

VICE ADMIRAL PAPP NOMINATED AS COMMANDANT OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD

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White House taps new Coast Guard commandant

By Katherine McIntire Peters
kpeters@govexec.com

On Tuesday the White House said President Obama will nominate Vice Adm. Robert J. Papp Jr. to become the 24th commandant of the Coast Guard in May, when Adm. Thad Allen, the current commandant, retires. The Senate must confirm the nomination.

If confirmed, Papp would take the helm of the Coast Guard at a time when service leaders are undertaking far-reaching organizational and cultural reforms, all while implementing the largest recapitalization plan in Coast Guard history.

Virtually every aspect of life in the Coast Guard is changing, from the way the service is structured and operates, to the way it acquires and maintains equipment. In an interview last spring, Allen described the turmoil of leading these changes as akin to "living in a blender."

Stephen Flynn, a retired Coast Guard commander and now a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations, said Papp has a lot of credibility with rank and file Coast Guard personnel.

"The strength Bob brings is he's a classic sailor -- he is very much an operations guy. He holds people to account," Flynn said. At a time when the service is undertaking so many changes, Papp will keep service officials focused on the enduring demands of the profession, he said.

Papp, who currently serves as commander of the Coast Guard Atlantic Area and Defense Force East, where he is the operational commander for all Coast Guard missions in the eastern half of the world, knows firsthand the challenges the service faces. Previously, he served as chief of staff of the Coast Guard in Washington. As Atlantic Area commander, Papp dealt with one of the Coast Guard's most embarrassing incidents, when members of the media misinterpreted a training exercise on the Potomac River near the Pentagon on the 8th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks as a possible terrorist event. President Obama was speaking at a Pentagon memorial service at the time, and the drill sparked widespread alarm. In Papp's assessment of the incident, which involved forces under his command, he noted that while the exercise didn't violate any policies, it was "ill-advised" and showed a lack of judgment among those involved.

As part of the Homeland Security Department, the Coast Guard employs 42,000 active-duty service members and 7,000 civilians. It is unique among federal agencies in that it functions as both a branch of the armed services and a federal law enforcement agency, making it a key player in addressing some of the nation's most complex security problems, including international smuggling and terrorism. In a statement, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said, "Vice Adm. Papp's extensive knowledge of the Coast Guard's operations and broad mission will strengthen our efforts to ensure the nation's maritime security."

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SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION OF COMMANDANT

1. PRESIDENT OBAMA HAS APPROVED AND WILL FORWARD TO THE SENATE THE NOMINATION OF VADM ROBERT J. PAPP JR. AS COMMANDANT OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD TO RELIEVE ADMIRAL THAD W. ALLEN EFFECTIVE 25 MAY 2010.
2. ADM T.W. ALLEN, COMMANDANT, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD, SENDS.
3. INTERNET RELEASE AUTHORIZED.

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