and to Dominion, and for the average boater in trouble, it can activate assistance, he said. Data collected from surveillance sensors can be accessed by the Navy, Coast Guard, Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Law Enforcement Information Network and the Calvert County Sheriff's Office, according to information provided at the ceremony.

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D, Md. 5th) pressed a key on a keyboard to activate the system, which displayed a live radar shot of the bay area surveillance coverage on an overhead screen.

"Energy is a critically important strategic resource for our economy and for our people," said Hoyer in earlier remarks, after mentioning the importance of security around the LNG plant and Calvert Cliffs Nuclear Power Plant in an age of potential terrorist activity.

Hoyer thanked local and state politicians, Pax River Naval Air Station personnel, Calvert County Sheriff Mike Evans and the Special Operations Team which has a contract with Dominion, and Dominion and CSC employees for their partnership efforts. He continued saying that the partnership between government and the private sector has remained positive in Southern Maryland, and this new venture was a good investment to enhance security for the country.

The system, which was designed in the 1990s for the Navy, and used by the U.S. Coast Guard in several harbors around the United States, was redesigned with updated technology for use on the bay with \$225,000 in federal funds, said Joe Anderson of CSC's government and community relations office.

"It's a tremendous return on taxpayers' investment," he said.

Paul Ruppert, senior vice president of Dominion Transmission, called the system "a powerful new security enhancement" that will monitor a sizable section of the bay building "a protective screen around an important resource."

Del. Anthony "Tony" O'Donnell (R-Calvert, St. Mary's) thanked those involved in the project and security measures, and said, "So many of you work so hard to keep our community safe."

Along with monitoring the bay, the system will send out an alert if any recreational boaters breach the 500-yard exclusionary zone, a perimeter around Dominion's off shore platform.