

Service looks into the future

# 21st Century Coast Guard

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## DEEP WATER MISSION ANALYSIS

In just five years the *CGC Hamilton* will be 33 years old, the *Reliance* will be 36, our newest C-130 aircraft will be 17 years old, our HH-65 helicopters will be approximately 16, the *Bear* will be at mid-life, and the *Storis* will be eligible for social security.

The fleet is aging, and soon new cutters, aircraft or other assets will be needed to fulfill the Coast Guard's responsibilities offshore.

But long before the plans are drawn Congress must approve all purchases. Before that happens, the Coast Guard must explain what the service believes it will be doing with the new hardware and also prove it has the most efficient method of accomplishing the mission. That job belongs to CAPT Hank Blaney, of Headquarters, Washington, and the Deep Water Mission Analysis team.

"No study presently underway will have a bigger effect on the operational Coast Guard in the 21st Century," Blaney said. "We're trying to predict what our jobs will be for the next 20 years, and ensure that we have the best

resources to carry them out. We're looking for the most efficient assets for the missions. We must recognize that our traditional cutters might not be the best way to pursue all of our objectives. This is more than an effort to design new cutters, we're designing the Coast Guard to fit what the service will be doing," he said.

The team is looking at missions that typically occur beyond 50 nautical miles offshore, or that require long onscene time or forward deployment. They are primarily concerned with the work now done by 210-, 270- and 378-foot cutters, and helicopters and aircraft. Polar icebreakers and buoy tenders are not included in the study due to their unique operations.

The four main areas being studied are law enforcement, national defense, environmental protection and maritime safety. And what does the team think the Coast Guard will be doing in these areas?

"As you might imagine, most of our traditional missions will remain the same," Blaney said. "Despite technolog-

ical advances, we believe the need for large, onscene resources will continue."

According to best estimates, Haitian migration will probably decline from the 1993 and 1994 levels, but there may be an increase in illegal migration from other Caribbean nations. Illegal migration from Asia will also be an issue.

Fisheries law enforcement may become harder. A fisheries study completed by the Operational Law Enforcement Division at headquarters predicts more areas will be closed to fishing because of depleted stocks and tougher regulations. This will result in fewer fishermen taking greater chances in order to make a living.

Overall there is no foreseeable dramatic change in drug enforcement. Education should decrease demand slightly in the future, but drug interdiction should remain at a steady state.

There should only be a moderate increase in long-range search and rescue. The Coast Guard will be able to locate vessels in distress far faster and more accurately, because of increased use of emergency position-indicating

radio beacons and more accurate navigational systems. This should offset the expected increase in merchant and recreational maritime traffic.

The service's national-defense mission may have the greatest impact on the future size and shape of Coast Guard resources. The service will probably continue to need capabilities similar to those of medium- and high-endurance cutters for national defense.

"The national-defense role will have a major impact on our capabilities," LCDR Dan MacLeod, of the DWMA staff said. "The NAVGARD (Navy/Coast Guard) Board has validated the defense missions of Maritime Interception Operations, like those conducted off Haiti, Bosnia and in the Persian Gulf. Deployable port operations, similar to what was done in Haiti, will also be important."

Other possible military missions include "showing the flag" in potential trouble areas and a possible anti-terrorism role in foreign ports and on ships at sea.

Historically, high- and medium-

endurance cutters have not had a major role in marine-safety operations. This may change.

"Marine-safety missions will play a much larger role in offshore operations," Blaney said. "We think this may be the biggest change in the way we are now operating."

Enforcement of Maritime Pollution regulations, which involves inspection of oil tankers, prevention of the dumping of plastics and the enforcement of illegal bilge pumping, may be done from cutters further offshore in order to prevent pollution of American waters. Offshore inspections of foreign vessels may also become a reality if expected new regulations come to pass.

Lightering zones are places where large oil tankers unload their cargoes into underwater pipelines or smaller ships. They are located as much as 50 to 60 nautical miles offshore. Currently there are three lightering zones located in the Gulf of Mexico. Estimates are that the number of lightering zones will increase as will the

requirement for monitoring and onscene enforcement.

The team is also looking at other missions on the horizon.

"It's possible we may become more involved in nation building or disaster response," Blaney said. "We might also end up overseeing maritime mining, or possibly take on a role in international fisheries enforcement. It's all a guess, but it's essential that we consider even these distant possibilities before we plan the new fleet."

The project is supported by approximately 40 people from a variety of Coast Guard programs. The staff also consults experts outside of the service. The study began in late 1993. A report will be completed this summer, but the study is expected to be ongoing.

No one can predict with absolute certainty what the future will bring. However, Blaney is certain that the tools of the future are a long way from being built. The work done by the DWMA team is only the first step.

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