

Significant Dates in Coast Guard Aviation

December 17, 1903: Life-Saving Service personnel from Kill Devil Hills Life-Saving Station helped carry materials to the launch site for the first successful heavier-than-air aircraft flight by the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk, NC. The life-savers were John T. Daniels, W.S. Dough and A.D. Etheridge.

April 1, 1916: Second Lieutenant Charles E. Sugden and Third Lieutenant Elmer F. Stone received orders to attend aviation training at Pensacola Naval Air Station. This date is considered to be the “birthday” of Coast Guard Aviation.

August 29, 1916: Naval Appropriation Act of 1916 provided the authorization, but not the funding, for ten Coast Guard Air Stations to be located along the coasts of the Atlantic, Pacific, Great Lakes, and the Gulf of Mexico.

October 28, 1916: Second Lieutenant Norman B. Hall was ordered to the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company to study aircraft engineering and construction.

March 22, 1917: The first Coast Guard aviators graduated from Pensacola Naval Aviation Training School. Third Lieutenant Elmer Stone became Coast Guard Aviator #1 and Naval Aviator #38.

April 6, 1917: After the U.S. entered World War I, Coast Guard aviators were assigned to naval air stations in this country and abroad. One Coast Guardsman commanded the Naval Air Station at Ille Tudy, France, and won the French Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. Another commanded Chatham Naval Air Station. He piloted one of two HS-1 seaplanes that attempted to bomb and machine gun a surfaced U-boat off the coast of New England. The bombs failed to explode, however, and the U-boat escaped.

October 13, 1917: Third LT Stone assigned to Navy's Bureau of Construction and Repair as Seaplane Test Pilot and engaged in the development of the first aircraft carrier, USS Langley (CVS-1).

May 8-27, 1919: Third Lieutenant Elmer Stone pilots the first trans-Atlantic flight on board the US Navy's *NC-4* Curtiss seaplane. For this feat he received a Congressional Medal. He also established a world speed record for amphibious planes.

November 20, 1919: At the Navy's request LT Stone reports to Aircraft Division the Bureau of Construction and Repair at the Washington, DC Navy Yard for assignment as a test pilot.

March 24, 1920: The first Coast Guard Air Station was opened at Morehead City, NC. Operating with six Curtiss HS-2L flying boats borrowed from the US Navy, the air station was closed after fifteen months due to lack of funds.

Although the Coast Guard was authorized to build and equip ten air stations in 1919, it was not until 2 April 1924 that the \$13 million was appropriated for their funding.

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December 14, 1921: While serving with the Navy, LT Stone, USCG invents a gun powder aircraft catapult.

April 1, 1922: Still serving with the Navy, LT Stone leads development of Langley catapults and arresting gear.

January 6, 1925: RADM Moffett letter requests Commandant of the CG to extend LCDR Stone's service with the Navy until catapult and arresting gear work is concluded.

January, 1925: LCDR Stone's MK V "P" type turntable catapult design is approved as the standard for battleships and cruisers.

May 1925: The Coast Guard established an Air Unit at Gloucester, Massachusetts on Ten Pound Island. The Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics donated a UO-1 for a period of one year for Coast Guard operation.

June 20, 1925: First Coast Guard aircraft (O2U-2) participation in capture of a smuggler (rum runner).

1926: The first permanent Coast Guard Air Station was established at Cape May, NJ.

1926: Coast Guard Radio Electricians Art Descoteaux and Clyde Solt develop first airborne radio direction using a loop antenna.

September 21, 1926: Installation of Saratoga and Lexington catapults and arresting gear complete. Navy returns LCDR Stone to the Coast Guard.

1932: Congress authorized funds for the Coast Guard to design aircraft which met the service's needs. Previously, the Coast Guard had used aircraft that had been designed to fulfill the needs of the other military services.

1934: The Coast Guard established three air detachments, one in San Antonio, Texas, one in Buffalo, New York and another in San Diego, California to "aid in combating smuggling of contraband over the Canadian and Mexican borders." The Coast Guard increased the number of personnel going through flight training and borrowed six aircraft from the Navy to outfit these new squadrons so as not to impact air operations at established Coast Guard air stations

March 9, 1934: Under the orders of the Secretary of the Treasury, all Treasury Department aviation activities were consolidated under Coast Guard control.

1934: July: Frank A. Erickson received his wings and was designated a Coast Guard aviator. He later became the Coast Guard's first helicopter pilot. With great foresight he championed the use of helicopters on board ships for law enforcement and life-saving. In 1944 he received a commendation for conducting, in violent winds and snows, the first lifesaving mission with a helicopter.

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January 10, 1935: LCDR Stone, flying a modified JF02, established world speed record for single engine amphibian.

April 18, 1938: Donald B. MacDiarmid was designated Coast Guard aviator. Highlights of his distinguished career included being the commander of Patrol Squadron 6 in Argentia, Newfoundland. This was the only all Coast Guard patrol squadron to serve in World War II. MacDiarmid was promoted to the rank of captain on 6 December 1950 and took command of Air Station San Diego. While there, he developed open ocean crash techniques which are still used today by commercial airlines.

May 12, 1938: Lieutenant C. B. Olsen became the first Coast Guardsman to be awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross. He was awarded the DFC for "heroism in removing Lieutenant Colonel Gullion, U.S. Army, who was stricken with acute appendicitis, from the Army transport 'Republic.'" LTs Frank A. Leamy and Richard Burke became the second and third Coast Guardsmen respectively to be awarded the DFC when Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau gave them their awards later in 1938.

1939: Coast Guard became a major participant in the Neutrality Patrols with the outbreak of war in Europe.

April 1939: United States took responsibility for the defense of Iceland. Coast Guard aviation moved to the island to participate.

November 1, 1941: Coast Guard transferred to Navy by Executive Order (interesting date – before the start of WWII).

July 1942: ADM King, USN assigned responsibility for developing a sea-going helicopter to the Coast Guard. Primary motivation was the protection of merchant shipping.

November 1942: Lieutenant John A. Pritchard and Radioman Benjamin A. Bottoms rescued two members of a crashed B-17 in Greenland, but lost their lives in an attempt to rescue a third member of the downed aircraft.

December 1942: Coast Guard participated in the establishment of the first air-sea rescue unit at San Diego, California.

July 23, 1943: The Navy assigns the Coast Guard the overall responsibility for an Air Sea Rescue capability.

October 5, 1943: US Coast Guard Patrol Squadron No.6 was commissioned and was based out of Argentia, Newfoundland. It carried out anti-submarine patrols. The Squadron later became Air Detachment, North Atlantic Ocean Patrol. This unit engaged in ice observation for the International Ice Patrol, which resumed its operations after a wartime interruption.

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January 3, 1944: CDR Frank Erickson (CG helicopter aviator #1) flew the first helicopter rescue mission when he delivered blood plasma lashed to the float's of his Sikorsky HNS-1 after an explosion aboard the USS *Turner* off Sandy Hook left dozens wounded.

January 16, 1944: CDR Stuart Graham (CG helicopter aviator #2), flying a Sikorsky YR-4B, made the first helicopter take off from and landing aboard a ship (British freighter SS *Daghestan*) on the high seas. The Navy had assigned Graham by to evaluate the use of helicopters aboard merchant ships for anti-submarine warfare.

March 1944: The Commandant of the Coast Guard was named to head the US Air-Sea Rescue Agency, which ended operations in 1949.

April 18, 1945: Airship training for U.S. Coast Guard personnel (nine officers & 30 enlisted men) began at NAVAIRSTA Lakehurst, New Jersey.

February, 1946: CDR Graham assigned as the project officer for the Naval Research Lab Helicopter Dipping Sonar program.

June 30, 1946: The U.S. Navy returned eleven air stations to the operational control of the US Coast Guard.

September 3, 1946: The U.S. Air-Sea Rescue Agency, was renamed the Search and Rescue Agency.

July 23, 1947: A US Coast Guard amphibious plane made a 900-mile (round trip) instrument flight in heavy fog. The plane landed in a rough sea some 450 miles NE by E of Argentia, Newfoundland to pick up a 18-year old seaman, in need of an emergency appendectomy, on USCGC *Bibb*. Long-range amphibian flights of this type were the hallmark of Coast Guard aviation between the 1930s and late-1950s.

February 27 – June 15, 1949: Aerial ice observations were made by long-range aircraft operating from Argentia, Newfoundland. International Ice Patrol operations, during the 1949 season, were for the first time, conducted entirely by aircraft.

April 6, 1949: A U.S. Coast Guard HO3S-1 helicopter completed the longest unescorted helicopter ferry flight on record. The trip from Elizabeth City, North Carolina, to Port Angeles, Washington, via San Diego, California, a distance of 3,750 miles, took 10 1/2 days to complete and involved a total flight time of 57.6 hours.

December 17, 1951: President Harry Truman presented the Collier Trophy to the Coast Guard, the Department of Defense and the "helicopter industry" in a joint award, citing "outstanding development and use of rotary-winged aircraft for air rescue operations." Coast Guard commandant VADM Merlin O'Neill accepted the trophy for the Coast Guard.

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March 4, 1952: On a test basis, an air detachment of three helicopters and their crews was established at Air Station Brooklyn. It operated in support of port security operations.

July 5, 1957: A P5M Martin seaplane from the U.S. Coast Guard Air Station, San Francisco made an offshore landing at the extreme operating range of 950 miles southwest of San Francisco to remove a seriously ill seaman, who had been transferred from the merchant vessel *Kirribilli* to USS *George*.

1957: Bobby C. Wilks earned his "wings" and thereby became the first African American Coast Guard aviator (Coast Guard aviator No. 735). He later became the first African American to reach the rank of captain and the first to command a Coast Guard air station. He accumulated over 6,000 flight hours in 18 different types of aircraft. He was also the project officer for the Sikorsky HH-3 helicopter when they were first delivered in the 1960s.

September 1960: Coast Guard HC-130 #1339 set a distance record when it flew non-stop between Shemya, Alaska, and Elizabeth City, a total of 5,532 nautical miles.

April 1965: U.S. Coast Guardsmen evacuated over 3,000 stranded persons through the use of helicopters and small boats, when rain and melting snow in southern Minnesota and northern Iowa caused record floods along the Mississippi and Red Rivers. US Coast Guard helicopters have been used to rescue flood victims since 1946.

May 7, 1969: HC-130H CGNR 1453, stationed at Air Station Kodiak, flew over the geographic North Pole, becoming the first Coast Guard aircraft to do so. The aircraft commander was LCDR Melvin J. Hartman and the copilot was LT Larry Minor. The purpose of the flight was ice reconnaissance of a potential route for super tankers from the North Slope of Alaska to the east coast of the U.S. According to a summary of the flight published in the *Commandant's Bulletin* (No. 21-69; 23 May 1969, p. 6): "COAST GUARD AIRCRAFT FLIES AROUND THE WORLD NONSTOP. . .During the course of this flight, the aircraft circled the north pole, crossing all meridians in eighty seconds."

1975: First Coast Guard women assigned to flight training.

April 4, 1977, the Coast Guard designated its first female Coast Guard aviator, Janna Lambine. She was Coast Guard Aviator #1812.

1977: The Coast Guard established a program to acquire a new short-range recovery helicopter. This led to the adoption of the HH-65A.

April-May 1980: A Coast Guard Air Detachment made up of helicopters was established at Key West, Florida, to aid in the rescue of refugees fleeing from Cuba.

October 4, 1980: The cruise ship *Prinsendam* was abandoned some 200 miles off the Coast of Alaska. Over 500 passengers and crew were rescued, most by helicopters

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flown by the Coast Guard, US Air Force, and Canadian military. This was the most successful rescue of its type and was carried out at the extreme operational range of most of the aircraft involved.

1981: After a month-long training program at AIRSTA Elizabeth City, four corpsmen from the Support Center became the first corpsmen to be designated as aircrewmembers on the HH-3F. They were HMC John Pettay, HM1 Jimmie Allen, HM3 David Lehmkuhl and HMS Johnny Midgett.

December 10, 1981: A Coast Guard HH-52A landed on CGC *Dependable's* flight deck, marking the 5,000th helicopter landing on board the ship. According to AVTRACEN records, this was the most helicopter landings ever recorded aboard a cutter. The landing occurred off Dauphin Island in the Gulf of Mexico. The pilot was LT R. D. Allen of the Aviation Training Center.

January 7, 1982: LT Colleen A. Cain, the Coast Guard's first female helicopter pilot, died in the line of duty when HH-52 CG-1420, on which she was co-pilot, crashed into a mountainside 50 miles east of Honolulu. The pilot, LCDR H.W. Johnson, and air crewman AD2 D. L. Thompson, were also killed.

March 1, 1985: Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer Program became operational at Air Station Elizabeth City, NC.

September 29, 1986 Coast Guard officials signed the contract papers to acquire the H-60 series helicopter to replace the venerable Sikorsky HH-3F Pelicans.

1986-1987: The Coast Guard's role in the interdiction of smuggling by air is established by the passage of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986. The legislation increased funding for the Coast Guard and authorized the loan, by the Navy, of two Grumman E2C Hawkeye aircraft that the Navy had previously loaned to the Customs Service. CGAW-1, Coast Guard Airborne Warning Squadron One, was established the following year at Naval Air Station Norfolk (22 January 1987). The detachment was named "Coast Guard Air Facility Norfolk" and consisted of the two loaned-E2Cs and 76 Coast Guard personnel.

1987: NASA selected Coast Guard LCDR Bruce Melnick for astronaut training. Melnick was the first Coast Guardsman to become an astronaut.

February 25, 1988: the Coast Guard commissioned LT Samone Vasser as a flight officer. She was the first female flight officer (NFO) in the Coast Guard. She was qualified to serve in the E2C Hawkeye and was assigned to CGAW-1.

July 31, 1989 Air Facility Norfolk (CGAW-1) was disestablished and relocated to St. Augustine, Florida, at a Grumman facility, on 1 August 1989.

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January 26, 1990: Coast Guard Air Station St. Augustine, home of CGAW-1, was formally commissioned on 26 January 1990. Two more E2C's were loaned to the Coast Guard by the Navy and the station's personnel complement was increased to 120. One E2C, #3501, crashed during a landing at Roosevelt Roads, Puerto Rico, on 24 August 1990 and all four crewmen on board were killed. CGAW-1 was disbanded soon thereafter and the remaining E2Cs were returned to the Navy.

October 6, 1990: The Coast Guard's first astronaut, CDR Bruce Melnick made his first space flight when he served as a Mission Specialist aboard the space shuttle *Discovery* on Space Shuttle Mission STS-41, which flew from 6 to 10 October 1990. *Discovery* deployed the *Ulysses* spacecraft for its five-year mission to explore the polar regions of the sun. CDR Melnick was the first Coast Guardsman selected by NASA for astronaut training.

March 15, 1991: The F/V *Alaskan Monarch* became trapped in the ice-encrusted Bering Sea near St. Paul, Alaska and was in danger of being swept onto the breakwater rocks outside St. Paul Harbor. An HH-3 from AIRSTA Kodiak, under the command of LT Laura H. Guth, responded. After a flight of 600 miles, including a winter crossing of the Alaska Peninsula and 400 miles of open water, Guth and her crew rescued four of the six-man crew before waves crashed over the vessel and swept the two remaining crewmen into the frigid water. They both were quickly pulled from the water safely.

May 7-16, 1992: Astronaut and Coast Guard CDR Bruce Melnick made his second space flight when he served as a Mission Specialist aboard the space shuttle *Endeavour* on her maiden flight for Space Shuttle Mission STS-49, which flew from 7 to 16 May 1992. During this mission, astronauts rescued and repaired the *Intelsat VI* satellite. Melnick, by this point, had logged more than 300 hours in space.

May 6, 1994: The Coast Guard retired the last HH-3F Pelican helicopter in Coast Guard service. This ended the Coast Guard's "amphibious era," as no aviation asset left in service was capable of making water landings.

August 22, 1994: HH-65A CG-6564 and crew from Aviation Training Center Mobile became the first U.S. helicopter and crew to reach the North Pole. They were attached to the *Polar Sea* for her deployment with expedition Arctic Ocean Section 1994, in concert with the Russian icebreaker *Yamal* and the Canadian icebreaker *Louis S. St. Laurent*. The four pilots and eight flight mechanics of Aviation Detachment 134 that participated in the expedition were members of the Polar Operations Division based in Mobile.

1996: LCDR Daniel C. Burbank became the second Coast Guard astronaut when he was selected for astronaut training by NASA.

1998: The Commandant, ADM James Loy, directed the Coast Guard to develop a plan to counter the threat posed by what were known as "Go-Fasts," high speed craft used to smuggle narcotics that were capable of outrunning most Coast Guard craft.

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Additionally, Coast Guard aircraft were unarmed, and therefore posed little threat to the smugglers. The Coast Guard then developed what became known as the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron. The unit, using armed helicopters, developed tactics and tested equipment, including working with aviation-capable cutters. They are based out of Jacksonville, Florida.

May 1999: Using the XV-15 Tiltrotor, a compatibility test was demonstrated on board a 270-foot USCG cutter, underway south of Key West, Florida. The test proved that deck compatibility was expected with the BA-609 tiltrotor operationally on typical USCG ships.

August, 2000: For the first time, weapons were fired from a Coast Guard HITRON helicopter" to execute the interdiction of a maritime drug smuggler."

September 2000: The US Coast Guard began proceedings to acquire, under 2-year lease, a number of Agusta A109E helicopters for "Go-Fast" drug interdiction, to be based at Cecil Field, Jacksonville, Florida. Two Agusta 109 's were to be delivered on 6 October, 2000 but this did not happen as Agusta did not have the helicopters ready but a ceremony was performed in Philadelphia at Agusta's U.S. assembly plant at N.E. Philadelphia Airport nonetheless.

September 8-20, 2000: LCDR Daniel C. Burbank became the second Coast Guard astronaut to fly on a shuttle mission (he had been selected by NASA for astronaut training in 1996). He flew as a mission specialist on NASA flight STS-106 *Atlantis* (September 8-20, 2000). During the 12-day mission, the crew successfully prepared the International Space Station for the arrival of the first permanent crew. The five astronauts and two cosmonauts delivered more than 6,600 pounds of supplies and installed batteries, power converters, oxygen generation equipment and a treadmill on the Space Station. Two crewmembers performed a space walk in order to connect power, data and communications cables to the newly arrived *Zvezda* Service Module and the Space Station. STS-106 orbited the Earth 185 times, and covered 4.9 million miles in 11 days, 19 hours, and 10 minutes.

November 24, 2000: The Coast Guard created an Aircraft Acquisition Projects Office (G-ACJ). The new office was assigned to oversee the acquisition of a Gulfstream C-37A executive aircraft to replace the Commandant's aging C-20B. The office was also tasked with acquiring Lockheed Martin C-130J and C-130-J-30 Super Hercules aircraft to replace the service's aging HC-130 fleet.

March, 2002: The Coast Guard selected the Agusta A109E Power as its choice for an armed, anti-narcotics helicopter. The service entered into a lease agreement for eight of the Italian made "Mako" armed interdiction helicopters to support its law enforcement functions. The program was expected to cost approximately \$18 million.

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June 24, 2005: LTJG Jeanine McIntosh-Menze was awarded her wings at a ceremony at Naval Air Station Corpus Christi, after completing training there. She is the first African-American female Coast Guard aviation.

September, 2005: Staging out of Coast Guard Aviation Training Center Mobile and Air Stations New Orleans and Houston, Coast Guard aircraft and crews from around the country teamed to save the lives of 24,000 victims of Hurricane Katrina.