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Coast Guard Doctrine

1. General
 2. Law Enforcement
 3. Assisting Vessels and Saving Life and Property
 4. Military Duties
 5. Various Duties
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1.

GENERAL

The Coast Guard shall, while carrying out its law enforcement and other duties, **render all practicable assistance to any person or thing that lies within its sphere of action and shall give aid and comfort whenever it can reasonably do so.** It shall not, however, furnish assistance that would interfere with private enterprise which stands in a position to render prompt and efficient service without unduly jeopardizing life or property. The Coast Guard shall build up in every community where it operates a **reputation for cheerful service and integrity**, and it shall maintain pleasant and cooperative relations with the civil authorities and appropriate civilian organizations. Close contacts shall be made with, and proper service rendered to, shipmasters, ship owners, maritime exchanges, yacht clubs, fishermen's associations, motor boat associations, and all other organizations that are interested in floating craft and things that pertain to the sea. The responsible Coast Guard officers will keep in close contact with the senior officials of all bureaus, agencies, services, and other activities of the Government for which the Coast Guard performs duty. This includes the following: The Bureau of Customs, The Customs Agency Service, The Narcotics Bureau, The Alcohol Tax Unit, The Secret Service, The Public Health Service (Quarantine), The Bureau of Fisheries, The Biological Survey, The Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, The Department of Justice (U.S. Attorney and Federal Bureau of Investigation), The Army (Engineers), The Immigration Service. Conferences between Coast Guard representatives and the local officials of those activities will be held sufficiently often to assure that the Coast Guard is cooperating in so far as practicable to their satisfaction in the enforcement of the laws administered by them. Headquarters is in contact with the heads of these services and notes with interest the cooperation attained in the field.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

(1) All Coast Guard officers shall be **thoroughly conversant with the Federal laws required for enforcement or patrol of the seas, navigable waters, or the coast line. They shall also be familiar with court decisions pertaining to such laws.** This shall apply particularly to customs laws, navigation laws, immigration laws, quarantine laws, laws pertaining to the fisheries, laws for the protection of the fur-seals and other marine animals, anchorage laws, the laws pertaining to the saving and protecting of life and property at sea, neutrality laws and the Oil Pollution Act. They shall also be familiar with all phases of international law and treaties that have a relation to the duties of a Coast Guard officer.

(2) Responsible officers shall **see that such laws are properly enforced.** In making contact with the organizations listed under Paragraph 1, arrangements shall be made, as far as possible, to insure obedience of the various laws with the least possible inconvenience to commercial craft, fishing craft, and pleasure craft of all kinds.

(3) A systematic plan for the boarding of commercial vessels, yachts, motor boats, and other floating craft shall be inaugurated and followed so that all such craft shall be boarded sufficiently often to insure compliance with the law and in such manner as to cause the least possible inconvenience to the owners or master thereof.

(4) Systematic plans shall also be made by responsible officers for the enforcement of the laws pertaining to customs, quarantine, immigration, anchorage, oil pollution, patrol of regattas, and the protection of the fisheries and seal herds, particularly the halibut and salmon fisheries in Alaska.

(5) Particular care shall be given to the prevention of smuggling. Plans shall be kept current from day to day to meet the latest smuggling developments. When smuggling vessels are most active, **the Coast Guard shall be at sea in force.** As a rule, where smuggling is carried on between the shore and vessels at sea, the plan shall be to guard and trail the source of supply, the boats inshore being used as a secondary line of defense. However, in any particular case the Coast Guard shall coordinate its activities with that of other agencies of the Treasury Department to the end that one plan as laid down by the Coordinator of Treasury law-enforcing agencies in such locality shall be followed. Aircraft shall be used to best advantage, and, so far as practicable, shall be considered as vessels constituting an integral part of the force assigned. Vessels with liquor or other contraband on board under seizure shall never be brought to a wharf until turned over to the Customs authorities. Commissioned officers shall be placed in charge of seizures wherever it is practicable to do so, and shall remain in charge until boats and cargoes are turned over to the Customs authorities and proper receipts in detail are obtained.

(6) Proper law enforcement requires **a high degree of good judgment and common sense.** Except where it is clearly the intent of a vessel to violate the law, as for example, a

smuggling vessel, the attitude of Coast Guard officers toward the unintentional violator of the law shall be that of friendly cooperation, rather than that of fault-finding, in that a **spirit shall be built up among all classes of honest seagoing men that the Coast Guard is a valuable friend.**

3.

ASSISTING VESSELS AND SAVING LIFE AND PROPERTY

(1) Shipmasters, ship owners, and the organizations listed under Paragraph 1 shall be consulted as to the best means and methods for rendering assistance expeditiously to all floating craft. They shall be kept fully advised of the plans and methods of operation of Coast Guard vessels for this work in order that they may receive the best returns from this emergency service. Responsible officers shall keep close track of shipping and shall see that Coast Guard vessels are placed at strategic points. When at sea, **Coast Guard vessels shall cruise in such localities as will be best adapted to render prompt assistance to vessels in distress, with due regard for the important duties of the Service.**

(2) Officers shall be familiar with coastwise and trans-oceanic shipping routes, the usual routes of tugs and tows, habits of pleasure craft, aircraft routes overseas or that border on the sea, etc. Communication routes shall be quick and reliable. Distress waves shall be doubly guarded. On hearing an S.O.S., or obtaining information of a vessel needing assistance, every Coast Guard vessel or unit within a reasonable distance shall **immediately proceed toward the distress case with all possible speed. Commanding officers shall not wait for instructions.** By "reasonable distance" is meant that the Coast Guard vessel has a chance to arrive upon the scene in time to give aid. If in doubt as to whether or not to proceed, the decision shall be to go. The immediate senior of the Commanding officer and such other officers as should have cognizance of the distress case shall be advised and such superiors shall then determine whether to permit the vessel to proceed or order her to return to her station and previous duty. **Under no conditions shall vessels within "reasonable distance" turn back, unless ordered to do so, until definite and accurate information is received that assistance is no longer required.** Any person in the Coast Guard, ashore or afloat, receiving information of a vessel in need of assistance shall forward such information by the quickest means available to the proper Coast Guard officer for action. If a vessel or boat is stranded or is in distress within a reasonable distance off the coast, the proper district commander and the Coast Guard stations concerned shall be quickly advised. If a vessel in distress along the coast is not rendered assistance by a Coast Guard unit, the Coast Guard officer in command in that locality shall make a careful study of the case to see if any corrective measures shall be taken. If a vessel in distress along the coasts of the United States is not rendered assistance by the Coast Guard, the presumption shall be that it is a fault somewhere within the Coast Guard. **Coast Guard vessels, stations, and equipment shall be kept in prime condition at all times,** and officers shall be ever alert to render assistance promptly. Care should be exercised to observe the provisions of Article 933, Regulations. Responsible officers shall see that, in so far as it may be within their jurisdiction, all seas and all navigable waters of the United States are kept free of derelicts and obstructions to

navigation. They shall maintain close contact with the Army District Engineers and give them all practicable assistance in their work. Where a floating derelict has been reported, the responsibility of the proper Coast Guard officer shall not cease until he is assured that such derelict is no longer a menace to navigation.

4.

MILITARY DUTIES

Coast Guard units shall **take advantage of every opportunity to conduct drills and exercises, and to keep officers and men thoroughly fit and trained for Navy service.** Every effort shall be made to carry out all prescribed target practices and battle practices in an intelligent and thorough manner. **Close cooperation shall be maintained with Navy units.** Coast Guard officers shall be permitted to observe duties and practices on board Navy vessels for short periods whenever it is practicable to do so. Coast Guard vessels shall participate in Naval maneuvers at every opportunity, provided more important work of the Service does not suffer thereby. Responsible officers shall cooperate with Naval district commanders in the preparation of War Plans for Naval districts and in regard to other matters of military importance. Wherever practicable, Navy principles, particularly methods of scouting, shall be used in anti-smuggling work.

5.

VARIOUS DUTIES

(1) The International Ice Patrol and the oceanographic investigations in connection therewith shall be fostered and developed. Proper steps shall be taken to make the Coast Guard the leading authority on the practical and scientific measures necessary to insure safety of shipping in the North Atlantic sea lanes.

(2) Every effort shall be made to meet the needs of deep sea fishermen in rendering them medical aid as provided for by law. Close contact shall be made with fishermen's associations in order that the Coast Guard may fully understand their requirements.

(3) Particular care shall be taken to see that adequate transportation facilities are furnished in the various harbors and elsewhere to Customs inspectors, immigration inspectors and quarantine officers. The service rendered shall, if possible, be satisfactory to the inspectors concerned.

(4) The responsible officers shall make a careful study of flood relief work in the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys to the end that they will be competent to supervise such work in time of need. They shall become personally acquainted with and frequently consult Army Engineers, Red Cross officials, mayors of cities, and all other persons having knowledge of flood conditions, or who would be involved in flood relief work. They shall, as far as practicable, have plans drawn up to institute adequate relief in flood areas expeditiously and without confusion.

(5) The Coast Guard shall perform all Federal work in the Territory of Alaska requiring the use of Government vessels, insofar as it has the authority to do so. Practically every Government department is concerned with the work, and, therefore, the necessary contacts shall be made, both with the bureaus and with the field officers to the end that the Coast Guard may plan to do such work expeditiously and satisfactorily. These duties shall include the transportation of supplies for every department of the Government to isolated points in Alaska, such as the Pribilof Islands, points along the Alaskan Peninsula and elsewhere, wherever commercial transportation facilities are not available; the patrol of the North Pacific Ocean for the protection of the seal herd; the protection of the fisheries; the protection of fur-bearing animals and game birds; the medical and welfare work for the natives and destitute; transportation of mails; transportation of the United States Court and all other Governmental officials, where commercial transportation is not available or suitable. All harbors and waters of Alaska, as well as the coast line, shall be thoroughly investigated so that the Coast Guard will be the best authority on matters pertaining to the coast line or waters of Alaska. Where practicable, notes and sailing directions shall be prepared of unsurveyed and little-frequented harbors, and the hydrographic information obtained sent to Headquarters for further transmission to the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey.

All duties of the Coast Guard shall be well planned and efficiently carried out. Constant thought and endeavor shall be given to improving the value and economy of these services to the Government and to the people directly concerned.

