Faster, Smarter, More Efficient

Today's Coast Guard: Being the Best It Can Be

By ROBERT E. KRAMEK

Adm. Robert E. Kramek is the commandant of the United States Coast Guard.

I want to thank the Navy League for the opportunity to contribute to the Coast Guard issue of *Sea Power* Magazine. It has been just over one year since I became commandant of the Coast Guard. This is a good time to share with your readers how Team Coast Guard is doing, and also tell you some of my concerns.

One year ago, I presented my "Commandant's Direction" to the men and women of the Coast Guard. Included in the direction were eight goals that are the foundation for how we do business. I'd like to briefly touch on each one.

Goals one and two focus on **leadership** and **diversity**. We already have some of the best leaders in the nation at all levels in our organization, but I want to improve on that. I have placed a new focus on leadership and leadership training, and will establish a new center for leadership excellence in New London, Conn.

I also want everybody to reach their full potential. For this reason we are conducting a "Workforce Cultural Audit." The audit will, among other things, identify existing barriers that inhibit Coast Guard people from being the best they can be. I need everyone's help with this. If the Coast Guard is to continue to attract the best people from our nation's workforce, then we must provide the best work environment possible.

Doing More With Less

Now for the goal everyone asks me about: **streamlining**. As many of you know, our streamlining actually started with doing our part in deficit reduction. In a few more years we will have 4,000 fewer people, and $400 million less in our annual budget. What everyone really wants to know is the status of the Streamlining Study—and if we've made any decisions. Our streamlining plans call for consolidation of support infrastructure, moving units to less expensive areas, eliminating overlapping activities, and reorganizing. We are in the final review process. Part of the review process is a public comment period, which is required by law. By the time you read this article, the comment period will be over and I'll be preparing my final recommendations to Secretary of Transportation Federico F. Pena and then to Congress.

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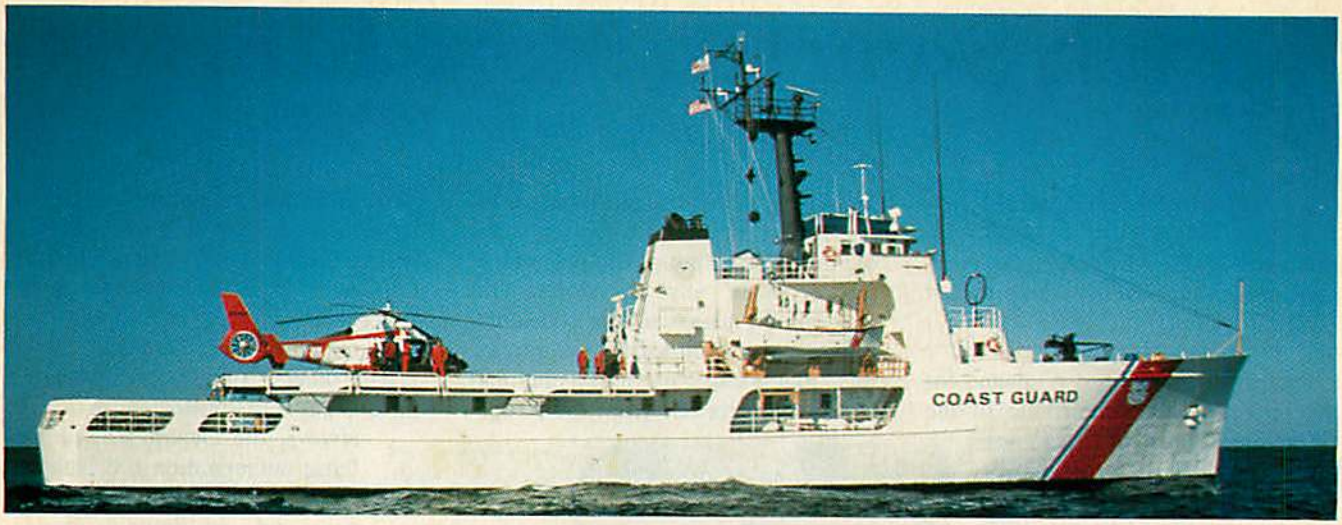
Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Robert E. Kramek is shown here with Secretary of Transportation Federico Pena at the commissioning of the buoy tender USCGC Juniper at Marinette Marine shipyard in Marinette, Wis.

I plan on providing complete information in August. Implementation should start in the spring/summer of 1996 and take up to two years to complete. We must streamline—it's good business. We want to streamline and reduce costs but in a manner that allows us to meet our strategic goals. When streamlining is complete we must remain Semper Paratus.

The other major budget concern I have is pay and entitlement parity. As always, the Department of Defense authorization bill includes the Coast Guard on all military pay and entitlement issues. These items then must be funded through the Department of Transportation's appropriations bill. I spend a great deal of time trying to get the funds for these military entitlements. It's important. We are one of the armed forces and we must have parity.

We are doing extremely well on my goal of **meeting our multimission requirements**. All you have to do is look at last year. In the summer we rescued over 56,000 Haitians and Cubans. Then we moved quickly to provide support to DOD in Support Democracy—everything from laying down SAR (search and rescue) resources for the invasion forces to one of our high-endurance cutters leading the forces into Port au Prince. These were good examples of the Coast Guard meeting its national security goals. Our response to the flooding, pollution, and fires near Houston was a terrific example of our Coast Guard forces concept of meeting surge requirements. Our ability to surge any contingency remains one of my priorities.

We continue to take the initiative in the Coast Guard being **the world's premier maritime service**. Our port state control program is reaping benefits. Other port states are starting to enforce similar regimes. The classification societies are withdrawing vessels from class when they don't meet international standards. This is causing the quality of vessels to improve, making the maritime environment safer. In August we will introduce the Coast



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Maintaining pay and entitlement parity for Coast Guard people, Kramek says, is one of his highest priorities as the Coast Guard strives to attract and retain the talented personnel needed to carry out its diverse and demanding missions. Shown here is a USCG HH-65 Dolphin helicopter landing on the helo pad of a medium-endurance cutter.

Guard-developed model maritime service code to five Eastern European countries. This code serves as a model for maritime nations to develop their own maritime legal systems.

We are an **intermodal partner** in the Department of Transportation. This was made obvious in the department's proposed plan to restructure its 10 modes. The Coast Guard will be one of three elements to remain: the Federal Aviation Administration, an Intermodal Transportation Administration, and the Coast Guard. Secretary Pena's award of the Department of Transportation Gold Medal for Outstanding Achievement to the entire Coast Guard for our efforts in 1994 is further proof of our value to the department.

Award-Winning Performance

We are continuing in our effort to be the best in **quality management** practices in government. We recently stood up our cadre of quality performance consultants, who are providing valuable training assessments and consultation to unit commanding officers. I'm seeing increased interest in applications for the Commandant's Quality Award, Baldrige, and other awards. We have hundreds of projects that have resulted in success stories—some have received Hammer Awards from the Vice President's National Performance Review.

To carry out our missions we will need to continue to **exploit new technologies**. We have just announced the contract award for our Standard Workstation III. It will have an open architecture that will allow us to share the information received from our many customers. We will be able to use newly developed off-the-shelf software. It seems that every unit I visit can hardly wait to get the new workstation.

Last month, I participated in the launching of the Coast Guard cutter Juniper, the latest addition to our buoy tender fleet. I'll be replacing 37 50-year-old buoy tenders with just 30 tenders of the Juniper class. These 30 will do the same amount of work with fewer people. They will be faster, smarter, and more efficient—all thanks to new technology and an innovative design.

As I travel around the Coast Guard I am always impressed with our people. They are professionals, and as proud as I am of our reputation as Lifesavers and Guardians of the Sea. I am confident that we will continue to be Semper Paratus. ■

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Kramek says that the Coast Guard, while remaining the "world's premier maritime service," will continue, despite severe budget reductions, to meet its national security goal of supporting the Navy at sea during times of crisis. This photo shows a Coast Guardsman adjusting a .50-caliber gun on the forward deck of a medium-endurance cutter.