

Heavy Weather Ahead for the Coast Guard

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Competing priorities and shrinking budgets threaten to swamp the service.

The U.S. Coast Guard faces a stark and troubled future. If our nation's fifth and smallest military service was a cutter it would be listing severely, crippled by decades of undercapitalization, a lack of political support, an overwhelming workload, and the five words most feared by any Guardian: "the curse of can-do." In the face of an impending budget meltdown, the Coast Guard must confront severe challenges that threaten its performance and long-term viability, as it comports with the realities of the post-9/11 environment. Will it remain the world's best Coast Guard or will it proceed down the path of Britain's Royal Navy, becoming a shadow of its former self?

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