



VOYAGE OF RENEWAL

The US Coast Guard readies itself to meet the evolving challenges of a post-9/11 century

Spurred by dramatic changes in both global threats and the domestic maritime transportation system, and fueled by receiving adequate funding, the United States Coast Guard's long-awaited voyage of restoration and renewal is firmly underway.

Today the Coast Guard is undergoing change on all fronts, rebuilding its ranks; replacing its aging maritime and airborne fleets; restructuring its commands and administration; renewing its support of maritime commerce and the seafarer; and raising its international presence and effectiveness through joint security and training initiatives with the Department of Defense, Department of State and national forces around the world. Altogether, America's Fifth Armed Service is flourishing in its new home in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

It isn't so much a new home as a new house in the old neighborhood. Securing the homeland, though not named as such, was the Coast Guard's first mission brief over 200 years ago. Founded as the Revenue Marine in 1790 by Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, for many years the service mainly combated commercial and security aggressions like smuggling and piracy, while fighting wars alongside the Navy as needed. Today's widely diverse mission has largely been acquired since 1915, when what was then called the Revenue

Cutter Service merged with the Lifesaving Service to become the US Coast Guard. The new organization absorbed the Lighthouse Service in 1939 and the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation in 1946.

Through that evolution, the Coast Guard collected probably the broadest mission portfolio of any maritime service in the world. It is the only Federal law enforcement authority beyond US Territorial Seas and a maritime industry regulator, boarding 50,000 ships and boats a year for various inspections. Responsible for safety and security of the more than 300 ports, 3,700 marine terminals, 25,000 miles of coastal waterway and 95,000 miles of combined coastline belonging to the United States, the agency also maintains the aids to navigation throughout and responds to some 50,000 distress calls a year, saving many lives.

Coast Guard cutters patrol and defend the 3.4 million square miles of open ocean in the US Exclusive Economic Zones and, working with the US Navy and its allies, combat drug, arms and human trafficking over an area ten times greater. The agency maintains a US presence in the Arctic and performs polar icebreaking. Around the world, Coast Guard personnel train foreign enforcement services, support US military operations and deliver humanitarian aid. In addition, while the Coast Guard has always served alongside the US Navy in time of war, it is now a permanent component of overseas contingency operations including actions against terrorist threats. As a

formal member of the intelligence community since late 2001, the service pursues its new homeland security mission with access to the most sophisticated communication networks and intelligence personnel to determine, detect and defuse maritime security threats wherever they begin.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. Too broad to fit beneath the umbrella of any single Government Department, the Coast Guard's day-to-day multi-mission work supports several – Commerce, Defense, Justice, State, Transportation and Treasury. The Coast Guard served under the Treasury Department until being moved to Transportation in 1967, where it remained until its transfer to Homeland Security in 2003.

“Wherever you put the Coast Guard in government, it's never going to be a perfect match. That said, I think this is as close as we're ever going to get to a perfect fit, and this is the right place,” says Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Thad Allen. Now in his third year as Commandant, Allen was the designated executive who led the Coast Guard's transition to DHS while Chief of Staff to then-Commandant Thomas Collins. “After six years in Homeland Security, it is clear there's more overlap with the critical things that we do and what this Department does, than with any other Department,” he says.

COMMANDANT OF CHANGE

The Coast Guard first developed a plan for total systemic renewal with 1998's Deepwater Capability Replacement Project, which hoped to change virtually everything all at once. A few years ago it reorganized into 35 sector commands that combined marine safety and security operations for US ports. But none of the changes really took root. So when Allen took charge in 2006, he hit the bricks running, armed with a plan to finish the kind of total systemic renewal his predecessors had aimed for.

A 31-year Coast Guard veteran, he based his plan on a lifetime of observation about the agency's policies and practices. His plan called for a revision of both the Coast Guard's business model – the organization and administration behind such activities as logistics, maintenance, support and finance – and its command and control structure.

“I thought that, given the external environment – dealing with all hazards and all threats that are a lot more complex than even 10 years ago – we needed a new Coast Guard organizational model, independent of having to meet some budget target,” he says. “I'm trying to reposition the service to be more flexible and more agile in the current threat environment. That means being more capable of sensing changes in

Recently delivered, the National Response Cutter BERTHOLF is the first of a series of new vessels for the Coast Guard.





US Coast Guard Commandant
Admiral Thad Allen

the demand signals from our stakeholders, and the nuances in those demand signals, to be better at moving forces around as needed.”

Now in its third year, Allen’s program is generating probably the largest amount of change in the service since World War II – changes in the field alter the way Coast Guard forces are grouped, managed and deployed, while those at the top dramatically revise the delegation of command authorities.

Presently, the Coast Guard Commandant (a four-star Admiral) is supported by a Vice Commandant, a Chief of Staff and Atlantic and Pacific Commanders (all three-star Admirals). In Allen’s plan, the Commandant is supported by a four-star Vice Commandant (the first such in Coast Guard history) and two (three-star) deputy commandants. The Deputy Commandant for Mission Support would oversee all mission support functions – such as acquisitions, logistics, information technology and human resources – and the Deputy Commandant for Operations would provide policy oversight and management for all 11 mission programs.

These are in turn to be supported by two force commanders (three-star Vice Admirals). The Operations Command (OPCOM) will oversee all Coast Guard sectors and districts, while the Force Command (FORCECOM) will handle intelligence, training and all aspects of force readiness.

This sweeping restructuring requires changes to Title 14 of the US Code, under which the Coast Guard is established. Although not yet passed, both the House and the Senate have endorsed the Coast Guard’s legislative change proposal, which would authorize its

full modernization plan. As this issue went to press, the Coast Guard was working closely with the 111th Congress and its Congressional oversight committees to facilitate its passage in 2009.

While awaiting that authorization, the Coast Guard has established provisional commands and revamped its field organization, the goal being to fully exercise the capabilities of what Allen calls the Coast Guard’s “Strategic Triad”: shore-based forces, which execute operations through “Coast Guard sectors”, a new combination of groups and safety offices for the US coastline described as ‘one captain, one port, all missions’; long-range maritime mobile forces, its fleet of high-endurance cutters and long-range aircraft that are allocated farther offshore according to mission or patrol; and deployable forces, specialist groups that can be assembled quickly as strike teams tailored to the need of the moment.

That last leg of the Triad is embodied in the Coast Guard’s new Deployable Operations Group (DOG), created when Commandant Allen assembled all deployable forces under a single command. The name may have a military ring to it, but its multi-mission duties extend across the whole spectrum of Coast Guard activity. For example, the law enforcement detachments operating off Navy ships around the Horn of Africa are part of the DOG, as are the reserve port security teams, the strike teams that respond to hazardous material spills and oil pollution incidents, and the Coast Guard’s new Maritime Security and Safety Teams (MSSTs) that were created for its new Homeland Security duties under the first post-9/11 budget.

“All deployable capabilities are now under a single command, to get synergies and create what I would call a depth-of-force package,” says Allen. “For example, we might put some Hazmat responders together with people capable of law enforcement duties and some logistics folks to sustain them and send them out to resolve a problem,” he explains.

FUNDING THE RESTORATION

Budget is the key word in keeping the voyage of systemic renewal on course – and for many years was also a bleak and bitter word around Coast Guard headquarters. The Treasury Department had always been a frugal manager, but Transportation proved downright stingy, allowing Coast Guard needs to submerge behind grant programs for highways, aviation, urban mass transport and other very visible

public benefits. The 1990s were particularly harsh, with budget cuts slashing Coast Guard funding by some \$400 million (then about 12 percent of its annual allotment) and, for the first time, forcing law enforcement to be scaled back in order to keep lifesaving at 100 percent. Some of its aging aircraft had to be taken out of service for cannibalization in order to keep the rest flying. When the 9/11 terrorist attacks came in 2001, the service was poised for yet another operational reduction.

Its funding landscape has changed dramatically since then. In 2003, the budget topped \$7 billion for the first time. Its first new cutter to arrive since 1967, the National Response Cutter *Bertholf*, was just accepted for service. The next three of eight high-endurance cutter replacements are at various points of their arrival timeline. Eventually, the old fleet will be fully replaced, with Fast Response Cutters and Offshore Patrol Cutters.

Together with the ships, the air fleet is undergoing upgrade and renewal as well. Six new editions of the C-130 "Hercules" long-range aircraft, the backbone of search and rescue, are now online. The remaining 25 or so planes in that fleet, whose planned service life ended in 1997, will be carried forward by a program of life extension and restoration until the total replacement plan is fulfilled. The agency's helicopters are undergoing a fleet-wide avionics upgrade. And its Falcon jets, now aged and very costly to maintain, are being replaced with somewhat slower but much more efficient turboprop planes.

As the positive power rolls in and the voyage of total renewal steams ahead, reminders of the past's stormy seas remain

close behind as maintenance crews continue patching an aging fleet. For example, two cutters are presently in drydock for extensive repair, having become "too deteriorated to chase drug runners or deliver humanitarian supplies." Fortunately, such capability troughs are being offset by operational peaks achieved through new interagency initiatives, improved intelligence gathering and more flexible use of force in the field.

"Our basic value proposition to the American public, and the genius of our operational model, is that a Coast Guard cutter can do five different things, and therefore you don't have to have five different ships," says Allen. "But inherent in that is the acknowledgement that you can't do five different things at once. This means that, although you might be able to do two or three at once, you will always face a tradeoff of risks based on allocating resources to the highest needs.

"To push the Coast Guard to the point where we're doing five things with five ships is to impeach our value proposition," he adds. "So the question on funding becomes, 'how much is enough' – I could argue that enough isn't what we've got now."



Providing for a Secure Future

Honoring the mariner and commerce.

As the US Coast Guard absorbs Commandant Thad Allen's sweeping organizational changes and settles into a still-developing set of post-9/11 roles, its traditional roles and missions continue to evolve around the world and at home. Although Homeland Security has been the top priority for eight years, Allen has lately been reassuring America's commercial marine sectors that Coast Guard support of the Maritime Transportation System is still strong and evolving to meet their needs.

"We are committed to honoring the mariner, to ensuring that commerce proceeds, because that's the economic lifeblood of this country," says Allen. "We have reached out and established centers of expertise where we're training marine inspectors and professionals to be focused on specific industries, in order to do a better job of serving them."

Earlier this year, Allen cut the ribbon on the Coast Guard's LNG Center of Expertise in Port Arthur, Texas. Other Centers of Expertise include the Cruise Ship Center in Miami, Florida; the Towing Vessel Center in Paducah, Kentucky; the Vintage Vessel Center in Duluth, Minnesota ('vintage' referring to Great Lakes carriers); and the Suspension and Revocation National Center in Martinsburg, West Virginia (regarding seafarer credentialing).

The Coast Guard has also begun a new mission directed at the individual seafarer: working with the International Maritime Organization and the International Labor Organization to develop a system that could support abandoned crews and also hold shipowners accountable for failing their humanitarian and financial responsibilities.

"Between 1990 and the present time, over 1,000 ships and crews are believed to have been abandoned by the vessel's owners who would, apparently, rather leave their ship and crew alone in a host country than meet their financial obligations," says Allen. "The abandonment of seafarers is truly a scourge – it's morally wrong and it's damaging to the shipping industry. The host state generally does not have the means to provide prolonged care for these dislocated seafarers. The burden of responsibility should be placed back on shipowners."

One of its evolving international security efforts is the anti-piracy work the Coast Guard performs around the African continent. Its legal arm is presently prosecuting a group of apprehended pirates under a new agreement with the Government of Kenya, while its field forces are sharing the service's two centuries of anti-piracy experience through training and joint exercises with partners.

In the Pacific Ocean, joint programs with various national partners combat illegal and unauthorized fishing which, according to the United Nations, costs the world some \$14 billion annually and threatens the livelihood of many tiny island nations. Meanwhile, new action is stirring at the top of the world as well as receding ice packs open northern sea routes to increased trade, tourism and territorial aspirations.

The Arctic environment is such a challenge to the operation of normal ships and aircraft that the Coast Guard has begun a "High-Latitude Study" there to help develop the mission requirements in what is sure to become a new area of regular activity. The study will be particularly concerned with maintaining presence, future icebreaking needs and developing the kind of assets needed there.



Big Task, Small Staff

USCG struggles to match people and mission.

So many diverse activities spread all over the globe might make one think the Coast Guard is a big outfit. In fact, it has just 42,000 uniformed staff. For a perspective on effective presence, consider that that's 8,000 fewer people than worked in the World Trade Center – a relatively modest-sized force for all that it accomplishes across America and around the world.

If the size of the Coast Guard today can be called modest, then ten years ago it was positively skeletal. Staffing suffered greatly during the 1990s, when budget reductions chopped the Coast Guard down to 34,000 people, “cut to the bone” in the words of one contemporary Commandant’s impassioned plea for Congressional relief. So, although the uniformed rolls have been increasing by an average of over 1,000 people annually for the past eight years, many of the new recruits not assigned to new DHS positions do not actually represent growth, but restoration, filling a hole in manning dug over a decade ago.

More missions call for a bigger staff, making the question of the day, “how big is big enough?” Allen says the Coast Guard can access 1,500 to 2,000 people a year without modifying its present intake facilities, principally its boot camp and the Academy. Some supporters say it still needs 10,000 people – indeed, if staffing has just caught up to where it should have been before 9/11, they may be right. Allen agrees more are needed, but says a prerequisite discussion must be had before talking about numbers.

“I would say the future growth of the Coast Guard should hinge on this question: what is an adequate maritime security regime for this country and, once that is agreed upon, are we willing to resource it?” says Allen.

“For example, the general public might be surprised to know that we do not have persistent and ubiquitous radar coverage of the entire coastline of the United States. It does not exist,” he says. “One question to ask is, do you want that or don’t you?”



Another question, raised by the tactics of smugglers, pirates and terrorists worldwide, is how to address the potential for enemies to use small recreational vessels as tools or weapons. “If you are flying a general aviation aircraft, you have to be transponding so that you can be seen. But if you’re on a 30-foot recreational boat that can go 15 knots and carry, say, 500 pounds, chances are you don’t have to be licensed; also, there’s no requirement to carry a locating device onboard because there’s a huge history of autonomous operation on the water for recreational and fishing vessels in this country. How do you want to handle that?” he asks.

“These kinds of questions have to be answered, but they have never been fully asked or figured out,” he says. “I’ve had these conversations for the past three years, trying to advance the discussion. So, before I can tell you how big the Coast Guard should be, the country needs to decide how it wants to handle maritime security. One thing I can tell you is that we need more resources.”

Questions aside, one thing the Coast Guard’s difficult funding history demonstrates is that it makes the most of whatever support it gets – a point that returns Allen to the genius of the Coast Guard’s operational model.

“One core value the Coast Guard brings to the nation is that we have very flexible, multi-mission assets and people that we can quickly deploy where the country’s highest needs are,” Allen says. “This was very well seen after Hurricane Katrina, where we quickly marshaled all our helicopters and small boat crews and rescued over 30,000 people. That kind of flexibility and on-scene initiative, the ability to employ assets to get their highest return based on the need that’s out there, is what we do best.”



US Coast Guard Modernization Milestones

July 2007

The Deployable Operations Group (DOG) is established and, over the following two years, proves capable of providing adaptive force packaging for all threats and all hazards.

June 2008

The Deputy Commandant for Operations is officially established (currently awaiting Congressional authorization). This organization formally aligns operational policy and planning under a single Deputy Commandant, to optimize maritime safety, security and stewardship capabilities consistent with national priorities.

October 2008

The mission support organization begins taking shape with the establishment of the first of five logistics/service centers. These new centers will improve mission support by installing product-line managers for all personnel services and Coast Guard assets.

The Aviation Logistics Center in Elizabeth City, North Carolina unifies support under a single organization for Coast Guard aviation forces.

January 2009

The Surface Forces Logistics Center (SFLC) and Asset Project Office (APO) are established in Baltimore, Maryland to provide centralized support for Coast Guard afloat assets.

February 2009

The C4IT (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) Service Center (C4ITSC) is established in Alexandria, Virginia to provide depot level information technology support; and the Shore Infrastructure Logistics Center (SILC) in Norfolk, Virginia to provide all depot and intermediate level support for Coast Guard shore facilities.

March 2009

The Personnel Service Center (PSC) is established in Arlington, Virginia to unify in one service center all Coast Guard personnel and human resource support.

April 2009

The Legal Services Command is established in Norfolk, Virginia to consolidate all of the Coast Guard's legal entities under a single command.

The Coast Guard takes a critical step toward re-aligning its Command and Control structure by establishing the Force Readiness Command Pre-Commissioning Detachment, which assumes responsibility and programmatic oversight of all Coast Guard training centers and training support commands.

June 2009

An interim Force Readiness Command (FORCECOM) is established as a component of Coast Guard Pacific Area Command and is charged with ensuring current and future readiness. Under the current construct, FORCECOM assumes responsibility and programmatic oversight of all training centers, training support commands, and selected standardization and assessment teams. After receiving Congressional authorization, the full stand-up of FORCECOM will also assume responsibility for readiness and allocation of deployable specialized and maritime patrol forces.

June 2009

Coast Guard Atlantic Area also positioned itself for its eventual transition to Operations Command (OPCOM), pending statutory approval. Now working in direct coordination with the National Command Center, Atlantic Area can monitor all 11 Coast Guard mission areas and can disseminate a global operational and intelligence picture to the entire Coast Guard and its maritime and interagency partners.