A History of Coast Guard Aviation

The Modern Era

1976 – 1994

Summary Overview

A systematic organization and expansion of Coast Guard aviation capabilities and facilities to accommodate operational requirements continued. A Coast Guard "Group" concept, in support of multi-mission responsibilities, greatly enhanced efficiency and effectively employed people and assets. Group Commands were established to coordinate the efforts of Coast Guard stations, patrol boats, aids to navigation and other functions within a given geographic area. The Group provided operational, administrative, supply, and engineering support. In some situations, Coast Guard Air Stations were an integral part of the Group and the Commanding Officer of the Air Station was also the Commanding Officer of the Group. In other instances an Air Station, as a separate entity, supported multiple groups.

In order to meet operational commitments four HC-130 aircraft were placed on the west coast of Florida. To accomplish this, Air Station St. Petersburg was moved to the St. Petersburg/Clearwater airport and Air Station Clearwater was established in 1977. The Coast Guard Air Station serving Southeast Alaska was moved from Annette Island to Sitka which was more centrally located in the area of responsibility. The Air Station/Group Humboldt Bay was commissioned in June of 1977 in response to a multi-year initiative by local residents to gain a year round aviation search and rescue facility for Northern California. Air Station Sacramento, California was established in September 1978 to provide HC-130 operations on the West Coast of the United States.

Based on the recommendations of the Coast Guard Aircraft Characteristics Board and the Medium Range Search Aircraft Evaluation Project, a requirement of forty-one turbojet aircraft to replace the HU-16 was established. The HU-25 Falcon was ultimately selected. Because of procurement delays, seventeen HC-131 aircraft were obtained from the U.S. Air Force as an interim replacement. The HU-25 came on line in February 1982. The Aerospatiale HH-65 was chosen as the Short Range Recovery helicopter replacement for the HH-52. The HH-65 became operational in November of 1985.

In the early years of Coast Guard Aviation, the US Coast Guard trained its enlisted aviation personnel at Navy schools. Aircraft and aircraft equipment increasingly became Coast Guard specific. "A" school graduates did not see a Coast Guard aircraft until they reach their first Air Station as an E4 Petty Officer. There also existed a difference in maintenance philosophies between the two services. There was a need for Coast Guard specific aviation technical training conducted at a common training site. The concept was approved by the Commandant and money

was appropriated in FY 76 Budget. Construction of the Coast Guard Aviation Technical Training Center (ATTC) began in July of 1976 at Elizabeth City North Carolina. The training center has continued to evolve to satisfy Coast Guard requirements.

In 1984 a helicopter Rescue Swimmer program was established to expand marine rescue capabilities. It evolved from its initial mission of open ocean rescue to its now extensive capability to assist people in distress in virtually any environment in which the Coast Guard operates. CDR Bruce Melnick became the first Coast Guard Astronaut to launch into space in 1990 and in 1991 a Coast Guard Air Detachment was formed and deployed to the Middle East during Operation Desert Storm.

The off-shore fishery zone around the United States had been expanded to twelve nautical miles from shore in 1967. The establishment of the Magnuson Fishery Conservation Act in 1976 created a 200-mile fisheries zone off the coasts of the United States increasing the law enforcement area of responsibility significantly. The Coast Guard concentrates surveillance and enforcement efforts in the active fishing areas protecting designated marine life as well as ensuring compliance with international agreements governing certain fisheries off the U.S. coasts. Aviation plays a prominent role. A mix of long range and medium range aircraft patrol the areas and report locations to cutters on fisheries patrol. A mix of high and medium endurance cutters, with helicopters embarked are used to monitor foreign vessels for compliance with procedures as agreed upon.

The start of maritime drug smuggling was prompted by a demand for marijuana in America that could not be met by the land supply from Mexico. Initially marijuana smuggling was conducted by a large number of entrepreneurs, usually Americans, using fishing vessels, sailboats and cabin cruisers. By 1976 large amounts of Columbian marijuana were reaching the United States in “mother-ships.” These large vessels carried bulk shipments of marijuana to prearranged points off the U.S. Coast. The ships moored far enough away from shore to avoid notice, and off loaded their cargo to small boats and fishing vessels that could smuggle the drug ashore less conspicuously and avoid detection. Cocaine was not considered a problem until 1982. Because of its existing maritime assets the Coast Guard became the primary maritime enforcement agency for the war on drugs. The initial small commitment continued to grow throughout the period, at first defensive in nature and then offensive. In 1986 the mission was expanded to include air-interdiction operations. When Admiral J. William Kime became Commandant in 1990 he believed the mission distribution of the Coast Guard should be more balanced. Drug interdiction operations were cut back and de-emphasized. Aviation played a vital role in the drug interdiction operations.

In 1980 the Mariel Cuban Exodus began. What was initially a massive rescue operation became an illegal immigration interdiction problem. This was followed by regular patrols of the Windward Passage between Haiti and Cuba. The role continued to increase and by 1994 this operational responsibility absorbed a large portion of Coast Guard maritime and aviation assets in what was called operations Able Manner and Able Vigil. Alien interdiction has continued as a Coast Guard mission and over the years the number countries from which illegal immigration is generated has increased significantly.

The aging of assets, the acquisition of additional mission responsibilities and the dynamic increased emphasis and expansion of law enforcement activities, left the Coast Guard well short of budgetary needs. When Admiral John B. Hayes became commandant in 1978 he was deeply concerned as to the age of the cutter fleet, aircraft, and shore facilities as well as a shortage of personnel to carry out the missions. He embarked on a program to convince the Secretary of Transportation, the President, and the Congress that this was a serious problem. Secretary Adams was receptive and his replacement Neil Goldschmidt became fully convinced of the inadequacy of financial resources. President Carter was persuaded to support modernizing the Coast Guard and increasing the budget by fifty percent. A roles and mission study was initiated. Unfortunately the nation's economy eroded and the serious budget deficits precluded any additional funding.

With the advent of the Reagan Administration certain key appointees wanted to convert the Coast Guard into a civilian agency and privatize as many Coast Guard functions as possible. They believed the private sector could manage the functions better, at less cost, and favored dismantling the Coast Guard. One of these was Darrell Trent, the Deputy Secretary of Transportation. Admiral Hayes stated that it was never clear as to the degree of collaboration between Mr. Trent and Transportation Secretary Drew Lewis but that he found himself cut off from making his case to anyone outside the Department. The Roles and Mission study, initially designed as an analysis to support budget requirements, was used by Mr. Trent and the Office of Management and Budget to question the fundamental reason why the Coast Guard existed. The Commandant realized that the Coast Guard was fighting for its survival.

Every recommendation and virtually every conclusion of the study was fought over. In those instances of reduction or elimination an honest and pragmatic appraisal was made to identify missions and units that could be decommissioned with the least overall impact on Coast Guard operations. The Commandant then advised the Secretary that he felt the closures were not worth the money the administration would save in face of the anticipated political reaction. This proved to be true. Compromises were reached and many of the closures did not occur.

It was also clear that decisions as to the demilitarization of the Coast Guard had been made prior to any evaluation. One of Admiral Hayes' initial strategic objectives after becoming Commandant had been to explore the Coast Guard's national defense responsibilities and to cement more firmly the services relationship to the Navy and Department of Defense. This proved extremely beneficial. A memorandum crafted through a collaboration of the Coast Guard, the DOD and the Presidents National Security Advisor stated bluntly that in evaluating the Coast Guard's military readiness mission, care should be taken that the Coast Guard's contribution to national security should be in no way be adversely affected.

The all out assault on the Coast Guard had been blunted but the budget wars would continue. During the next four years, Admiral James S. Gracey's tour as Commandant, the attempts to privatize Coast Guard functions would continue. He had to deal with the Grace Commission and the continued hostility of the Office of Management and Budget. It was not until the mid to late 1980s that significant support was forthcoming from the Secretaries of Transportation. Significantly contributing to the problem was the fact that Coast Guard appropriations were included in the overall Transportation Department appropriations. Many times the Congressional appropriation committee would divert funds to other Department of Transportation functions and the full Coast Guard budget would not get supported. Obtaining sufficient funds was always a problem.

During Admiral Paul A. Yost's years as Commandant he chose a pro-active approach. Relationships with the other military services were emphasized and for the first time Coast Guard aviation participated in air interdiction of drug smuggling. Assets to accomplish this were obtained and what was once a small operational mission represented 25% of the Coast Guard budget by 1989.

A military-led coup overthrew the government of Haiti in 1991. An increase in illegal migration took place as a result. Initially the numbers were small but by the end of the following year it had become a major problem. Haitian migrants were interdicted and returned directly to Haiti. Coast Guard patrols of the Windward Passage between Haiti and Cuba were maintained. During 1994 a mass exodus of migrants from Cuba again took place. The U.S. Government did not want a repeat of the 1980 Mariel Boat Lift so interdiction operations were begun in the Florida Straits. The Coast Guard found itself engaged in two major operations occurring at the same time. A total of forty-six cutters and fifteen aircraft were involved in these operations.

Search and Rescue

Search and rescue continued to be a primary responsibility of Coast Guard aviation during this period. The commissioning of Coast Guard Air Station/Group Humboldt Bay marked the completion of the Aviation Development plan initiated in 1962. Ten new Air Stations had been added, five had been relocated, and two decommissioned. Frank Erickson's idea of Coast Guard Stations equipped with helicopters on the maritime coasts of the United States had come to pass. The capability of the helicopter increased exponentially. The HH-52 had come on board followed by the HH-3F. These were followed by the HH-65 and the HH-60J. The Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer Program established in 1984 has been an outstanding success. The Rescue Swimmers have performed some truly remarkable feats. A copy of the first Distinguished Flying Cross awarded to a Rescue Swimmer is included within the Rescue Swimmer entry in this section of the timeline. Narratives of specific heroic exploits of Coast Guard aircraft crewmembers are much too vast a subject for presentation in this type of format but the magnitude of their achievements is amazing. Individual recognition awards may be view on the Coast Guard Pterodactyl website. The Coast Guard does not break down rescue statistics into surface and aviation units but the combined statistics are astonishing. During the nineteen years, 1976 through 1994, the Coast Guard saved 101,729 lives and $48.5 billion dollars in property. These figures do not include the lives saved in the Mariel Boatlift of 1980 and the Alien Migrant Interdiction operations of 1993 and 1994.

Historical Timeline of Events

The Modern Era 1976- 1994

Year	Date	Remarks
1976		Air Station Clearwater Established
1976	March 1	200 mile fishing Zone established by Public Law 94-265 – The Coast Guard was given the responsibility for enforcement.
1976	February	The Marijuana War Begins -- The Coast Guard becomes the lead agency for maritime drug interdiction.
1976	September	HC-131A - Obtained As A Medium Range Search (MRS) Interim Replacement Aircraft For The HU-16**.**
1977	April 19	Coast Guard Air Station Sitka established.
1977	June 24	Coast Guard Air Station/Group Humboldt Bay established.
1978	August 4	The Coast Guard Aviation Technical Training Center was established.
1978	September 5	Coast Guard Air Station Sacramento Established.
1979		HH-65 Aircraft Program Office established.
1980	April 24	Mariel Boat Lift began - U. S. Coast Guard operations during the 1980 Cuban Exodus.
1981	October 9	Coast Guard Air Detachment Guantanamo Bay Cuba established.
1982	January	Coast Guard and Department of Defense conducted joint evaluation of Lighter Than Air (LTA) aircraft.
1982	February	HU-25 Falcon Jet enters service.
1982	April	OPBAT –Operations Bahamas Turks and Caicos –A cooperative drug interdiction operation initiated.
1984	September 10	Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer program established.
1984	October 31	Operation Hat trick –The Coast Guard takes the offensive in the drug war.
1985		Coast Guard acquires a C-20B executive transport.
1985	November 15	HH-65A –Dolphin helicopter enters service.
1987	January 2	Coast Guard establishes an air-interdiction role in the war on drugs.
1988		RG-8A Condor –a covert surveillance aircraft enters Coast Guard service.
1990	March	HH-60J Jayhawk enters service
1990		CASA 212-300 Light Transport Aircraft obtained.
1990	October 6	CDR. Bruce Melnick – First Coast Guard Astronaut launches into space.
1991	February 7	Desert Storm – Coast Guard aviation participation.
1993	January	Alien interdiction – the flow becomes a flood

1976 – Air Station Clearwater Established:

In 1934, the Coast Guard Air Station St. Petersburg was commissioned at Albert Whited Airport located in downtown St. Petersburg, Florida. Charged with Search and Rescue responsibilities, the Air Station became the base of operations for various amphibian aircraft and helicopters over the years. In 1976, to meet operational commitments, it was desired to place four HC-130 Aircraft in the southeastern geographic area of the United States. To accommodate this Air Station St. Petersburg was moved to the St. Petersburg/Clearwater International Airport 11 miles to the north.

Utilizing the HC-130 and the HH-3F helicopter the station provided search and rescue services, law enforcement patrols and logistics. During the initial ten year period a yearly average of 300 search and rescue cases were handled.

Clearwater became the Coast Guard's largest Air Station in 1987 with the expansion of the drug interdiction mission. "Operation Bahamas. Turks, and Caicos" or OBBAT. This large ongoing mission resulted in the assignment of 12 HH-60J helicopters and an additional three HC-130 aircraft to support the increased law enforcement efforts. These operations boosted personnel strength to of over 500 men and women.

The Air Station is also home base for two AN/TRC-168 Emergency Communications Vans capable of a variety of communications. The units are normally transported by C-130 and their equipment can provide essential communications to any emergency organization. The vans are designed for continuous service under severe weather conditions and were deployed to assist in rescue relief efforts associated with hurricane Hugo, as well as other natural disasters.

Air Station Clearwater helicopter aircrews presently fly an average of over 400 Search and Rescue cases each year along the coasts of Florida, the Bahamas, and beyond. Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater has a rich history, and its operations have been at the heart of significant events in Florida and the Caribbean for many years. In the early 80s, its high operations tempo earned Clearwater two Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendations, the Humanitarian Service Medal, and the Coast Guard Unit Commendation. It was during this time that the Air Station provided crucial support to the surface fleet during the Cuban boatlift. Shortly thereafter Clearwater answered the call to duty during operation URGENT FURY- the Grenada rescue mission, and was awarded the Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation for its efforts. Later that same year a second Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation was awarded to the Air Station for OPERATION WAGON WHEEL, an international drug interdiction effort. In 1986 following on the success of the previous operation, Clearwater conducted OPERATION HUNTER. This drug interdiction effort planted the seeds for what is today's OPBAT.

The 90s were no less dramatic for the men and women of Clearwater. In 1991 unit C-130s responded rapidly to fly personnel and supplies in and out of the combat theater in support of operation DESERT STORM. During the Haitian uprising in 1992, Clearwater crews evacuated American embassy personnel and transported U.S. Special Forces into Haiti. When south Florida and Louisiana were devastated by hurricane Andrew, Clearwater crews flew missions round the clock transporting hundreds of tons of badly needed supplies. In March 1993 the "Storm of the Century" struck Florida leaving numerous sunken vessels in its wake. Air Station crews launched at the height of the storm and pulled 62 people from the water in what was the busiest search and rescue day in the Air Station history, In the summer of 1994 air crews participated in a massive SAR effort which located and rescued 34,568 Cubans and 23,389 Haitian migrants from the waters of the Caribbean.

HH-60J "Jayhawk" Making Rescue Hoist

HC-130H "Hercules" Making Raft Drop

In 1997 President Clinton announced a renewed effort towards the War on Drugs, and Clearwater responded as part of operations FRONTIER SHIELD, GULF SHIELD, and FRONTIER LANCE. Those operations were aimed at stemming the flow of illegal drugs and migrants and spanned from the Leeward Islands of the Caribbean to the southern coastline of Texas. The Coast Guard set new records for both drug seizures and arrests.

1976 – 200 mile fishing Zone established by Public Law 94-265 – The Coast Guard was given the responsibility for enforcement.

Public Law 94-265, also known as Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act, established a 200-mile fishery conservation zone, effective March 1, 1977. It established Regional Fishery Management Councils comprised of Federal and State officials, including the Fish and Wildlife Service. The concept of a fishery conservation zone was subsequently dropped by amendment and the geographical area of coverage was changed to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), with the inner boundary being the seaward boundary of the coastal United States.

The Act provides for management of fish and other species in the EEZ under plans drawn up by the Regional Councils and reviewed and approved by the Secretary of Commerce. It provides for regulation of foreign fishing in the management zone under GIFA's (governing international

fishing agreements) and vessel fishing permits. It also provides a mechanism for preemption of State law by the Secretary of Commerce.

The Coast Guard was given exclusive jurisdiction over the Fisheries Conservation Zone and provided the ships and aircraft and much of the manpower to staff the sensing equipment and the command and control function of operations. The National Marine Fisheries Service, which is primarily concerned with gathering management and scientific data, assisted in enforcement. The State Department has also played an important role in fisheries law enforcement. The State Department negotiated the various treaties and international agreements, and in the past, any foreign fishing vessel was seized only after coordination with the Secretary of State. A close liaison between the State Department and the Coast Guard was needed since any interference with foreign shipping, warranted or not, could certainly affect U S relations.

Contrary to popular opinion, there is no "200-mile" limit within which foreign fishermen are forbidden. Foreign governments apply for permits which enable their vessels to conduct a direct fishery for an allocation of certain species. Vessels are required to check in and out of designated areas with the Coast Guard District by radio. The area encompassed by the 200-mile-wide band surrounding the United States and its possessions adds up to 2.5 million square miles of ocean and contains an estimated 20 percent of the world's fishery resources. In order to enforce any regulation in any fishing area at any given time, fishing vessels must be classified as fishing according to the provisions of their permits and existing regulations or in violation of these controls; violators must be apprehended; and some prosecutor action must be taken.

C -130 Making identification

Enforcement of regulations in the new 200- mile fishery zone is complicated by the size of the area and the fact that fishing is to be regulated not prohibited. It became readily apparent that, given the vastness of the area, Coast Guard aviation resources were absolutely essential to the operation. Surveillance and enforcement efforts concentrate on vessel and aircraft patrol operations in active fishing areas. A mix of long and medium range aircraft patrol the areas to monitor foreign fishing and coordinate with cutters on fishing patrols. The high and medium endurance cutter carry helicopters aboard. Additional flight hours were required and equipment to implement them was obtained. Four new HC-130 aircraft were purchased. As an interim measure four reactivated HC-131 were utilized as replacement aircraft to free up HU-16s to operate in the New England area. An additional HC -131 was utilized for patrols in the Gulf of Mexico area. The HC-131s were replaced by HU-25s when they came on board. Five HH-52 helicopters were assigned for deployment duties aboard Coast Guard cutters engaged in fishery patrols. Ten new HH-65 helicopters were procured to replace the HH-52s, resulting in a net increase of five Short Range Recovery helicopters in the Coast Guard inventory.

The "active fishing areas" concept which focused efforts on those areas which had historically shown, or were known to possess sufficient quantities of fish to support commercial exploitation, were geographically designated as high threat areas. Responsibility is assigned by Coast Guard District. The remaining area of the fishery conservation zone is overflown on a situational basis.

- Northeast – CGD1 --Traditionally cod, flounder and haddock
- Mid-Atlantic – CGD5 – scallop fishing
- Southeast/Gulf of Mexico –CGD7 and CGD8 – shrimp
- Great Lakes – CGD9 Canadian commercial fishing vessel encroachments
- Pacific Coast- CGD11 and CGD13 – groundfish species and salmon
- Central/Western Pacific – CGD14 – migratory species such as tuna
- Alaska – CGD17 – Peak activities lasting several months – salmon, halibut, king crab.

The method of enforcement is by overt presence by both surface vessels and aircraft; a barrier patrol operation used to board vessels enroute to or from a fishing ground; and pulse operations in which assets are concentrated for a dedicated period and concentrated on a specific fishing fleet or low compliance to a particular regulation.

As an example; In 1978 the Western Aleutian salmon fishery attracted over 600 Japanese vessels to Alaskan waters during the summer. An additional monthly average of 300 vessels were engaged in year round operations in the Gulf of Alaska and the Bering Sea. A six to ten hour HC-130 patrol originated daily from Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak carrying a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) agent on board. During multiple runs at 150 knots and 200 feet of altitude the HC-130s zig-zagged over 1500 track miles of the Gulf of Alaska, Aleutian chain, or Bering Sea. Identification of vessels was made by name and homeport and activity noted and recorded together with position, course and speed. The sighting was documented by a 35 mm camera. Comparison of sighting data was made with historical data from a "management information system" computer in Juneau. This enabled selective interception and boarding of high interest targets.

HH-52 Helicopter operating off a Coast Guard WHEC

HH-52 helicopters were deployed aboard 378-foot cutters arriving in Alaskan waters from the Pacific Coast and Hawaii. The HH-52s were equipped with light airborne radar and guided by x-band transponders and shipboard TACAN. Normal HH-52 deployment was for a period of up to seventy days of continuous reconnaissance duty, greatly expanding the cutters surveillance capability and thereby increasing mission effectiveness. Acts of provocation were rare, but a ship's boarding party boarding party was vulnerable during a tense confrontation

between a cutter and a violator. It was generally recognized that the cutter and her main battery constituted an ample deterrent.

The doctrine of hot pursuit became unnecessary. Even citations issued by aircraft could result in stiff fines or revocation of permit. In 1983 for instance a HC-130 from Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii made an aerial seizure when it ordered the Japanese fishing vessel Daian Maru #68 to sail to Midway Island to await a Coast Guard boarding team. The Captain complied.

Over the years the number of statutes the Coast Guard has been given enforcement responsibility for has continued to expand. Mission creep set in. The present program has expanded to additional marine environmental and conservation areas. The strategic plan to provide effective planning and use of resources to fulfill this expanded mission is known as *OCEAN GUARDIAN.*

1976: - The Marijuana War Begins -- The Coast Guard becomes the lead agency for maritime drug interdiction:

Marijuana plant

The start of maritime drug smuggling was prompted by a demand for marijuana in America that could not be met by the land supply from Mexico. Initially marijuana smuggling was conducted by a large number of entrepreneurs, usually Americans, using fishing vessels, sailboats and cabin cruisers. Florida was closest to the developing marijuana sources and the coast from Miami to Palm Beach was an ideal off-load area. Fishing vessels and cabin cruisers could make the run from South Florida to a supply point in Jamaica in forty-eight hours. Key West also became a major marijuana port of entry. There were over 400 shrimp and lobster boats home-ported out of Key West and hundreds of miles of mangrove shore line and countless small uninhabited islands that were perfect off-load sites for marijuana bales. The shrimp boats had the range for non-stop trips to Columbia and below-deck capacity to carry large amounts of marijuana. It was common for American shrimpers to transit to and from the shrimp grounds off Central and South America. The ability to make more than a year's wages with one or two marijuana runs was more than many could resist.

Marijuana smuggling changed dramatically in the mid seventies. In 1975 the Mexican government agreed to an aerial drug crop eradication program using the herbicide 2,4-D. The primary goal was to spray the poppy fields to reduce opium production but was spread to marijuana resulting in a "poisoned' supply. The Marimberos, as they called themselves, of Columbia's North Shore, who had been in various smuggling operations for years, stepped into the void. In order to meet demand a substantial capacity increase, best provided by maritime transportation, was needed. The Marimberos expanded their operation from production and packaging to include transportation and distribution. A mother-ship concept, similar in operation

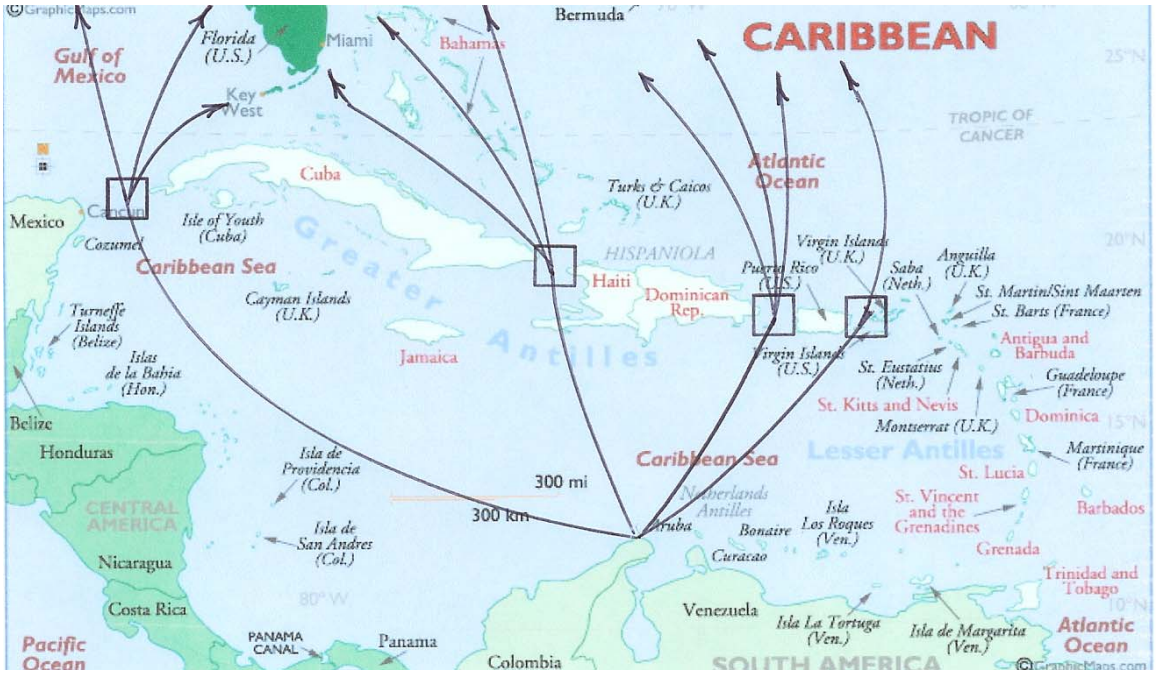
to that used during Prohibition, was set up using coastal freighters. Marijuana smuggling became highly organized and the product was delivered in multi-ton quantities. The independent operator surrendered the trade to multi-national groups who had volume capabilities.

There was a great deal of reluctance on the part of some senior Coast Guard Officers to be become involved in drug interdiction. Many did not look favorably upon becoming a maritime police agency engaged in a program which at the time did not have a public consensus. The Coast Guard had been transferred to the Department of Transportation and the service was focused on its lifesaving and other missions. The historical roots of the organization, however, were in the enforcement of revenue laws. Despite this reluctance, the Coast Guard became the lead agency for maritime drug interdiction. Admiral Owen Siler, Commandant of the Coast Guard, during this early period, addressed profound changes in law enforcement at an unprecedented rate.

Typical 190 foot coastal freighter

By 1976 large amounts of Columbian marijuana were reaching the United States in the mother-ships. These large vessels carried bulk shipments of marijuana to prearranged points off the U.S. Coast. The ships moored far enough away from shore to avoid notice, and off loaded their cargo to small boats and fishing vessels that could smuggle the drug ashore less conspicuously and avoid detection. During the early part of the year, Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) aircraft flew surveillance flights up and down the coast of La Guajira, Columbia, a major embarkation point for marijuana smuggling operations. Ships were loaded right off the beach in a scene that resembled a World War II amphibious operation. Trucks ran between warehouses and the beach. Bales were loaded by means of floating platforms or directly up ramps to the vessels. The DEA aircraft identified the vessels and reported the information to the DEA's El Paso Intelligence Center, which then relayed the information to the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard developed an interdiction system whereby existing assets could be concentrated to intercept a transporting vessel prior to it reaching its destination. In order for a vessel, leaving the La Guajira Peninsula on the north coast of Columbia, to reach drop-off areas adjacent to the United States they had to transit one of four passages through the Islands of the Caribbean. These passages were referred to as choke points. Cutters took up station at a choke point. Helicopters were placed on flight-deck equipped cutters greatly increasing coverage and effectiveness. Fixed wing aircraft flew surveillance flights in support of the cutters. They also patrolled the potential drop points. Intelligence information provided by the DEA significantly increased the interdiction rate .



Typical 1978 marijuana routes from La Guajira, Columbia to the eastern United States passing through choke points.

The Coast Guard efforts became increasingly effective and began to make serious inroads into the drug operations. The smugglers adapted their operations to counteract this. By 1980 Marijuana smuggling had evolved into a highly efficient business. Operations were conducted according to specialized divisions of labor and expertise. Off load coordinates were passed at the last minute utilizing alpha-numerical codes. Air surveillance was used by the smugglers to ensure an off load point where a Coast Guard cutter was not present and high speed chase boats would check out the off-load area just prior to the arrival of the mother-ship. Marijuana, once carried openly, now began to be transported in hidden compartments. In spite of this, the Coast Guard choke point strategy, utilizing a combination of aircraft and surface vessels, was able to interdict a growing number of smugglers before they got to their off-load points. This strategy became know as OPERATION STEEL WEB.

The use of foreign and stateless ships became the mode of operation. In order to take enforcement action against a foreign vessel a Statement of No Objection (SNO) was required. Under the terms of the 1958 Geneva Convention, one nations naval or Coast Guard unit must receive permission from another nations government to board the latter's vessel on the high seas. The procedure to obtain this was cumbersome but the procedure had been developed in the 1960's for foreign fishery enforcement boardings and the SNO was usually obtained within a few hours. If the vessel was determined to be stateless or if the Master of the suspect vessel gave permission to board, no SNO was necessary. If contraband was found after a consensual boarding, a SNO was necessary to seize.

A number of events, starting in 1980, provided significant help in interdiction efforts. The Biaggi Act (21 USC 955a) expanded U.S. jurisdiction over U.S. and stateless vessels and the Cuban

boatlift ended thus freeing up Coast Guard resources. In December of 1981 Congress amended the Posse Comitatus Law to enable the military to give indirect assistance to law enforcement entities, including sharing of intelligence, use of military equipment and facilities, and training of civilian law enforcement personnel. Three former Navy salvage tugs were outfitted and commissioned as Coast Guard cutters and three Surface Effect Ships were obtained. In Miami, drug related crime had risen to the point were it finally caught the nations attention and President Reagan created the South Florida Task Force (SFTF) to coordinate the activities of all agencies involved in the drug war.

HC-130 On patrol

The Seventh Coast Guard district encompassing 1.8 million square miles of the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea and a portion of the Gulf of Mexico exercised operational control. In the period 1982-1984 RADM D.C. “Deese” Thompson, USCG was Commander Seventh Coast Guard District and the SFTF coordinator. Secretary of the Navy John Lehman authorized the Navy to support the Coast Guard with air and surface surveillance, towing or escort of seized vessel, embarkation of Coast Guard law enforcement details on naval vessels, and logistic support to Coast Guard units. RADM Thompson went to COMPATWINGSLANT and briefed the P-3 community on what the Coast Guard was looking for. Their patrol tracks were modified to put them in the most likely areas for targets of interest. The P-3s carried a Coastguardsman onboard. Once the Navy units were committed they chopped to CCGD7 operational control. The Coast Guard LANTAREA sent additional high endurance cutters (WHEC) and medium endurance cutters (WMEC) and some patrol boats (WPB) from other LANTAREA districts. They also chopped in and chopped out. The Coast Guard, for the first time, was able to maintain an almost continuous presence at all choke points. C-130s were made available when not tasked for other operations. HH-52s were sent out with the WMECs and WHECs within the limits of availability and as rapidly as pilots could be qualified for night shipboard operations.

A number of the WMECs and WHECs were forced to take up station without a helicopter aboard. There were not enough helicopters in CGD7 to provide both SAR coverage and shipboard interdiction operations. Additional helicopters from other Coast Guard Districts were assigned on a temporary basis for specific periods of time but there was a reluctance on the part of the aviation community to regularly deploy them. Each helicopter temporarily assigned to a WMEC or WHEC for drug interdiction in CGD7 directly effected the mission capabilities of the units designated to deploy them. There had been significant mission creep with no additional aircraft and no funds to procure them. Commandant Hayes had just recently been in a battle with the Bureau of the Budget (OMB) whose intent was to drastically reduce the Coast Guard budget

and civilianize major portions of it. There just was not enough aircraft to adequately cover the missions the Coast Guard had been given.

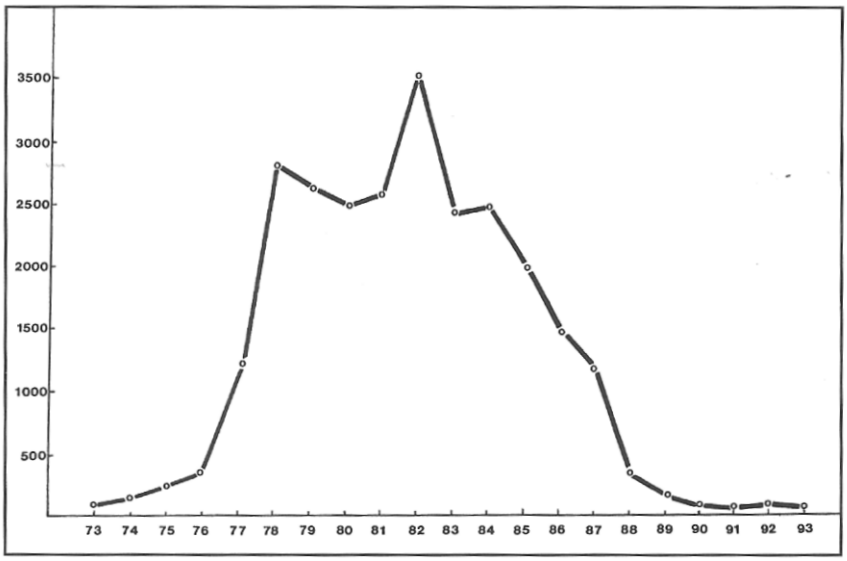
Despite political posturing, fears of a military takeover, continuing interagency rivalries, and differences in emphasis, the SFTF provided a degree of multi-agency coordination not previous obtained. The Vice President made regular visits and as SFTF coordinator RADM Thompson would brief him. President Reagan paid a visit in November 1982 to reassure South Florida that actions were being taken to coordinate a more effective effort against "drug smugglers and the narco thugs." RADM Thompson as SFTF coordinator briefed him on board the USCG Dauntless moored at the USCG Base Miami Beach, Florida. Drew Lewis, the Secretary of Transportation, called RADM Thompson the day before the briefing to make it known that he did not want him pressing for more USCG resources and requested a copy of the Admiral's brief. The Admiral told him that he was not speaking from a brief. RADM Thompson commented, "The briefing room was secure and there was no note taking, so we had a very fruitful and candid discussion of our strategy, tactics, and need for more assets for us and better cooperation from some of the reluctant agencies."

Standing; RADM "Deese" Thompson; Attorney General William French Smith, President Ronal Reagan, and Coast Guard Commandant James S. Gracey; are on the right of the picture; On the left is D7 Chief of Staff CAPT Allen Breed and in the foreground the Commanding Officer of the USCGC Dauntless, CDR

The incentive to engage in large scale maritime marijuana smuggling operations was generated by the enormous profits that could be realized. Good grade Columbian marijuana was purchased at the supply end for $35 a pound. The cost of a pound of marijuana at wholesale in the Southeast United States averaged out at $450 a pound. The average mothership carried between 10- 15 tons of marijuana. A shipment of 24,000 pounds would generate a gross profit of almost 10 million dollars. The mothership had a Captain, an Engineer and depending on the size eight to ten crewmembers representing a cost of $350,000 for manning and operating expenses. Aircraft surveillance would run about $275,000. A chase boat and off-load boats would add another $250,000. Handlers and off-load storage another $200,000. A payment of 1 million went to a middleman. The principals still made $7.88 million on each successful two –to-three-week round trip.

Although it was not realized at the time, the years 1982-1983 marked the turning point in maritime drug interdiction operations. The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces were created to go after key traffickers and their money sources. The SFTF concept was expanded and the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS) had been created bringing the Department of defense and the national intelligence community assets into the drug war. The Coast Guard manning choke points on a continuous basis with valuable assistance from the Navy, was becoming very effective in interdiction operations.

Drug interdiction on the West Coast was considerably different than the Caribbean and the Atlantic areas. There were no natural choke points that smuggling vessels had to pass through. Initially, off-shore drug patrols, using 82-foot and 95-foot patrol boats were regularly conducted. Admiral Gracey, COMPAC at the time, stated they were not effective so they were discontinued and reliance was placed on over-flight patrols conducted by aircraft. The homeports of the patrol boats were moved to locations that enabled them to arrive on scene rapidly if intelligence dictated or a suspected smuggler was spotted by an aircraft. He went on to say that occasional patrols were made to establish a presence. In addition C-130 aircraft were deployed to Howard Air Force Base in Panama and flew patrols along the Panamanian, Columbian, and Ecuador coasts looking for ships that fit the profile. When one was found it was trailed until a destination was established. This was possible with the existing limited assets because the drug smuggling was not near as intense as in the Caribbean.



Approximate U.S. Coast Guard marijuana seizures, 1973 to 1993 (thousands of pounds)

(From U.S. Coast Guard records and other sources)

The total maritime marijuana seizure statistics for the period 1977 through 1982 compared to 1975

reflects the tremendous increase in marijuana smuggling. It also indicates the increase in U.S. interdiction efforts. In 1978 almost 3 million pounds of marijuana was interdicted and 115 vessels were seized. During 1980 the Coast Guard was actively engaged in alien migrant interdiction but marijuana seizures remained high. During the last three months of the year 69 vessels were seized for a total of 101 vessels seized during the year. Seizures rose to 126 in 1981 and to 145 in 1982. The amount of marijuana seized also continued to increase peaking in 1982 at 3.5 million pounds. In 1983 there was 3.1 million pounds intercepted, 75% of which was intercepted in the Caribbean. The Coast Guard accounted for roughly 80% of that or 2.4 million pounds while seizing 99 vessels. The years 1984 and subsequent reflect the growing success of the interdiction forces efforts.

Note:

Peter Bourne, President Carters Special Assistant for Health Issues believed that Cocaine was not a health hazard. Emphasis of the DEA was on Heroin. The smuggling of cocaine grew exponentially when Carlos Lehder and the Medellin Cartel developed a sophisticated air smuggling operation through the Bahamas in 1980. This part of the cocaine smuggling operation is addressed under the OPBAT heading of the Time Line. It was not until 1983 that cocaine smuggling also became a maritime problem.

The maritime drug interdiction went on the offensive in 1984 and this action is addressed in the Time Line under that heading. Coast Guard aviation flew maritime surveillance flights both fixed wing and shipboard helicopter since the beginning of the Coast Guards interdiction efforts.

Coast Guard air interdiction did not commence until 1987 and is addressed under that heading.

1976 – HC-131A - Obtained As A Medium Range Search (MRS) Interim Replacement Aircraft For The HU-16:

A full scale wing fatigue test was conducted to determine whether – or when -- major repair or replacement of the HU-16 Es wing would be required. The test was completed on October 31, 1968 and a wing service life of 11,000 flight hours was established. The Coast Guard explored the possibility of utilizing a mixed fleet of HH-3F helicopters and C-130s. It did not prove a viable option. In 1971 the Coast Guard Aircraft Characteristics Board convened to develop operating characteristics and performance requirements for the HU-16E replacement and established a requirement for forty-one MRS aircraft. The ever faithful “goat” had served long and well. Several multi-engine aircraft were leased for evaluation. As a result of the evaluations it was decided to obtain the North American Rockwell Sabre Model 40. The Sabre had the cabin interior volume required; had an established history and as the T-39 was being procured by the military. The Decision was made to proceed with the issuance of a Military Interservice Procurement Request (MIRP) with the Navy acting as purchasing agent.

Coast Guard HC-131A

The decision to proceed with a non-competitive procurement drew some sharp industry and congressional criticism. The Commandant directed the cancellation of the MIRP and initiated a competitive two-step, formally advertised , procurement. The request for proposals went out in January of 1975. The HU-16Es were being taken out of service due to flight time limitations and it became apparent that an interim MRS aircraft had to be obtained. The Falcon HU-25A would become the MRS aircraft coming on line in July of 1979. The rest followed at the rate of one per month.

Beginning in late 1975, under the direction of Commander Art Wagner, a search for an interim MRS replacement began. A business jet lease option was evaluated but none had the proper assets and the cost was high. Airline Turbo Props being replaced by jets were evaluated but the T-56 and Rolls powered Convairs were very high time as were the Viscounts and Fairchilds. An interim report was drawn up to that effect. The Commandant, Admiral Owen Siler, then contacted the Air Force and Navy and the Coast Guard was granted full access to anything stored at the Davis Monthan Storage Facility that met Coast Guard requirements.

There were a number of P2 aircraft but with R3350 engines, a Varicam stabilizer, two J85s on the wing, they would have been costly to operate and maintenance intensive. There were a number of S2s with R1820 engines which would have been a good fit but they had come off Carriers and then sent to the training command. They were not in good shape and were limited on interior cabin space. There were a number of C-131s but they were of every version imaginable and it seemed there were no two alike in configuration. A check of the records, however, revealed that there were almost thirty former MedEvac C-131As, a version of the Convair 240/340 series commercial airliner, all with radar, all with APUs, and all identical in cockpit configuration. They averaged 20,000 flight hours on a 60,000 hour airframe and it was all airways flying. The Air Force was supplying support for the few remaining operational C-131

aircraft as was the Arizona Air Guard. In addition, it was discovered that there were approved plans for a camera hatch (became the drop hatch) and big windows in the side of the fuselage. It was a good fit.

In 1976, the Coast Guard acquired seventeen C-131A transports from US Air Force stock as the interim replacement for the HU-16E Albatross. They were to be used for search and rescue flights as well as surveillance patrols of the new 200 mile exclusive fisheries zone. The Coast Guard refurbished and modified one aircraft per month from September 1976 through January 1978. Fourteen aircraft were acquired from Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and three others were transferred from Air National Guard stocks. For spare parts, three other C-131As were held in reserve at Davis-Monthan and another was acquired for use at the training school located at ARSC Elizabeth City.

After initial flight trials the Coast Guard modified the aircraft by adding specialized electronics and search and rescue equipment. Each aircraft first underwent an overhaul at Hayes International in Dothan, Alabama. They were then flown to ARSC Elizabeth City for Coast Guard-specific modification. The following electronic systems were added or if already installed, upgraded: AN/ARA-25 UHF/VHF (AM-FM) DF; AN/ARC-84 VHF transceiver; AN/ARC-94 HF transceiver; AN/ARC-160 VHF-FM transceiver; AN-ARN-44 LF ADF receiver; AN/APM-171 radio altimeter; AN/APN-195 radar; ADL-81 LORAN C receiver; and the necessary antennae. The following structural modifications were also made: installation of a drop hatch; the addition of a radio operator/navigator position and two positions for search-observers; an acoustic locator beacon known as "Pinger"; a mount for the airborne radiation thermometry (ART) sensor; and the reconfiguration of the cargo area.

As the modifications were completed, the aircraft then flew to the AVTRACEN in Mobile, Alabama, for crew and ground personnel for familiarization training. The aircraft were assigned to Coast Guard air stations Miami, Corpus Christi, San Francisco, Traverse City and AVTRACEN Mobile. The aircraft were retired as the new HU-25A entered Coast Guard service.

Manufacturer	Convair Aircraft Corporation, San Diego, California
Designation	HC-131A
Wing Span	105' 4"
Height	28' 2"
Length	79' 2"
Fuel Capacity	920 gallons
Cruising Speed	250 mph
Range	450 statute miles
Empty Weight	29,248 lbs.
Gross Weight	47,000 lbs.
Crew	3

Passengers/freight	27,000 lbs.
Service Ceiling	24,500'
Engine(s)	2 x 2,500 hp Pratt & Whitney R-2800-99W

1977 - Coast Guard Air Station Sitka established:

In 1977 the Coast Guard Air station serving Southeast Alaska moved from Annette to Sitka which is more centrally located in the area of responsibility. Coast Guard Air Station Sitka is located on 165 acres of property owned by the Coast Guard. The physical plant consists of a hangar complex, a barracks/ medical facility, a NAFA building, and fifteen family housing quadruplexes. The facilities are located immediately adjacent to the Sitka Municipal Airport and near the Mt. Edgecombe USPHS Hospital. Coast Guard floating units also tie up to a Coast Guard dock located on Japonski Island.

In March of 1977, the barracks and hangar were completed and the move of personnel and equipment began. On April 19 flight operations for three HH-3F Sikorsky helicopters were shifted to Sitka. On Alaska Day, October 17, 1977 CGAS Sitka was officially commissioned. As of 2004 Air Station Sitka's aircrews have saved over 1,800 lives, assisted thousands of others, and saved several hundred million dollars in vessel property from the perils of the sea. The Air Station utilizes three HH-60J Jayhawk helicopters and has a complement of 21 officers and 120 enlisted personnel.

The area of operations remains all of Southeast Alaska from Dixon Entrance to Cordova. It is bordered on the north, south, and east by the US/Canadian border and shares its western boundary in the central Gulf of Alaska with CGAS Kodiak. This area of responsibility includes 12,000 of coast line and all inland areas. Rugged coast, mountainous terrain, severe weather and vast distances between fuel caches and landing sites characterize this isolated region. Flying in this challenging environment Sitka Crews average over 150 search and rescue cases a year, many completed in storm force winds, snow, low visibility and periods of extended darkness.

In a "ready" status 24 hours a day for search and rescue, the crew and helicopters are also used to support 75 marine aids-to-navigation, fisheries law enforcement, enforcement of laws and treaties, and various other missions in cooperation with federal, state, and local government agencies. Additionally, the aircraft are often utilized for medevacs from outlying native communities and logging camps.

CGAS Sitka also participates in the maritime portion of Operation Northern Edge. This is an annual joint training exercise designed to practice operations, techniques, procedures and enhance inter-service operational capabilities. The Commander Coast Guard District 17 is dual hated and is also Commander Naval forces Alaska. The Harbor Defense segment of Northern Edge tests US Naval Forces Alaska units ability to deploy, secure, and defend a port for use by US Forces.

There have been several noteworthy operations in recent years. In 1980 one of the most successful air-sea rescues in modern history occurred when the Dutch cruise ship Prinsendam caught fire 195 miles west of Sitka. Sitka crews were part of a joint international rescue team with units from the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Air Force, Canadian forces and commercial resources. In all, 13 aircraft, three Coast Guard cutters, and three commercial ships rescued the 522 passengers and crew within a 24-hour period without loss of life or serious injury. Sitka crews have also won national acclaim for several daring, lifesaving missions such as in the sinking of the fishing vessels Le-CONTE (1998) and BECCA DAWN (1999) during horrendous winter storms in the Gulf of Alaska. Aircrews battled 70-foot waves, severe turbulence, and darkness to save fishermen from the frigid waters. The professionalism, ingenuity, and unwavering devotion to duty displayed by the men and women of the Coast Guard continue to reflect great credit upon themselves, their unit, and the United States Coast Guard.

HH-60J helicopter on the ramp at Sitka. Mount Edgecomb is in the background. This is dormant volcano that looks identical to Japan's Mount Fuji.

1977 - Air Station/Group Humboldt Bay, California Commissioned:

Coast Guard Group / Air Station Humboldt Bay was commissioned on June 24, 1977 at the Arcata-Eureka Airport in McKinleyville, CA. This completed a multi-year initiative by local residents to gain a year-round aviation search and rescue (SAR) facility for Northern California. Prior to 1977, an aviation detachment from Coast Guard Air Station San Francisco provided air coverage during the summer season but the response time of over two hours was not fast enough for victims to survive in the 40-50 degree water commonly found along the north coast. Originally named Air Station Arcata, the Group / Air Station was redesignated to its current name in May 1982. The new $3.5 million facility also relocated boat station support offices from nearby Samoa to establish centralized command and control over all Coast Guard assets in the area.

Humboldt Bay, California is the latest in a series of harbors on the West Coast of the United States being developed as a deep water port to service the Pacific Rim and other international ports of call. Coast Guard Group / Air Station Humboldt Bay serves the public along 250 miles of rugged coastline from the Mendocino - Sonoma County line north to the California - Oregon border. Cold Pacific currents, powerful Alaskan winter storms, towering offshore rocks, fog and dangerous harbor entrance bars consistently threaten commercial and recreational vessels operating in the area. The primary mission is search and rescue, and most cases are dramatic and lifesaving in nature. The Air Station also provides MEDEVAC support for injured personnel in the mountains surrounding the Group area. Secondary missions include aerial support for aids to navigation, law enforcement, and marine environmental protection

The unique coastal airport location facilitates combining the best features of a Coast Guard Group, which traditionally oversees multiple boat stations along a few hundred miles of coastline, with a Coast Guard Air Station which typically serves one or more Groups. Group / Air Station Humboldt Bay, commonly referred to as Group Humboldt Bay for short, currently oversees 3 HH-65A helicopters, 2 Coastal Patrol Boats, and 4 motor lifeboats. An Aids to Navigation Team and a Marine Safety Detachment also serve the region. Twenty-two officers and over 170 enlisted personnel operate these various facilities located at Crescent City, McKinleyville, Samoa, Eureka, and Fort Bragg, California.

1978 - The Coast Guard Aviation Technical Training Center was established:

In the early years of Coast Guard Aviation the US Coast Guard trained its enlisted aviation personnel at Navy schools. There was a restructuring of aviation enlisted ratings after World War II and in 1949 the initial aviation training “A” schools moved from San Diego to the Naval Training Center, Memphis, Tennessee. The Coast Guard continued to utilized the Navy schools with the exception of the Aviation Machinist's Mate (AD) "A" school. The Coast Guard established its own AD “A” school at the Aircraft Repair and Supply Center (ARSC) in Elizabeth City, North Carolina. An AT "A" school was established at ARSC in 1964.

In August 1972 the Office of Personnel, Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC, commissioned an in-depth study of the aviation technical training needs of the Coast Guard. Aircraft and aircraft equipment had increasingly become Coast Guard specific. There also existed a difference in maintenance philosophies between the two services. The Navy taught the 3M system which the Coast Guard did not use and the “A” school graduates did not see a Coast Guard aircraft until they reached their first Air Station as an E4 Petty Officer. The study, under the direction of CDR George Krietemeyer, concluded there was a need for Coast Guard specific aviation technical training conducted at a common training site. The concept was approved by the Commandant and money was appropriated in FY 76 Budget. CDR Krietemeyer remained close to the project and became director of the newly created Aviation Management Branch at Coast Guard Headquarters.

Construction of the Coast Guard Aviation Technical Training Center (ATTC) began in July of 1976 at Elizabeth City North Carolina. CDR Krietemeyer was transferred to AR&SC to oversee construction and operate the AD and AT schools. A selected cadre of AE and AM instructors was assigned to develop Coast Guard AE and AM curricula. The unit, with CDR Krietemeyer as Commanding Officer, was commissioned on August 4, 1978. All of the “A” schools previously held at ARSC were moved to the new facilities and the newly developed Coast Guard AE and AM schools were

Coast Guard Aviation Technical Training Center

established. In addition, selected advanced technical “C” school courses were also established.

The Aviation Survivalman (ASM) "A" School was added to the ATTC curriculum in 1980. Throughout the years, numerous "C" Schools offering advanced training in aviation maintenance have been added and removed at ATTC to keep pace with the changing aircraft and maintenance support requirements of Coast Guard aviation. The Coast Guard transitioned to Performance Based Training, which emphasized rapidly changing curricula to keep pace with technology

In 1995 the Coast Guard undertook another service-wide study of the aviation maintenance requirements which resulted in a complete restructuring of the enlisted aviation workforce. In October 1998 ATTC began training and graduating petty officers in three newly created aviation ratings: Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT), Aviation Survival Technician (AST), and Avionics Technician (AVT). These advanced schools reflect the high degree of complexity associated with current aviation maintenance.

Since December 2003, aviation rates are represented in the “A” School curricula with courses of instruction approximately 20 weeks in duration. While at “A” School, students are introduced to a regimen of technical and personal challenges designed to develop their rate and leadership skills. Upon graduation students with a new aviation rating in either Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT), or Aviation Survival Technician (AST), or Avionics Electrical Technician (AET) are assigned directly to active air stations. Students at “C” School are experienced technicians who receive in-depth training on specific components or systems as required to address particular needs of Coast Guard aviation.

Aviation Maintenance Technician (AMT)

AMT “C” students troubleshooting in an HH-60

Aviation Maintenance Technicians (AMT) are trained to perform ground handling and servicing of aircraft and conduct routine aircraft inspections and aviation administrative duties. AMTs inspect, service, maintain, troubleshoot, and repair aircraft engines, auxiliary power units, propellers, rotor systems, power train systems and associated airframe and systems specific electrical components. They also service, maintain, and repair aircraft fuselage, wings, rotor blades, fixed and movable flight control surfaces, aircraft bleed air, hydraulic and fuel systems. Additionally, AMTs perform flight duties in the following Aircrew Positions: Flight Engineer, Flight

Mechanic, Loadmaster, Dropmaster, Sensor Systems Operator, and Basic Aircrewman. AMTs assigned to HH-65A Air Stations can expect shipboard deployments for various periods of time.

Avionics Technician (AVT)

Avionics Technicians (AVT) perform ground handling and servicing of aircraft and conduct routine aircraft inspections and aviation administrative duties. AVTs inspect, service, maintain, troubleshoot, and repair all avionics systems that perform functions of communications, navigation, collision avoidance, target acquisition, and automatic aircraft flight control systems. AVTs also service, maintain, troubleshoot repair and adjust AC and DC power generation, conversion and distribution systems and aircraft batteries. Additionally, AVTs perform duties in the following Aircrew Positions: Navigator, Radio Operator, Sensor Systems Operator, and Basic Aircrewman. AVTs assigned to HH-65 Air Stations can expect shipboard deployments for various periods of time.

AVT "A" School students learning basic electronic theory in a computer based training lab

Aviation Survival Technician (AST)

AST "A" School students learning swimming techniques

Aviation Survival Technicians perform ground handling and servicing of aircraft and conduct routine aircraft inspections and aviation administrative duties. ASTs inspect, service, maintain, troubleshoot, and repair cargo aerial delivery systems, drag parachute systems, aircraft oxygen systems, helicopter flotation systems, dewatering pumps, survival equipment for air-sea rescue kits and special purpose protective clothing. They also store aviation ordnance and pyrotechnic devices. ASTs provide all aircrew survival training to aviators such as swim tests, survival lectures and shallow water egress training. Aviation Survival Technicians function operationally as Helicopter Rescue Swimmers and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) Basic. ASTs may find themselves being deployed into a myriad of

challenging rescues ranging from hurricanes and cliff rescues, to emergency medical evacuations from ships at sea. Following graduation from ATTC, ASTs must graduate from the Coast Guard Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) School in Petaluma, California prior to becoming fully qualified AST/Rescue Swimmers. Other aircrew positions include Dropmaster, Loadmaster, Sensor Systems Operator. and Basic Aircrewman. ASTs assigned to HH-65 Air Stations can expect shipboard deployments for various periods of time.

As a prerequisite to attending “A” school all prospective students are required to complete a four-month Airman program at an air station. “A” school courses vary from 16 to 20 weeks. Upon course completion, and if all other requirements are met, graduates are transferred to operational air stations as Third Class Petty Officers (E-4). ATTC “C” Schools provide advanced/specialized training for more experienced technicians. “C” School students receive in-depth training designed to address specific needs of the field. At present, ATTC provides five different AMT “C” School courses on specific airframes and power plants, as well as HH-60 and HH-65 helicopter Rotor-Tuner training. AVT “C” Schools offer include basic Air Navigation and three airframe specific avionics system courses.

A fine-tuning of aviation maintenance occurred in 2003 when some of the electrical maintenance responsibilities of the AMT were assigned to the AVT rating. These changes prompted a rating designation change of the AVT rating to AET; Avionics Electrical Technician.

The training Center is composed of four modern structures that contain twenty classrooms, five maintenance/electronic labs, instructional aircraft and maintenance training units, engine, metal, composite classrooms. There are also state-of-the-art ‘Hot” mock-ups, a computer media center and swimmer training facilities. A staff of six officers, seventy enlisted and five civilians provide apprentice level ("A" School) and journeyman level ("C" School) training to nearly 700 of the Coast Guard's aviation maintenance personnel yearly.

ATTC provides a number of additional training related services including analysis , design, development, and evaluation of resident and non-resident courses and the development of all service wide exams. These services support the Office of Aeronautical Engineering, the Office of Aviation Management and the Office of Training and Performance Consulting. Career development programs such as obtaining FAA Airframe and Power Plant (A&P) certificates are available. There are advanced education programs available whereby qualified enlisted personnel may obtain associate and baccalaureate degrees.

ATTC continuously evaluates the training needs of aviation personnel, examining the feasibility of hosting courses and providing training materials and other means to expand training capabilities and effectiveness.

1978 - Coast Guard Air Station Sacramento Established:

Coast Guard Air Station Sacramento was commissioned on the fifth of September 1978. It is located at the north end of the former McClellan Air Force Base. Air Station Sacramento was established as an outgrowth of Air Station San Francisco when available ramp space and an increase in the number of aircraft required that the fixed-wing contingent be relocated. With a complement of 153 officers and enlisted personnel operating four HC-130 "Hercules" aircraft, Air Station Sacramento is under the operational and administrative control of the Commander, Twelfth Coast Guard District.

Air Station Sacramento participates in a wide range of Coast Guard missions. Primary among them and perhaps most widely known is Search and Rescue. The Air Station maintains a 24-hour immediate response capability, with a "ready" Search and Rescue crew on duty at all times. Search and rescue coverage is provided for the Eastern Pacific Area, the entire west coast of the United States, areas west of Canada, and south along the Baja California coast.

Other missions of Air Station Sacramento are Marine Environmental Protection and Federal Law Enforcement. These efforts include fisheries patrols in support of the Fisheries Conservation and Management Act of 1976 and law enforcement patrols aimed at enforcing the 200-mile limit and combating the ever-increasing problem of drug smuggling.

Drug interdiction patrols are flown year-round and are coordinated with Coast Guard cutters allowing a greater geographic area to be more thoroughly covered. As many as six or eight Coast Guard cutters may be coordinated into a patrol. The aircraft extends the ‘eyes’ of the ship while patrolling not only coastal waters, but shipping lanes and fishing grounds miles at sea. The ship provides a boarding capability should a violation be detected.

Another major area of responsibility of Air Station Sacramento is that of providing transportation for the Pacific Strike Team, the Coast Guard’s oil spill prevention and containment team on the west coast. Located at Hamilton Field, the Strike Team is immediately alerted in the event of an oil spill, responding to provide expert assistance in containment and cleanup of environmentally damaged areas.

Air Station Sacramento further supports the many missions of the Coast Guard by performing logistics flights between the stations, carrying essential cargo and passengers on an ‘as- required’ basis. Also, the Coast Guard’s Long Range Aids to Navigation System is frequently checked for accuracy by LORAN monitor flights over both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Aircrews are

constantly conducting training flights to maintain proficiency in the basic airmanship and Search and Rescue techniques that so often result in the saving of lives and property at sea.

The HC-130 operated by Air Station Sacramento is one of the most versatile aircraft in the world today. Four powerful turboprop engines enable short field take-offs and landings, as well as a respectable cruise speed of 290 knots. The HC-130's fuel capacity allows for covering long distances as well as extended on-scene endurance in the event of long searches or emergencies at sea. Visibility, an extremely important factor in any search, is excellent. The aircraft's high maximum weight allowance and large cargo compartment permit handling of a wide variety of cargos. An aft ramp and door may be opened in flight, allowing aerial delivery of cargo or emergency equipment. All in all, the HC-130 is an extremely versatile and reliable aircraft, well-suited to the multiple mission needs of Coast Guard aviation.

HC-130s On the ramp Air Station Sacramento

1979 - HH-65 Aircraft Program Office Established:

During 1977 an acquisition program was launched to provide the Coast Guard with a new Short-Range-Recovery (SRR) helicopter by early 1980. A Request for Technical Proposals (RFTP) was issued in September of 1977 with a Coast Guard decision on the new machine planned for August of 1978. Helicopter manufacturers who responded to the request were Textron Bell Helicopter with a utility version of its Model 222, Sikorsky Aircraft with a version of its S-76 Spirit, and Aerospatiale with a modified version of its AS 365.

The Bell 230 was relatively small and had old technology; Sikorsky proposed a different avionics package than what the Coast Guard wanted and would not modify their proposal. The 366G (SA-365) was 75% composite, including rotor head, blades and fuselage, with a much higher speed than both competitors. The Coast Guard version of the SA 365 was designed to be equipped with Lycoming engines which claimed marvelous specifics. The Aerospatiale proposal was accepted.

The Coast Guard contract specifications reflected a very ambitious schedule. The helicopter was to be FAA-certified under Part 27. The airframe, a derivative of the basic Sud Aviation SA 365A, was considered a new airframe and thus required a Type Certificate (TC). The Lycoming LTS-101 engine, replacing the AS365 Turbomeca Arriel engine, was also new and thus needed its own TC. The Aerospatiale aircraft, now designated AS366G, was considerably smaller than the HH-52 it was to replace and space for all equipment was at a premium. The Coast Guard provided an Avionics Specification detailing the capabilities and in many cases the exact equipment to be used. The helicopter was to be certified for single-pilot IFR flight and be the first helicopter so certified with a four-axis autopilot. Military Specifications for virtually every aspect of naval helicopter operations were imposed on top of all of the requirements.

The Coast Guard Plant Office for the SRR contract was established soon after the contract was awarded in 1979. CDR Dave Young was the original Commanding Officer. Aerospatiale's original facilities were located at the Vought Helicopter Corporation which operated for a short period as a licensee of Aerospatiale. In late 1980 Aerospatiale built its own plant facilities at Grand Prairie, Texas. The unit functioned as the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) for the program and was provided dedicated space. The assigned personnel were involved from the beginning, attending not only the formal program reviews but visiting Aerospatiale Helicopter Division in France, Lycoming, Rockwell Collins, and the FAA lead region for helicopter certification. The formal reviews consisted of a post award meeting, a Preliminary Design Review (PDR), Critical Design Review (CDR) and monthly program/progress reviews.

In an effort to gain early Coast Guard approval of the proposed configuration, Aerospatiale fabricated a full-sized mockup for use at the CDR. The cockpit was fairly well designed and was modified by inputs received during reviews at Rockwell Collins and the PDR. In addition, various equipment such as the litter, rescue basket, trail line, float lights, and pumps were utilized to allow crew members to work through the necessary cabin operation scenarios. The interface between the hoist operator and his various controls received considerable input that was incorporated into the final configuration. The use of the mockup enabled the contractor and major vendors to rapidly move out with prototype builds. Three helicopters were used in flight tests. Two were flown to obtain certification in France and then through reciprocity the FAA certification. The third was used in the United States to prove the avionics installation. Eventually all three were flown out of Grand Prairie.

As the program progressed, personnel became involved in component development, testing, and conformity to specification as the aircraft went down the production line. Coast Guard aviators eventually took over the test program. The Coast Guard enlisted personnel participated in all

phases as well. They went through maintenance procedures and manuals and performed ground tests on all aircraft and support equipment.

The first of ninety-six HH-65s was delivered to the Coast Guard in November of 1985.

During the production years the relationship between Aerospatiale and the Coast Guard became a contentious one. The benefits of an open and frank exchange and negotiating for a better product were not recognized. The Coast Guard Plant Office, under guidance from Headquarters, refused to depart from any specification, standard or requirements regardless of circumstances. Aerospatiale filed a claim against the Coast Guard. The Plant Office eventually moved off the facility and awards were made to the company.

The HH-65 had only one major fault. The LTS 101-750 did not meet the manufacturer's claims resulting in an underpowered aircraft. The Coast Guard litigated against AVCO Lycoming for grossly deficient performance of the HH-65s LTS101-750 engine. Seventeen Million was awarded the U.S. Government but of particular benefit to the Coast Guard was a six year Power by the Hour (PBTH) overhaul and service agreement provided by AVCO Lycoming. The LTS 101-750 engine is now being replaced by the more powerful Turbomeca Arriel 2C2-CG and the HH-65 will undergo a service life extension and become the Multi-Mission Cutter Helicopter.

1980 - Mariel Boatlift -- U. S. Coast Guard Operations During the 1980 Cuban Exodus:

HH-52A – Landing on the CGC Vigilant

A huge Cuban refugee exodus took place in 1980. The reason is deeply rooted in that nation's internal affairs. After the Cuban Revolution in 1959 a steady flow of Cuban immigration took place as Castro moved deeper and deeper into the communist fold. This was temporarily halted by the Cuban Missile Crisis. In 1965, as economic conditions continued to deteriorate and opponents of government policies increased, Castro announced that the port of Camarioca would be opened to Cuban exiles who wished to return to Cuba to pick up relatives desiring to leave Cuba. This boatlift was terminated after President Johnson negotiated a safer and more orderly use of commercial aircraft for the transportation of refugees. These flights continued until August of 1971. A total of 263,540 Cubans came to the United States during this period. In April 1980 the Castro regime again initiated a large scale emigration to reduce discontent caused by Cuba's deteriorating economic conditions. The exodus grew in magnitude to a point where it seriously taxed the ability of the United States to accommodate it.

On 1 April 1980 a group of six Cubans crashed the gate of the Peruvian Embassy and requested asylum. Castro exploited the incident and announced the gates to the embassy would remain open to all who wished to leave Cuba. By 6 April there were over 10,000 Cubans crowded onto the grounds of the Embassy. Castro had not expected this number and found himself boxed in. He was experiencing considerable negative publicity but realized the situation was an excellent opportunity to initiate another boatlift. Shrewdly he made contact with the Cuban exile community and let it be known that if they came by small boat to the port of Mariel they could pick up relatives along with the refugees from the Peruvian Embassy. Castro's message to the Cuban exile community came through loud and clear. On 21 April two fishing vessels arrived in Key West with forty-eight Cuban refugees. The next day additional refugees arrived and during radio interviews they stated that the Cuban government had opened the port of Mariel to those wishing to leave. By 24 April there were close to 400 boats in Mariel harbor waiting to pick up refugees.

HC-131 Aircraft

The United States Coast Guard's Seventh District, commanded by Rear Admiral Benedict L. Stabile, knew they were going to have a search and rescue problem to deal with. The question was: How large? Surveillance flights began 24 April from Air Station Miami utilizing HC-131 aircraft in the area south of Key West and twice daily patrol flights became routine. An estimated 11 vessels had safely crossed to Cuba and had returned with over 700 refugees, disembarking at Key West or Miami. Nearly one thousand craft were observed southbound on the afternoon of the 24th. At least twenty could be seen from the patrolling aircraft at any given moment. For the most part, these were Cuban-Americans who owned their own boat; typically a 20 to 40 footer primarily equipped for local pleasure boating. Those that did not have boats were paying large sums to small craft operators, such as shrimpers, to bring back relatives. At the end of April the Cuban Government reported over 1700 vessels were in the port of Mariel. The

Coast Guard responded to distress calls on a case by case basis. Within a 21- hour period, Group Key West assisted sixteen craft and had a waiting list of twenty boats which had suffered mechanical failures and needed assistance. In addition to the Groups three patrol boats the cutters *Acushnet* (WAGO-167), *Dauntless* (WMEC-624), and *Dependable* (WMEC-626), the latter with a HH-52 helicopter embarked, patrolled the general area.

Recognition that the problem was going to grow was immediate. A request for supplemental assistance was made to the Atlantic Area Commander who ordered additional units transferred to the operational control of the Seventh District. The units consisted of two additional HC-131s with double crews; an HH-3F with double crew assigned to Group Key West; two HH-52 aircraft assigned for shipboard operations; four additional cutters and three additional patrol boats. The Coast Guard mission was to provide maximum protection for refugee vessels transiting between Florida and Cuba. The SAR workload continued unabated. Helicopters and surface ships coordinated efforts for maximum effectiveness. By the end of April the volume of cases had become so heavy that accurate records could not be kept. It was not uncommon for a cutter to have five or six boats in tow and a number of survivors on board from swamped boats. During one 24-hour period the cutter *Dauntless* picked up 131 persons from six overloaded boats, two of which were disabled. *Diligence* had six craft in tow, was escorting two others, and had twenty-three persons on board from a sunken vessel.

Governor Bob Graham, in response to the rapidly expanding refugee problem had declared Florida a disaster area by the end of April. During the first two weeks of May the number of refugees arriving Key West had approached 5000 a day. The number of Immigration Service Officers had increased to fifty and an additional one-hundred Border Patrol Officers were assigned to the area. The refugee processing facilities were completely overwhelmed. Initially, Customs, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the US Public Health Service and other involved government agencies worked independently of each other and often agency efforts were duplicated. The agencies quickly realized that a coordinated effort with guidance and approval authority at the local level was the only way the escalating situation could be handled. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was assigned to coordinate the efforts of nine different government agencies and five private organization and charities. FEMA quickly recognized that Key West could not accommodate the continuing influx of refugees. Expeditious relocation of the refugees off the Island was critical. A logistical and transportation system capable of transporting up to 10,000 people a day out of Key West was developed.

By the middle of May emphasis was being placed on bringing order to the boatlift and stopping the flow of refugees. The revised Coast Guard Operations Order of May 15 contained an additional mission. Units were to be heavily engaged in law enforcement as well as Search and Rescue operations. In addition to preventing the loss of life, Coast Guard units were directed to interdict southbound boats for the purpose of curtailing the sea lift; to ensure that all northbound arrivals terminate at Key West for processing; and to provide all concerned agencies with up-to-date and accurate intelligence on vessel movements. The Seventh District staff realized that a timely system for detecting and reporting southbound vessels was critical to reducing the flow of refugees. Coast Guard fixed wing search aircraft – HC-131s from Air station Miami and HC-130s from Air station Clearwater and Air station Elizabeth City - flew surveillance flights. Navy long-range P-3 aircraft from Naval Air Station Jacksonville augmented the Coast Guard flights. The Seventh District's Operation Division coordinated patrols for fixed-wing aircraft; Group Key West scheduled coastal surveillance patrols for HH-3F and HH-52A helicopters operating out of NAS Key West; Flight deck equipped cutters scheduled flights for their own attached HH-52A helicopters. To facilitate the increased aviation activity, two additional HC-131, two HH-3F helicopter, and five additional HH-52A helicopters, four of which were deployed onboard flight-deck equipped cutters, were assigned from other aviation units.

Shipboard HH-52 patrolling Florida Straits

Direct water pickup of survivors

Group Key West was under the command of LCDR Sam Dennis. Key West was the primary departure and arrival point for the exile boats making the trip to Mariel and back. The SAR responsibility was along the coast out to 30 miles offshore. The group had quadrupled in size and operated and supported an imposing group of additional resources consisting of 110-foot, 95-foot and 82-foot patrol boats, and a large number of 41-foot utility boats. To assist with coastal rescue and surveillance, an HH-52A and two HH-3F Coast Guard helicopters were also assigned.

As the tempo of operations continued to increase, with no let up in sight, the Group Commander, burdened with increased responsibilities, needed assistance in coordinating and maintaining air assets at his disposal. On 20 May 1980 the Coast Guard Aviation Detachment (AVDET) came

into being with LCDR Mont J. Smith assigned as "Aviator-in-Charge." The detachment consisted of an aircraft maintenance officer, an enlisted maintenance supervisor, four HH-3E flight crews, three HH-52A flight crews, and three seven-man maintenance support sections. NAS Key West provided ramps space, limited office space and messing for Coast Guard personnel. Ground support equipment was obtained from CGAS Clearwater and a supply network was set up with CGAS Miami, CGAS Clearwater and the Coast Guard Aviation Repair and Support Center (AR&SC) at Elizabeth City, N.C. AVDET Key West grew into an "ad-hoc" air station -- one of the busiest in Coast Guard history -- significantly contributing to the successful response to the Mariel Exodus. A more detailed account of the creation and operation of the Key West AVDET is addressed at the end of this narrative.

The Cuban exile community became aware that Castro had used them. The make up of the people leaving Cuba was different than in previous years. During the Mariel Boatlift more than 20,000 men were forced to leave Cuba without their families; an extremely small percentage of the refugees were related to those in the exile community; close to 2000 of the 126,000 refugees were convicted felons and an estimated 3000 Cuban Intelligence Service agents, given a variety of assignments, entered the United States.

M/V Red Diamond

On 2 June, the Coast guard encountered a new situation when the 118-foot M/V Red Diamond departed Mariel, escorted by three Cuban vessels, with hundreds of people on board. The Coast Guard was ordered to prevent the vessel from coming to Florida. When the Coast Guard cutters Dallas, Acushnet and Cherokee began to force the Red Diamond to change course the Cuban escort threatened to make a serious international incident. At 4 pm that afternoon the Coast Guard cutters were ordered to allow Red Diamond to proceed to Key West. The Justice Department said the decision had been made "for humanitarian reasons." Additional attempts at this type of operation continued. The United States recognized the threat of large commercial vessels capable of transporting thousands of people. Fortunately, diplomatic efforts persuaded Panama and other flag states to pressure Cuba into rejecting their ships for the boatlift. Vessels were stopped before sailing for safety violations and those that did go and return were seized.

On 25 September 1980 the Coast Guard Cutter *Point Thatcher* was patrolling north of Mariel. A look at the cutters radar screen showed a series of blips on the radar screen departing the harbor entrance. By the next morning it had been confirmed that none of the 58 boats carried refugees. The boat crews told the Coast Guard that they had been forced to leave by the Cuban

government. The 159-day boatlift was over! There were 600 stranded refugees who had already been processed that were flown out later.

RADM Stabile and staff, with Captain Raymond J. Copin as Chief of Operations, did an outstanding job. The task at hand was huge and they were forced to react to an ever changing situation orchestrated by Fidel Castro as well as an initial lack of a coherent policy on the part of the Administration. They opted to augment existing staff components and operational forces within the already established organization. Augmentation allowed the people most knowledgeable, having the greatest familiarity with the area and resource capabilities, to direct the operation on a day to day basis. This proved to be a wise decision. Operational authority was vested at the lowest level possible and was supported up through the chain of command providing a great degree of flexibility and the ability to meet the ever changing requirements. Jack Watson, President Carter's Chief of Staff said "The Coast Guards response was outstanding, from the top of the organization to the boat operators on the scene --- 'Semper Paratus' was exactly right. The Coast Guard was ready and they had the flexibility to get the job done – they were creative in solving problems."

This was a large operation. The Coast Guard utilized twenty-two large cutters, eleven 95-foot patrol boats, twenty-six 82-foot patrol boats and twenty-one 42-foot utility boats during this operation. The Navy provided fourteen additional ships and aircraft from four aviation units. This effort also saw the greatest concentration of Coast Guard aircraft ever. Aviation resources were critical to the Coast Guard response to the exodus. Aircraft and aircrews were provided from fifteen Air stations. An additional eleven Air stations provided supplemental crews. There were a total of thirty-three fixed-wing aircraft and thirty-six helicopters that flew a total of 9,026 mission hours without an accident.

Over 126,000 refugees crossed the Straits of Florida in craft that were marginal and in various states of disrepair. Amazingly there were only forty-five known fatalities. This is directly attributable to the talent and professionalism of those personnel working the air and sea. Over 1,300 separate SAR cases were reported. This is an impressive number considering that there was a period at the end of April when the Coast Guard was too busy to record them. Thousands of lives were saved. This operation stands out in Coast Guard annals as one of the Service's greatest achievements.

Coast Guard Aviation Detachment Key West

Aviation resources proved to be critical for boatlift operations. HC-131 Convairs from Coast Guard Air Station (CGAS) Miami flew the first surveillance flights providing data to help evaluate the developing situation. As the pace increased, HH-52 helicopters were deployed upon the increasing number of Coast Guard cutters with flight deck capabilities. Additional fixed-wing assets were assigned to the Miami Air Station. By 5 May 1980 there were five

surveillance flights made each day by HC-131 aircraft from CGAS Miami and HC-130 aircraft from CGAS Clearwater, augmented by Navy P3 aircraft from NAS Jacksonville. Initially all aviation support for helicopter operations was conducted out of CGAS Miami.

The shortest distance between Mariel and a port in the United States was across the Florida Straits to Key West. To assist with coastal rescue and surveillance and provide support for forces afloat an HH-52 from CGAS Miami and two HH-3Fs, one from CGAS Clearwater and one from CGAS Elizabeth City were deployed to Coast Guard Group Key West. The helicopters at Key West were deployed from a parent air station as a pre-positioned SAR resource -- usually for a period of two or three days. Each carried a parts and service kit and obtained support from their air station.

On April 14 LCDR Mont Smith and LCDR Tom Burnaw arrived at NAS Key West as the CGAS Clearwater HH-3F replacement. They obtained a briefing from LCDR Jim Leskinovitch, an HH-52 pilot and the senior aviator from CGAS Miami. Both LCDR Leskinovitch and LCDR Burnaw were aircraft maintenance officers and Jim explained to Tom how NAS Key West had become a “drop point” for aviation resources. A number of HH-52s would come ashore from their assigned cutter, refuel, perform a 10-hour tail rotor maintenance check, re-supply with parts requested from their home air station, water wash the engine and proceed back to their ship. LCDR Smith and LCDR Burnaw analyzed the situation. Aviation assets were growing and operations were continuing without let up. The Group Commander, LCDR Sam Dennis, burdened with a rapidly increasing workload, needed assistance in coordinating the operation and maintenance of aviation assets. The three met to set up a structure that would provide logistical, maintenance, and operational support for aviation resources attached to his command. An OPLAN was drawn up and submitted to CAPT Ray Copin, CCGD7 Operations. He bought the plan and made it happen.

Coast Guard Aviation Detachment (AVDET) Key West came into being on 20 May 1980 with LCDR Mont J. Smith designated as “Aviator-in-Charge” (AIC) and staffed with an aircraft maintenance officer, an enlisted maintenance supervisor, four HH-3F flight crews, three HH-52 flight crews and three seven-man maintenance support sections. Allocated ramp space and a small office were acquired from NAS Key West. Ground support equipment and a temporary communications center were airlifted in from CGAS Clearwater. A supply network was established with the Coast Guard Aviation Repair and Supply Center (AR&SC) at Elizabeth City, N.C. whereby helicopter replacement parts would be furnished from stock at CGAS Miami and CGAS Clearwater; critical items normally available only from the inventory control point were expedited overnight by express delivery from AR&SC. Administrative supplies and equipment were obtained, messing provisions for attached personnel were arranged with NAS Key West, and billeting of personnel was contracted out to local motels. An aviation liaison officer, LCDR Jim Marcotte, was assigned to the Group Commanders staff

serving as a link between the Group and the Seventh District Chief of Operations in Miami.

HH-3F "Pelican LCDR Dick Wright with New Orleans crew

The CGD7 Chief of Operations worked with COMLANTAREA to arrange personnel and aircraft rotation cycles. Where in the past crews and aircraft had been deployed for two or three days they were now assigned to the unit, on a temporary basis (TAD), for periods of thirty to forty-five days. Supplemental crews were also provided. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) were developed and initiated. As the workload increased augmentation crews came aboard you were apt to have found a Mobile aircraft commander with a Clearwater co-pilot and an E City enlisted flight crew flying a Borinquen helicopter. It all worked flawlessly --- a real credit to service-wide aircrew standardization. This concept would prove to be invaluable many times over in future years. The AVDET aircraft averaged eight daylight hours of "boatlift" patrol in the Group Commanders area of responsibility. One HH-3F and one HH-52 were maintained on a 24-hour "Bravo Zero" SAR status. An additional HH-3F was kept on two hour standby.

AVDET Search and Rescue was on-going but of note was the launch of two HH-3Fs and one HH-52 helicopters in darkness in the early morning hours of 17 May when a 30-root vessel carrying fifty-two Cuban refugees grounded and sank on a coral reef south of Key West. All fifty-two persons were hoisted to safety in an operation where twenty-three persons were hoisted by one HH-3F, twenty-two persons by another HH-3F and seven by the HH-52 in a simultaneous operation.

Capt William J Brogden, on the cutter *Dallas,* was the On-Scene-Commander surface vessels. He acted as the command-and-control ship and strung out 210 foot WMECs, with HH-52s aboard, on stations along the track line from Mariel to Key West. The HH-52s provided short-range reconnaissance and tactical SAR. The concentration of helicopter assets aboard mobile support platforms in a "target rich" environment provided a greater synergy and a high degree of effectiveness. Capt Brogden conducted conference calls to operating units every night on HF radio. LCDR Smith, as (AIC), participated in the net. He was briefed

on operational requirements, logistical requirements, and ascertained aircraft maintenance and parts requirements. The shipboard helicopters had been deployed to a specific cutter --- but this was not the way to operate efficiently and effectively in the given situation. The option of cross-platform operations to other flight decks, including the Navy's Amphibious Assault Vessel *Saipan*, was a requirement. In addition the WMECs were limited on aircraft fuel and freshwater for engine wash. The 10-hour rotor inspections were not labor intensive but could be difficult and sometimes dangerous because the rotor would extend out over the fantail when the helicopter was secured in the landing grid. A non-operational helicopter was of no value to the cutter --- so it evolved that the helicopters would come to the AVDET for maintenance and repair, water wash engines, and obtain a full load of fuel. The HH-52 assigned to Key West, was in many instances, utilized as an "operational spare." HH-52 flight crews were assigned to helicopters, not necessarily their own, and deployed to where they were needed. Personnel and high priority cargo were routinely transported between ship and shore. The AVDET, in addition to providing Group SAR, had also become what the Navy would later call an AVLOGDET or "Aviation Logistics Detachment."

Coast Guard Cutter Dallas WHEC 716 with HH-52 Helicopter on board

All AVDET personnel were TAD. LCDR Mont Smith was relieved as AIC by LCDR Jack Stice who in turn was relieved by LCDR Bill Meininger. Here again planning was evident. Each had been assigned to the AVDET prior to being appointed AIC and each was familiar with the "Drill" prior to becoming AIC thereby providing continuity.

This was a truly remarkable operation. A group of LCDRs, strongly backed by CAPT Bob Whitley, Commanding Officer CGAS Clearwater and CAPT Ray Copin, CGD7 Chief of Operations, planned, established and operated an "ad-

hoc" air station under the Group Commander with an operational workload as great or greater than any other aviation unit at the time. AVDET Key West was not a dedicated unit – it was operationally created by men of vision who were willing to operate outside the box and answer for it. The unit was exceptionally well run and highly effective. It became the model for future aviation deployments in support of alien and drug interdiction operations.

1981 - Coast Guard Air Detachment Guantanamo Bay Cuba Established:

The Cuban exodus of 1980 changed the response to illegal immigration from the Caribbean. Skilled immigrants from Jamaica and Haiti, both Afro-Caribbean groups, arriving between 1965 and 1980 passed into American society almost unnoticed. The pre-1980 Cuban migrants received all kinds of state assistance facilitating incorporation and were highly successful, in large part because of the willingness of the existing Cuban exile community to absorb them. In the period between the 1980 Cuban exodus, until the terrorist attacks in 2001, immigration policies were shaped primarily by domestic concerns. Between 1970 and 1980 there were a little over 56,000 Haitians that immigrated legally and as many as 90,000 that immigrated illegally. The illegals transited 700 miles of open ocean in unseaworthy, overcrowded, sailing vessels and a number had drowned in the attempt to reach the South Florida beaches. Thousands had been arrested and detained awaiting deportation. Thousands more, who had either put up their lifelong savings or sold themselves into bondage to reach the United States, evaded the Immigration Service (INS) and were assimilated into a rapidly growing "little Haiti" in Miami. They were largely unskilled and from the rural sections of Haiti with an annual per capita income of less than $300 per year. A high incidence of HIV/AIDS infection compounded the problem. The economic impact on South Florida was staggering. By early 1981 almost $467K per day was being spent to care, feed, clothe, and provide medical attention for the illegal arrivals. The political pressure was intense to stop the flow.

A September 23, 1981, agreement between the United States and the Republic of Haiti, permitted the United States to stop (interdict) boatloads of Haitians attempting to reach the United States and return them to Haiti. This Agreement provided the legal basis for President Reagan's September 29, 1981, finding (Presidential Proclamation Order 4865) and authorization (Executive Order 12324) for what became known as the Haitian Migrant Interdiction Operation

(HMIO).The State Department and the Immigration and Naturalization Service established and promulgated procedures to block and deter smugglers bringing Haitians to the United States. The responsibility for implementing the program was given to the Coast Guard.

WHEC Coast Guard Cutter Chase with HH-52 on board

Lessons learned from the Mariel Exodus clearly showed that it would be much more effective to stop the flow of illegal immigration at the source and that the combination of air and surface assets was most productive. A force package of consisting of a High Endurance Cutter (WHEC) an HC-130 and two HH-52 helicopters, augmented with medical teams and Immigration Service personnel, was drawn up to patrol the international waters surrounding Haiti to identify, examine, board and interdict suspect vessels bound for the United States. The Coast Guard was already preparing an extensive drug interdiction campaign together with the Drug Enforcement Agency and the U.S. Customs Service to thwart the lower Caribbean drug pipeline. The service piggy-backed the two operations.

Naval Air Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba was the most suitable site for aviation support to the On-Scene Commander, whose vessel would patrol the Old Bahama Channel and Windward Passage in an Arc around Port du Paix on the Haitian northwest coast. Extensive negotiations with the Commander, Naval Base Guantanamo Bay (GTMO), Cuba resulted in an excellent relationship under an Interservice Support Agreement (ISSA) to provide operations, maintenance, supplies and living accommodations for thirty-five Coast Guard aviation officers and enlisted personnel at NAS Leeward Point Utilizing the experience gained from AVDET Key West, representatives from the Seventh District Operations, Air Station Miami and Air Station Clearwater drafted detailed Operation Orders, well in advance, to delineate personnel tasking, a concept of daily flight support, a communications plan, and aircraft maintenance/supply procedures. Support for the operation was provided by the Seventh Coast Guard District with Air Station Clearwater providing operational and logistical support and Air Station Miami providing the helicopter maintenance support. HC-130 aircraft were deployed to GTMO (Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba) from Air Station Clearwater on a weekly basis. While at GTMO they flew four to five hour surveillance patrols. During the initial

Sikorsky HH-52A " Seaguard"

period HH-52 helicopters and crews from Air Stations Traverse City, Brooklyn, Savannah and Miami rotated through the AVDET. Two HH-52s were attached to the AVDET at a time. The helicopters alternated between a week at sea onboard the WHEC and a week ashore at the AVDET for maintenance and logistical service to the cutter. The deployed helicopter ranged extensively throughout the flying area. Three C-130 loads of personnel, ground support equipment, a communications van, and an extensive HH-52/HC-130 spare parts allowance began to arrive in GTMO on 5 October 1981. Four days later USCG Aviation Detachment (AVDET) Guantanamo Bay, Cuba became an operational reality. The Aviator-in-Charge concept was again utilized and LCDR Mont J. Smith was assigned this responsibility.

A typical interdiction was similar to one which occurred in late October. An HH-52 sighted an unseaworthy and overloaded sailing vessel. The USCGC Chase intercepted and removed fifty-six Haitians from the now sinking thirty-five foot vessel. As soon as they arrived aboard the Chase, all were given medical examinations and then they were extensively interviewed by the Immigration Service Officer through the Immigration interpreter to determine if any had valid claims of asylum in the United States. None made claim for asylum and they were returned to Port Au Prince where they were met by officials of the Government of Haiti, the Haitian Red Cross and staff from the American Embassy.

Lockheed HC-130 "Hercules

Commenting on the operation, CAPT Douglass Currier, the Commanding Officer of the Chase said that without the helicopter the interception would probably not have been made and the Haitians would have perished at sea. Coincidentally, interception and seizure of drug smuggling vessels had increased considerably since the beginning of the operation. By mid November the seizure of the fifth drug ship had occurred. The estimated street value of the contraband totaled more than $14 million. When the Chase was relieved on station in early December CAPT Currier sent a message to the AVDET, information to the Seventh District, praising the flight crews for their skill, dedication, support and professionalism displayed. The message included his personal BZ..

The AVDET Guantanamo Bay was a continuing success. Once again the concept had been proven. During drug interdiction activities in 1984-85 an AVDET was established at Curacao. AVDET GTMO was used during the late '80s for air interdiction missions and again in 1994-95 during a peak interdiction period as well as a number of times since. The AVDET is maintained in a skeletal form and is fully activated when operations dictate. At present HU-25 aircraft are operating out of GTMO on interdiction missions and HH-65 helicopters support the Coast Guard Port Security Detachment.

Coast Guard Air Detachment Personnel - Guantanamo Bay Cuba

1982 -- Coast Guard and Department of Defense conducted joint evaluation of Lighter Than Air (LTA) aircraft:

The Coast Guard and the United States Navy initiated a joint study to determine the feasibility of developing an airship to meet Navy and Coast Guard needs. Information to determine the efficiency of LTA craft was obtained from the Naval Air Development Center. NADC did a mission analysis comparison between airships and ships, aircraft, and ship/aircraft teams needed to accomplish the same mission.

NADC used a specially written computer program to estimate the operating cost of airships. These findings were combined with known data obtained from Coast Guard mission platforms. The NADC study covered the entire spectrum of potential missions that could be performed by airships; enforcement of laws and treaties, search and rescue, marine environment protection, port safety and security, ice operations, short range aids to navigation and military operations.

In addition to operating costs, additional costs such as acquisition costs , capital investment in real estate and facilities, personnel, training, and maintenance were determined and taken into consideration to provide a comprehensive cost comparison. The airship came off well. The hourly cost of the 210-foot cutter was about 15 percent lower than an airship but the airship can perform a larger range of missions. The airship cost 15 percent less to operate than the HU-25 Falcon medium range search aircraft, half of what it cost to operate 378-foot cutters and the C-130 long-range search aircraft, and 70 percent less than the H-3 medium range helicopter. It found that airships could perform long =-endurance missions beyond the capabilities of helicopters and some vessels. An airship could interact with surface units more directly than fixed-wing aircraft. These missions were within the abilities of the larger vessels but with an airship, could be done in half the time and use one sixth the fuel.

A contract was signed January 20th between the Navy and Airship Industries Ltd. Of Great Britain for lease of an AI-500 airship for evaluation purposes. The Ai-500 was the same size as the "Goodyear Blimp" with a payload capacity by weight of plus 40percent. This efficiency was achieved by the use of vectored thrust propulsion and light weight materials such as Dacron/ Mylar for the envelope and a rigid structure of glass-reinforced plastic and suspension cables of Kevlar. The nearly exclusive use of nonmetallic components produced an aircraft with a very small radar signature ----a "stealth blimp." The envelope and components were transported to Toronto Canada for assembly. The AI-500 was assembled and then flown to Elizabeth City North Carolina for the evaluation phase of the project. The airship operated out of the nearby Weeksville blimp base. The base consisted of two blimp hangars which served as the site of an extensive U.S. Navy airship activity up until the mid 1950s.

The on-site test program was under the direction CDR James Webster USCG. During the test flight phase data was gathered in a number of areas. The airships response to wind gusts and the effectiveness of the control and propulsion systems during critical landing and retrieval conditions was documented. The quality of the ride, safety, and vibration levels were monitored. The radar performance and the airships ability to use night vision devises for effective 24-hor surveillance was evaluated These tests were conducted by pilots and crewmembers from the Elizabeth City Air Station. The data obtained was used to verify a NASA computer simulation program.

Operational evaluation did not take place. The initial evaluation focused on the multi mission capabilities with

primary reference to search and rescue. The operational evaluation most probably would have found the airship capable but unable to perform all of the missions of a ship, helicopter or fixed wing aircraft. Thus the LTA would be a supplemental procurement program. Budget considerations led to the cancellation of the LTA program. The Department of Defense continued with a LTA program. This resulted in the Aerostats. The roll of the aerostat was elevated persistent surveillance. Networking several Aerostats equipped with sophisticated radar provided blanket coverage of a particular area that could be down-linked to a command and control facility. The Aerostats were used for this purpose to facilitate drug interdiction in the Caribbean and along the U.S./Mexican border.

The Coast Guard established Mobile Aerostat Platforms on board leased vessels commencing in July of 1985. Ships were civilian contracted. They were used primarily in the "choke points" and targeted surface vessels. Coast Guard personnel operated the radar computer package. The civilian master and crew operated the vessel as directed by the Coast Guard officer-in-charge. They performed well but were susceptible to weather. Strong winds could damage the Aerostat and, being tethered, a lightning bolt could severely damage the electronic package. When bad weather was encountered a decision had to reposition or bring the Aerostat down. In 1987 the Coast Guard was assigned co-responsibility for air interdiction. Four E2C AWACs were operated for air surveillance purposes. Both of these operations were effective but single mission and expensive.

The airship could have provided a mobile platform able to operate in both land and marine environments. It could operate at a higher altitude than the shipboard aerostat did, providing more range. It would not have been tethered and would have been much less susceptible to weather. Equipped with the proper radar inside the envelope it could have performed both surface and air surveillance. Its non metallic construction would have made it hard to detect on radar and its speed would have allowed it to keep up with the "go-fasts" of the time. The endurance would have provided a 24/7 surveillance in the departure zone off the coast of Columbia as well as other areas. It would have had multi-mission capabilities. The total cost including support would have been significant but in all probability nowhere near as great as the combine expenses for the Aerostats and the E2Cs.

Would this have been a cost and operationally effective operation? There is no way of knowing.

Again in July of 2008, a test project to determine the suitability of powered airships as an economical detection platform was conducted in the Florida Straits. The airship is equipped with radar, infrared cameras and other sensors to help vessels at sea track boats smuggling illegal both boats smuggling illegal migrants or drugs in the waters separating the tip of Florida and Cuba. Some 90 miles distant. No determination has been forthcoming as of October 2008.

1982 – HU25 Falcon Jet Enters service:

The HU-25 Falcon Jet is a medium-range surveillance (MRS) fixed-wing aircraft that is used to perform search and rescue, enforcement of laws and treaties including illegal drug interdiction, marine environmental protection, and military readiness. The origin of this MRS procurement can be traced back to 1966 when the Coast Guard participated in a full-scale wing fatigue test of the HU-16. A wing service life of 11,000 was established. Replacement would be required. The possibility of utilizing a mix of HH-3F helicopters and C-130 aircraft was evaluated in 1971. In 1972 several aircraft that could possibly fit the MRS requirements were leased for evaluation. Because of industry and Congressional challenges, it was not until January of 1977 that a contract was awarded to Dassault-Breguet for the Falcon Twenty (HU-25A). The first aircraft was delivered in February of 1982 with subsequent deliveries of one per month for a period of 41 months

It is 56.25 feet in length, 17.6 feet in height, and has a crew of five. Its ceiling at Mach .855 is 42,000 feet and it flies at 350 knots at sea level and 380 knots at 20,000 feet. The Falcon's ability to operate from sea level to altitudes of 42,000 feet makes it suitable for Coast Guard's missions of search and rescue, drug interdiction and marine law enforcement. Key features include computer controlled air navigation system, surveillance system operators console, surveillance camera and avionics adapted for oil pollution over-flight detection.

Forty-one HU-25, medium range surveillance fan jets replaced the HU-16E Albatross and the C-131A Samaritan prop driven aircraft, in the Coast Guard aviation fleet. The Guardian's modern technology and design enhances its performance as the services first multi-mission jet. It is twice as fast as previous Coast Guard fixed wing aircraft and can get to the scene quickly to perform its role.

The airframes were assembled in Little Rock, Arkansas at Falcon Jet Corporation, a subsidiary of Dassault-Brequet Aviation. The acrylic search window, drop hatch for delivery of emergency equipment to vessels, and other fuselage modifications unique to Coast Guard aircraft were made

at Grumman Aircraft Corporation in New York. The Garrett turbo fan engines were manufactured in Phoenix, Arizona specifically for the aircraft's long flights. The computer controlled air navigation system was built by Rockwell International, Collins Avionics group in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The HU-25 had surveillance system operators (SSO) console including Texas Instruments radar with 160-mile range, manufactured in Dallas, Texas.

In 1997 the Coast Guard initiated a study to determine the mission profile of the HU-25. The reason for this study is a part of continuing efforts to extend the service life of the HU-25. Dassault-Falcon Jet developed a program whereby Falcon 20's (the HU-25 is really a Falcon 20G) can have its' service life extended from 20,000 flights and 30,000 landings to 40,000 flights and 60,000 landings. The aircraft would first undergo a Major Corrosion Inspection and then periodic additional inspections in critical areas to assure the airplane can continue to fly. To put this in perspective, the Coast Guard has been operating the HU-25 since 1982 and by 1997 the aircraft with the highest time was only about halfway through its initial service life. Civilian Falcon aircraft track flights, while the Coast Guard has always tracked only hours and landings. Pressurization cycles of the fuselage are the most critical factor for the HU-25.

A program, to upgrade the sensor capability on HU-25 aircraft resulted in the HU-25B variant. The HU-25B was equipped with the Aireye Surveillance System and wing pads carrying side-looking radar (SALR) The upgrade was delayed due to funding and technical problems. The project goal was to capture the analog output of the HU-25B sensors, convert it to a digital signal, and be able to process the data on a computer. The hardware for the first installation was installed on CG 2118 in Kalispell, Montana. Software integration problems were the driving force in the delay of the program.

Additional sensor upgrades resulted in the HU-25C and HU-25D variants. The HU-25C, used for air interdiction, is equipped with an APG-66 air intercept radar, improved Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) radar, and an Electro-Optical day color Electro-Optic device, military satellite communications and advanced tactical workstation, with data base, capable of tracking up to 30 surface contacts simultaneously significantly improving command, control, communications, computers and intelligence capabilities. The HU-25D has the same FLIR/EO/LLTV/ Tactical Workstation as the HU-25C but is equipped with the AN/APS-143(V) Inverse Synthetic-Aperture Radar (ISAR) system.

Major Missions	Search and Rescue/Law Enforcement Environmental Response/Air Interdiction
Maximum Gross Weight	32,000 lbs.
Fuel Capacity	10431 lbs.
Empty Weight	25,500 lbs
Operating Range	2045 NM
Overall Length	55 Ft.
Crew	5

Overall Span	22 Ft.
Wing span	54 ft
Maximum height	18 Ft.
Powerplants	Two Garrett ATF3-6 turbo-Fan engines rated at 5440 pounds thrust each.
Cruising Speed	350 knots at sea level 380 knots above 20,000 feet
Max Speed	450 kts
Max Range	1,940 nautical miles
Radius of Action	800 nautical miles
Service Ceiling	41,000+ feet above sea level
Endurance	5.75 hours
Number Flight Crew	5

1982 - OPBAT – Operation Bahamas Turks and Caicos; A cooperative drug interdiction operation initiated:

The Bahamas, a sparsely settled group of islands extending from a point seventy miles off the east coast of Florida to just northwest of Haiti, gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1973.
Carlos Lehder, one of the kingpins of the Medellin Cartel, arrived there in 1978 and started buying up property at Norman Cay. By 1980 he controlled the entire Island. The Bahamas became a trans-shipment point for both Marijuana and Cocaine. Cocaine was not yet on the DEA radar screen and the Carter Administration saw no health hazard associated with it. Lehders plan was to revolutionize the cocaine trade. Previously drug dealers relied on human “mules” to smuggle the drugs on regular commercial flights. Utilizing Norman Cay for a trans-shipment point much greater quantities could be transported with far less risk of interception. Lehder built a 3300 foot runway protected by radar and armed guards. Flights were made to Columbia to pick up cocaine on a

regular basis. The cocaine would then be transferred to small personal-type aircraft that would transport it to drop points in the States. These aircraft would blend in with the high density low altitude weekend traffic between the Bahamas and the Florida coast. The Bahamian government did nothing to curtail this and other operations.

In 1982 the Bahamian government, in response to pressure from the United States, began to crack down on this and other drug activities. The Norman Cay operation was shut down but the use of the Bahamas as a transshipment point for marijuana and cocaine continued unabated. The police forces of the Bahamas and the British-administered Turks and Caicos islands were ill-equipped to locate and stop the smugglers' aircraft and small boats. An Agreement was entered into by the British, Bahamian and United States governments to cooperate and enhance the ability of the Bahamian government to interdict, prosecute and convict drug traffickers. In April, with little fanfare, OPBAT became operational. It was initiated by a contingent of the South Florida Task Force (SFTF), with the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) as the primary agency. The DEA provided two helicopters that transported Bahamian police detachments to the islands identified as air and boat trans-shipment sites. The agreement also gave U.S. interdiction forces the right to fly in the islands' air space and patrol their contiguous waters.

In 1983 two U.S. Air Force UH-1Ns replaced the DEA helicopters. In 1987 U.S. Coast Guard personnel assumed the responsibility for the OPBAT operations center in Nassau and Coast Guard HH-3Fs, deployed from Air Station Clearwater, took over operations out of Nassau and Freeport. US Army helicopters operated out of Georgetown. In 1991 the Great Inagua OPBAT site opened and it also was manned by Coast Guard HH-3Fs. During the period 1993-94 the HH-3F helicopters were replaced by the HH-60J.

The Department of Defense (DOD), through the Joint Interagency task Force-East (JIATFE) and the Custom Service (USCS) through the Air and Marine Interdiction Coordination Center, provided detection and monitoring of suspected air and surface smuggling targets as they depart South America and other Caribbean locations, enroute to the Bahamas. Airborne targets, generally twin engine turbo-prop aircraft, air dropped cocaine to boats waiting in the Bahamian waters or landed at remote island airstrips where the contraband was loaded on waiting vehicles. Small high speed boats, called "go-fasts", 28 to 40 feet long fitted with three or four 250 horsepower engines,

passed through the Windward Passage between Haiti and Cuba hugging the Cuban coast. About halfway up Cuba's northern coast the smugglers turned their boats north and race into Bahamian territory, hoping to make landfall unobserved. OPBAT utilizes its helicopters to effect apprehensions and seizures once the contraband had reached Bahamian territory. This is more difficult than what it would seem to be. The Bahamas consist of over 700 islands that cover a geographic area roughly the size of the state of California. Anticipating the drop site and adequately covering the area with widely dispersed helicopter bases is a difficult task. The effective use of intelligence is therefore critical to successful operations. OPBAT has a Tactical Analysis Team (TAT), manned by DOD intelligence specialists and USCS Intelligence Analysts.

The Government of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas and Government of the Turks and Caicos Islands provided police officers who flew all OPBAT missions and were responsible for making arrests and seizures. A DEA Special Agent was also on board every flight to provide advice, coordination and the collection of intelligence to be immediately disseminated to all participants. Over all management was vested in the DEA Nassau Country Office. Coast Guard helicopters made daily daylight checks throughout the islands. They were amphibious and could land just about anywhere. Night runs were flown several times a week. The HH-3E with its FLIR (infrared radar) was especially suited for this. They could identify and track smugglers before the drop, at the drop, and after the drop. They could track and direct people on the ground. The Bahamian police officers would wear transponders and thus the people in the helicopter could tell the "bad guys" from the "good guys" and direct the ground agents as they apprehended the smugglers.

The Bahamas proximity to the United States and the shear extent of its area guarantee it will be a target for drug trans-shipment and other criminal activity for the foreseeable future. The Bahamas is expected to continue its strong commitment to the bilateral counter narcotics efforts but because of its relatively small budgetary resources it will continue to depend upon significant U.S. assistance. OPBAT is an example of cooperation and coordination between entities. It has responded to the changing patterns and techniques of the drug traffickers employing innovative and advanced technologies. It has been a successful operation and with continued flexibility will remain so.

HH-3F on the water

HH-60J on the beach

1984 -- U. S. Coast Guard Rescue Swimmer Program Established:

At approximately 0400 on Saturday, 12 February the M/V MARINE ELECTRIC sent a distress call. The vessel was taking on water and sinking off the Virginia coast in 20– 40 foot seas with winds in excess of 60 knots. The Rescue Coordination Center Portsmouth alerted the Navy at NAS Oceana and the Coast Guard Air Station at Elizabeth City. The ready-helicopter HH-3F helicopter from Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City was immediately dispatched. It was one hour-fifteen minutes enroute in freezing rain. By the time the helicopter arrived the ship had sunk and 34 people were now desperately fighting for their lives in the frigid waters. The rescue basket was prepared and lowered but numbed by severe hypothermia the men were unable to grab the basket and pull themselves in. The Navy helicopter, with a rescue swimmer, was delayed because NAS Oceana did not keep a ready-crew on board the station at night but due to a shorter enroute time to the scene the Navy H-3 helicopter arrived on scene just shortly after the Coast Guard. The Navy swimmer immediately deployed but had difficulty with the Billy Pugh net collapsing in the rough seas. The two crews agreed to have the rescue swimmer work with a rigid basket lowered from the Coast Guard helicopter. For over an hour, both aircraft, supplemented by a second HH-3F out of Elizabeth City, positioned themselves to receive survivors. The Navy rescue swimmer swam to the point of exhaustion in 40-foot seas in his effort to save as many as he could. Conditions were so severe and the temperatures so cold that sea water on his facemask froze. A number of hoists were made but only three persons were recovered alive. Tragically a total of 31 crewmen perished.

The Congressional Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee convened hearings to question why the worlds premier maritime rescue service was unable to assist people in the water. It became apparent during the hearings that the existing Coast Guard techniques and equipment were inadequate for rescue in such circumstances as occurred with the MARINE ELECTRIC.

The rescue swimmers or equivalent had been used by other services for some time. The U. S. Air Force Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service pararescue operations evolved from trained parachute rescue teams utilized in the later part of World War II. Originally limited to pararescue operations the scope it was expanded over the years to include scubba capabilities. During the Vietnam conflict the pararescue man was part of the helicopter rescue teams recovering downed airmen. The U.S. Navy had trained aviation rescue swimmers in support of naval aviation operations.

At the operating level there were Coast Guard personnel that were aware of the need for a rescue swimmer capability within the Coast Guard. Visionaries at several Air Stations created their own rescue swimmer programs. Most notable of such initiatives were New York's Air Station Brooklyn's team and California's Air Station San Francisco's Sea Air Rotor Wing Evacuation Team (SARWET). With assistance of Air Force personnel training programs were set up. Everything, however, was in house and subject to limited funding. There was no advocate or support at the Headquarters level. This was partly due to the fact that the Coast Guard had been and was in a fight for its very existence; the budget was extremely limited; and instituting a new program was not top priority.

Congress mandated in the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1984 that "The Commandant of the Coast Guard shall use such sums as are necessary, from amounts appropriated for the operational maintenance of the Coast Guard, to establish a helicopter rescue swimmer program for the purpose of training selected Coast Guard personnel in rescue swimming skills."

The responsibility for research and implementation of this project was given to The Aviation Division (G-OAV) at Coast Guard Headquarters. LCDR Dana Goward, of the Aviation Plans and Programs Branch, was assigned to develop a proposal for a Helicopter Rescue Swimmer Program and determine the funds required to implement it. LCDR Ken Coffland, Chief of the Aviation Life Support Branch, was named Program Manager. To assist them was ASMCM Larry Farmer, the Aviation Survivalman (ASM) Specialist at the Coast Guard Institute in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

The source and designation of Coast Guard helicopter rescue swimmers was addressed. Aviation ratings in the Coast Guard, in addition to flight crew duties, were maintenance orientated and highly specialized. The extensive training and the maintaining of demanding rescue swimmer qualifications required a specific rating dedicated solely to this function. It was decided to transform a present rating rather than establish a new one. The rating most easily transformed was Aviation Survivalman (ASM). Transition of the ASM rating, however, raised concerns for those individuals within that rating who had no interest or the ability to become rescue swimmers. This was resolved by exempting individuals who were E-7 or above and providing a satisfactory procedure to change to a different rating. In June 1984 the Commandant authorized a five-year period to implement the program throughout Coast Guard aviation. Physical fitness

standards and requirements were established. The requirements were mission specific. Female personnel who possessed the strength and stamina and met the established standards were eligible to become rescue swimmers.

The initial concept of the Coast Guard program was primarily a maritime rescue resource similar to the Navy's. An agreement was entered into with the Navy by which Coast Guard helicopter rescue swimmers were trained at the U. S. Navy Rescue Swimmer School at NAS Pensacola, Florida. Training commenced on 10 September 1984. The Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City was the first unit to go operational in March of 1985. Two months later the Air Station recorded the first life saved by a rescue swimmer when a severely hypothermic survivor was unable to climb into the rescue basket.

Training for the Aviation Survivalman rating is both specific and intense. As of 1 January 1986, individuals have been required first to pass a physical fitness screening test and then attend sixteen weeks of Aviation Survivalman "A" School at ATTC Elizabeth City. This was followed by four weeks of training at Rescue Swimmer School. It was determined that the ability to provide pre-hospital life support for rescued individuals was a necessity. For a short period of time hospital corpsmen were part of the flight crew. Due to weight and space limitations on HH-65 and HH-60 helicopters it was decided that Coast Guard helicopter rescue swimmers should be qualified to perform these duties eliminating the need to carry a hospital corpsmen in the aircraft. Therefore, in addition to their other training, rescue swimmers are required to attend three weeks of training at EMT School at Coast Guard Training Center Petaluma, CA.

ASMCM Farmer developed the Coast Guard Helicopter Rescue Swimmer Manual to promulgate policies and operating procedures. The rescue swimmer deployed either by free fall from the helicopter or via the hoist cable and equipped with mask, fins, snorkel, and appropriate anti-exposure garments, would swim freely to assist the survivor. Master Chief Farmer, himself a rescue swimmer, was selected to lead the Rescue Swimmer Standardization Team at Air Station Elizabeth City established in September 1984.. The Rescue Swimmer Standardization Team remained at Elizabeth City until August 1988 when it was transferred to ATC Mobile.

A comprehensive schedule was developed for the implementation of the program throughout Coast Guard aviation. Every air station providing operationally ready helicopters for search and rescue was required to utilize rescue swimmers. In addition to Air Station Elizabeth City, San Francisco followed on November 1 1985; Astoria on 31 January 1986; Clearwater on 11 August 1986; Sitka on 20 November 1986; and Cape Cod on 1 December 1986. Implementation would

continue but there was considerable resistance within Coast Guard aviation regarding the need for rescue swimmers. Reasons and opinions put forth by those opposed were numerous and varied. Some had merit and were addressed. In most cases, however, it was a resistance to change. One of the greatest challenges was overcoming this resistance.

Initially there was a reluctance to deploy rescue swimmers except under favorable conditions. As operational experience was gained the saving of life dictated otherwise and Rescue Swimmers were increasingly utilized in extreme weather conditions. On 10 December 1987, Air Station Sitka, Alaska, received a distress call from the F/V *Bluebird* taking on water about 10 miles southwest of Sitka. An HH-3F was quickly launched to search for the vessel. The weather conditions were terrible. Visibility was down to ¼ mile in a severe snow storm, the seas were running at about 25 to 30 feet and the wind was blowing at 35 knots with gusts up to 70 knots. Aboard the vessel was a 33 year-old man and his 6 year-old son both of whom were wearing survival suits. In the heavy seas the tall rigging of the sinking boat swayed violently from side to side with the stern already awash. Despite numerous attempts the pilot and hoist operator were unable to get the rescue basket to the two people on the boat. The two survivors abandoned the vessel as it rolled and went down by the stern. The man's survival suit leaked and immediately filled with water. After several attempts to get into the basket, it became apparent that they could not. The rescue swimmer, ASM2 Jeffery Tunks, volunteered for deployment. In a few short moments Petty Officer Tunks was in the turbulent water and swimming to assist the two individuals. Fighting heavy seas and winds, Petty Officer Tunks struggled to get the two survivors into the rescue basket. Once secured, they were hoisted to the hovering HH-3. With the aircraft being buffeted by extremely gusty winds during the subsequent effort to recover the rescue swimmer, Petty Officer Tunks was dragged through an enormous sea swell, causing him to lose his mask and snorkel and sustain an injured back. Tunks was ultimately recovered and with the two survivors safely aboard, the HH-3 returned to Sitka. For his courage and presence of mind in deploying into conditions as yet not previously encountered during previous rescue swimmer operations ASM2 Jeffery Tunks became the first rescue swimmer to earn the Distinguished Flying Cross; the nations highest peacetime award for heroism.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE
DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

TO

JEFFERY D. TUNKS
AVIATION SURVIVALMAN SECOND CLASS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Petty Officer TUNKS is cited for extraordinary heroism during aerial flight on the night of 10 December 1987 as rescue swimmer on Coast Guard HH-3F 1486 engaged in the perilous rescue of a man and his son from the F/V BLUEBIRD which sank in storm tossed waters 10 miles southwest of Sitka, Alaska. The helicopter launched into a blinding snowstorm and severe turbulence to assist the stricken 26 foot fishing vessel foundering in 30 – foot seas. The two survivors abandoned the vessel as it rolled and went down by the stern. After several unsuccessful hoist attempts in the 70 knot winds, Petty Officer TUNKS voluntarily deployed into the frigid, angry seas. Swept back 75 yards from the victims as he was being lowered, Petty Officer TUNKS struggled through the towering waves to reach the survivors who were by now immobilized by the icy water entering their survival suits. He calmed and reassured them. Then with Herculean effort Petty Officer TUNKS was able to pull the survivors away from the sinking vessel, grab the sea tossed rescue basket after several attempts and roll them into the relative safety of the basket for hoisting. Later, as Petty Officer TUNKS was himself being hoisted, the helicopter was driven backwards by particularly violent gusts; Petty Officer TUNKS was smashed into the breaking waves which ripped away his mask and snorkel and injured his back. Petty Officer TUNKS' remarkable fortitude and exceptional daring in spite of imminent personal danger saved the father and child from perishing at sea. His courage and devotion to duty are most heartily commended and are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard.

Operations such as this continued to occur with increased regularity. As more people became aware of the significant enhancement that rescue swimmers gave to SAR team capabilities attitudes changed and resistance to the program changed to endorsement.

Like so many programs in the Coast Guard, lack of funding was a problem. The program was temporarily halted during 1987 and much of 1988. Fortunately funding for the program was restored in 1988 and implementation of the remaining air stations was rescheduled. Ten air stations went operational during 1988-1989. Budget constraints occurred again in 1990 and only three air stations went operational. LCDR Richard M. Wright became Rescue Swimmer Program Manager, and between February and July 1991, he implemented the final five air stations and two air facilities.

Rescue swimmers were being utilized in an increasing variety of operational situations. The Coast Guard was responding to persons in distress along rugged coastlines as well as further inland in ever increasing numbers. Concern was expressed that the training received by rescue swimmers and flight crews did not adequately prepare them for such conditions. The requirement for additional training and procedures did not gain a sense of urgency until a rescue swimmer was nearly killed in an attempt to rescue a stranded hiker off a 120 foot cliff along the rugged Oregon coastline.

LCDR Wright with the assistance of ASMCM Darrell Gelakoska, who became Chief of the Rescue Swimmer Training Branch, evaluated techniques whereby the rescue swimmer remained attached to the hoist cable and deployed directly to a survivor. This was followed by a program to expose rescue swimmers to severe sea conditions. ASMCM Gelakoska recommended in early 1995 that advanced training be provided in hazard awareness and the various new procedures, techniques and equipment that rescue swimmers did not receive in Rescue Swimmer School or normally encountered during operations at their air stations. A formal proposal was made and approved and an Advanced Rescue Swimmers School was established at Astoria, Oregon. The rugged coastline, demanding surf and prevailing high seas provided ideal training conditions. Twice a year for one month periods, HH-65A, HH-60J and Rescue Swimmer Training Branches from ATC Mobile host advanced rescue swimmer training for pilots, hoist operators, flight mechanics and rescue swimmers from all Coast Guard air stations. Although the mission of the school is to conduct training in advanced rescue swimmer operations, the focus is upon integrating the pilots and aircrew into an entire team to enhance the Coast Guard's ability to conduct helicopter rescue safely and efficiently. It is now a highly sought training opportunity by not only Coast Guard rescue swimmers, but also Navy, Air Force and international students. In 1997, the Coast Guard opened the Rescue Swimmer Training School at Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City

The Coast Guard Helicopter Rescue Swimmer Program has and continues to be outstandingly successful. During the period 1985 - 2004, Coast Guard helicopter rescue swimmers saved more than 5700 lives. This elite group operates in the most severe weather conditions imaginable deploying into extremely hostile environments. The record of success is directly attributable to the training, professionalism and courage not only of the rescue swimmers but also of the aircrews who deploy them. Only those who have willfully placed themselves in harms way and have known that innermost feeling which comes from a personal experiences resulting in the saving of life can understand the bonding and uniqueness of this group of kindred spirits. Courage and devotion to duty is a common trait.

Aviation Life Support Equipment

During 1970 a Life Support Section came into being, however, the emphasis was still on flight safety and standardization. Life support equipment was primarily of Navy derivation and those items germane to Coast Guard missions were obtained. It was not, however until late 1979 that helicopter crews were required to attend the Navy's Helicopter Egress Trainer. Egress inability is no longer a problem. As late as 1981 aircrews were flying in flight suits that did not protect against hypothermia. With the advent of the Rescue Swimmer Program the development of Life support equipment was accelerated. Rescue Swimmer personnel CDR. O'Dogherty, LCDR Coffland, LCDR Wright, ASMCM Farmer and ASMCM Giza were directly involved in acquisition and development of life support equipment.

In 1986 the Coast Guard evaluated two prototype aircrew anti-exposure coveralls resulting in the first anti-Coast Guard exposure coveralls. This evolved into the procurement of the CWU-62P Aircrew Drysuit.

In 1991, working closely with the Gentex Corporation, the Coast Guard developed the SPH-5CG helmet used by helicopter crews. It is a form fit, lightweight composite shell and energy-absorbing liner providing impact protection. It a visor system to protect the eyes from glare, wind and dust and is equipped with a quick disconnect device for ANVIS-6 night vision goggles. The internal wiring of the helmet is compatible with all Coast Guard aircraft.. The helmet dampens noise in excess of 39 decibels. The result is a light weight helmet that provides outstanding crash protection, sound attenuation and comfort.

In fulfillment of its drug interdiction mission the Coast Guard operated E-2C and RG-8A surveillance aircraft. The existing parachute system in the E-2C did not meet Coast Guard requirements and the RG-8A had no bail out system at all. The Aviation Life Support Branch began a search for a parachute sufficiently compact to work in the E-2C and also compatible with the extremely small cockpit of he RG-8A. A parachute manufactured by Butler Parachute Corporation, similar to those worn by the crew of the *Voyager* aircraft, was chosen. To meet Coast Guard requirements the parachute was modified to contain an LRU-18/C one person liferaft and a normal complement of survival aids. The package was designed as a backpack for the RG-8A and as a chest pack for the E-2C and EC-130V.

Equipment utilized by the airlines for smoke and/or fire in the cockpit which also provided eye protection was investigated. The EROS Quick Don Oxygen/Smoke mask best satisfied Coast Guard needs. An Underwater Emergency Rebreather was developed as an interim measure and was replaced by an Emergency Survival Air System (ESAS) which was compact and could be placed into the side of LPU-25/P survival vest and greatly enhanced underwater egress.

The Coast Guard has made great strides in the field of aviation survival. Importance has been placed on survivability and on providing the best equipment available to aircrews. Recognizing that, in the preponderance of emergencies, a crewmember will survive an accident with only what he/she has on the body, all essential survival aids were designed to be integrated into the personal equipment worn during flight. Truly a job well done!

1984 – Operation Hat Trick –The Coast Guard Takes the Offensive In The Drug War.

Operation Hat Trick was a series of offensive operations. The first offensive strike was a DEA special operation which located the cocaine-processing facilities in Columbia. Mexico had gotten back in marijuana production and Mexican Federal Police and DEA agents destroyed a large marijuana growing operation in Chihuahua. The Chihuahua operation was the second strike. The third offensive operation was maritime. Known as Operation Wagon Wheel, it was a multinational, multi-service, winter drug interdiction operation, which included protracted operations in the Caribbean, off the coast of Columbia, and in the Bahamas. RADM Richard Cueroni, Commander of CGD7 and NBISS Coordinator. had the operational responsibility. The plan was conceived and executed by Captain. G.Stephen Duca as Chief of Operations.

The operation was planned in two phases. Phase I was the deployment of ships and aircraft to reinforce the patrol line in the western Bahamas and along the choke points from the Yucatan Peninsula to the Virgin Islands. In Phase II the patrol force moved south to the coastal waters of Central and South America with a focus on the Guajira Peninsula of Columbia. The operation covered a segment of a circle with an arc extending from the Yucatan Peninsula to the eastern boundary of the Leeward Islands, touching Panama and Columbia. The area inside the segment, with its center in South Florida, encompassed the Caribbean. The operating area was divided into three zones. The departure zone was near drug-producing nations and trans-shipment points extending seaward from their territorial limits to 100 nautical miles. The arrival zone was the mainland of the United States and its territorial waters to a point 12 nautical miles offshore. The area in between was the transit zone.

HH-52 secured in "landing grid"

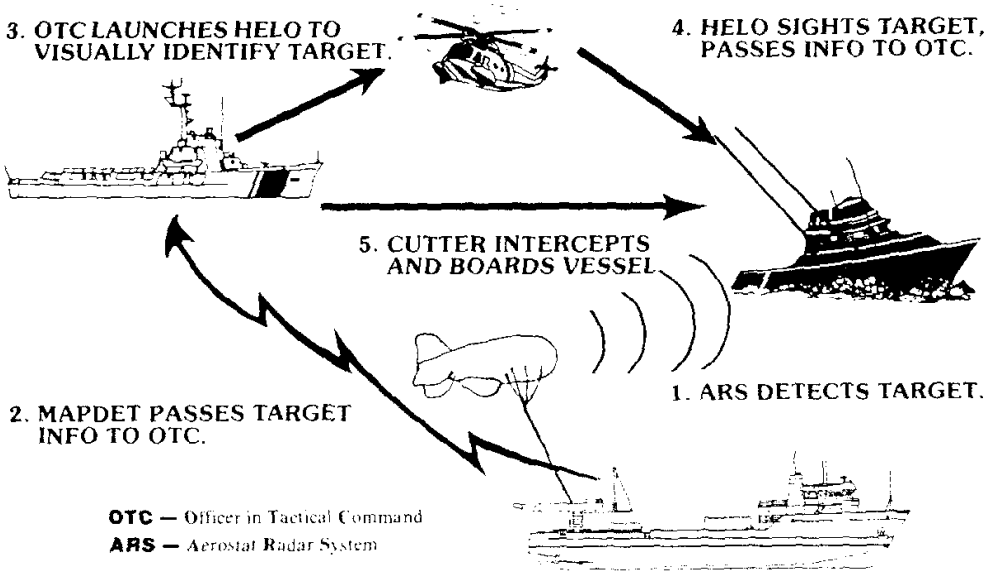
Operation Wagon Wheel forces consisted of the Coast Guard cutters NORTHWIND (WAGB-282) serving as flag ship, four high endurance cutters, six medium endurance cutters, two surface-effect cutters, two patrol boats and four buoy tenders. The Navy contributed a guided-missile destroyer (DDG), a guided missile frigate (FFG) and three high-speed hydrofoils (PHM). Air support was three Navy P-3 Orions, two Coast Guard C-130s, and a Coast Guard HU-25 Falcon, for long range surveillance. Five Coast Guard HH-52 helicopters operated from surface ships. Phase I began 31 October 1984. Phase II began 22 November as the patrol line moved south toward Columbia.

From a maritime interdiction viewpoint confiscation and seizures were less than spectacular and was so noted in the Press. Continuous rain in the marijuana growing areas washed out roads and trails leading to the storage areas. Gale force winds kept many grass boats in the harbor. There is, however, more to the story. Planning for the operation was a closely held secret but this did not last long. The news media broadcasted the event six days before the Caribbean Squadron started its move southward. Alerted, the smugglers began to stockpile marijuana ashore to wait out the United States Forces. The political climate in Columbia was changing and as a result Columbian Forces made in country sweeps eliminating the stock piles. This was not reported by the media. The Caribbean-Squadron joint operation itself was very successful and was kept in place.

Planning started immediately for Hat Trick II, a continuation of the original sea-air effort. The second operation was larger and more diversified. All military services supported the Coast Guard, Customs and DEA. The governments of Columbia, Panama, Venezuela and Jamaica cooperated. The Coast Guard and Navy were the primary maritime interdiction forces while Customs and all military services did air interdiction. A three month concerted effort resulted in the seizure of 1.7 million pounds of marijuana, 22,000 pounds of cocaine and the arrest of 1300 drug traffickers.

By 1986 Hat Trick became more of a concept than a special operation. It became a year around effort focusing on strategy as well as tactical operations. The Caribbean-Squadron (CARIBRON) concentrated on the departure zones adjacent to the drug producing countries. Both Coast Guard and Navy vessels took part in the operations. Coast Guard law enforcement details (LEDET) were assigned to all Navy ships. Navy ships were under the tactical command of the Coast Guard. Long-range air support was provided by Coast Guard C-130s and Navy P-3s. Local air surveillance was the responsibility of embarked Navy and Coast Guard helicopters. Pulse operations were initiated and, depending on the mission, additional air support was also given by Customs aircraft, Air Force E-3 AWACS, Navy E-2C Hawkeyes, Coast Guard HU-25 Falcons, Marine Corp OV-10s, and Royal Dutch Air Force F-27 aircraft.

The choke-points were reinforced and Coast Guard manned sea-based aerostat vessels were placed on station to increase radar detection capabilities. State of the art electronics were carried aloft to heights up to 2500 feet by helium balloons (SBAs) tethered to a ship referred to as a mobile aerostat platform (MAP). This provided a great increased in radar detection capability. The MAP worked with one or more cutters with embarked helicopters. These were called maritime interdiction surveillance teams (MISTs). A target information system aboard the MAP sent a protected video display directly to the cutter which served as the MIST command and control vessel. The helicopter then investigated the SBA targets. The MAPs were capable of refueling the cutters at sea. The main drawback to the system was that the aerostats were susceptible to weather. A strong wind or a lightning strike could put the aerostat out of commission. Weather therefore had to be monitored at all times. In spite of this shortcoming the aerostats proved to be effective.



The effectiveness of aerial surveillance coupled with ship-board operation proved itself time and again. Naval Air Reserve P-3s and Coast Guard C-130s flew patrols over choke points and primary drop zones. Some of the C-130s were equipped with SLIR which provided an excellent surveillance path covering an area of 35 miles each side of track line from an altitude

of 8000 feet. Upgrading C-130 capabilities continued. This, coupled with increased profile abilities on the part of the aircrews, resulted in a flow of information to the surface vessels which produced positive results. HH-52 helicopters carried on board Coast Guard cutters served as "eyes over the horizon." Examples of the effectiveness of this concept are numerous. Typical is a multiple drug bust made by the Coast Guard cutter *Diligence* (WMEC-616). A long range surveillance aircraft located a vessel east of the Bahamas that matched the profile and was apparently disabled. The information was relayed to the *Diligence.* When the cutter arrived on scene investigation revealed that the vessel was the BISMARK, she was indeed disabled, she was stateless, and her cargo was 30 tons of marijuana. The DILIGENCE took the BISMARK in tow and headed west to Florida. The cutter continued to deploy her helicopter en route to Miami. During a surveillance flight the helo crew sighted the motor vessel ROSANGLE with 40 marijuana bales exposed on deck. Since the DILIGENCE was engaged with a tow the cutter LIPAN was dispatched, made the seizure, and took six prisoners.

By 1986 marijuana was transported in hidden compartments, motherships were having trouble getting through the Caribbean and were going further to the east in the open ocean. Intelligence was better, the drug operations were being penetrated, marijuana smuggling operations were converting to cocaine, production was down in Columbia and up in Mexico and domestically. Seizures were down but the price of marijuana was going up. The signs were there. RADM Howard B. Thorsen, USCG Southeast Region Coordinator and Seventh District Commander estimated an interdiction rate of 50% and up to 60% in some cases. The Admirals estimates would prove to be conservative. Ambrose Weldon kingpin of the Gulf off-load organization stated losses exceeded 80% in 1987. Columbian suppliers arranged off-loads at the Belize-Mexico border. He further stated that he had to negotiate with Cuban intermediaries to arrange off-loads within 200 miles of his high-speed boats. Attrition had cut deeply into reliable help. By the end of the year 1987 there were no assets left. (Ambrose Weldon was a cover name given to protect the principal). Columbian multi-ton marijuana smuggling ended in 1987. Total marijuana seizures dropped to about 400,000 in 1988. The media had defined the maritime interdiction program as unwinable. The Coast Guard had conducted a successful war of attrition in spite of inter-agency disagreements and a lack of clear direction from the administrations. This was not mentioned by the Press. By 1990 an astonishing 74% of marijuana taken was seized on land at or near the Mexican border. By 1993 the wholesale price of marijuana had risen to $1500 a pound.

Cocaine was a different story. Maritime seizures had risen significantly and would continue to do so but about half of the volume transported by sea was done using commercial maritime containers. Large merchant ships transporting multiple containers were almost impossible to search at sea. Most of the cocaine smuggling was done by air. Air interdiction leading to apprehension at a delivery point was the method of operation. Cocaine had become a real problem by 1985 and in 1986 the Anti Drug Act established a roll for the Coast Guard in air interdiction. Cocaine interdiction efforts are also addressed under the Air Interdiction heading and the OPBAT heading.

1985 – Coast Guard acquires executive transport - C-20B

C-20B Executive transport

The C-20B is a military modification of the commercial Gulfstream III aircraft, manufactured by Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation. The C-20B was used to support long range-low passenger missions offering worldwide access and included a communications suite which provided worldwide secure voice and data communications. The Air Force chose the C-20B as a replacement for the C-140B Jetstar in 1983.

The Coast Guard obtained a C-20B from the Air Force in 1985 to replace the C-11 executive transport. It served as the Commandant's and Secretary of Transportation's executive jet transport. It was the only dedicated command and control support in the Coast Guard inventory. The changes compared to the C-11, in addition to the command and control capability, included a revised wing of greater span and area with drag reducing winglets, more fuel tank capacity and thus greater range, re-profiled nose and a three foot fuselage stretch. Contractor logistics support was utilized was utilized.

Gulfstream C-20B

Manufacturer	Gulfstream Aerospace Corporation
Designation	C-20B
Other Designations, if any:	USCG-01; Gulfstream III
Aircraft Type	Fixed-wing twin-engine long range command and control turbojet aircraft

Wing Span	77' 10"
Height	24' 6"
Length	83' 2"
Fuel Capacity	28,300 lbs usable
Top Speed	.75Mach
Cruising Speed	.75Mach
Range	3700 nautical miles
Gross Weight	69,700 pounds
Crew	2 with up to 14 passengers
Service Ceiling	45,000 feet
Engine(s)	2 x Rolls-Royce Spey MK511-8 turbofan engines producing 11,400 pounds of thrust per engine; engines equipped with thrust reversers.
Unit cost	Approx. $22.2 million

1985 – HH-65A Dolphins enter service:

The United States Coast Guard added 96 Short Range Recovery (SRR) HH-65A helicopters to its fleet to replace the HH-52A Sikorsky Sea Guard. The twin-engine Dolphins operate up to 150 miles off shore and will fly comfortably at 120 knots for three hours. Though normally stationed ashore, the Dolphins can be carried on board medium and high endurance Coast Guard Cutters. The cutters are capable of refueling and supporting the helicopter for the duration of a patrol. Unlike the HH-52, the HH-65A is not able to perform water landings.

The SRR is utilized for Search and Rescue, enforcement of laws and treaties, including drug interdiction, polar ice breaking, marine environmental protection including pollution control, and military readiness. Helicopters carried on Coast Guard cutters greatly enhance surveillance capabilities and mission effectiveness.

The HH-65A minimum equipment requirements exceed anything previously packaged into one helicopter weighing in at less than 10,000 pounds. HH-65As are made of corrosion-resistant, composite-structure materials. The shrouded tail rotor is unique to the Dolphin. Also a unique

feature of the Dolphin is its computerized flight management system which integrates state-of-the-art communications and navigation equipment. This system provides automatic flight control. At the pilot's direction, the system will bring the aircraft to a stable hover 50 feet above a selected object. This is an important safety feature in darkness or inclement weather. Selected search patterns can be flown automatically, freeing the pilot and copilot to concentrate on sighting the search object.

The TALON deck landing system is utilized for the HH-65. It consists of a helicopter mounted hydraulic probe and a six foot diameter shipboard mounted honeycombed grid. After the helicopter touches down, the probe is activated by the pilot to engage the grid. The probe contacts and locks into the grid by applying and maintaining a hold-down force. To save weight, the probe can be easily removable and can be installed when the HH-65 is deployed to a ship.

Mission	Short Range Recovery (SRR) helicopter twin-engine
Manufacturer	Aerospatiale
Overall Length	38 ft.
Rotor Diameter	39 ft.
Overall Height	13 ft.
Maximum Gross Weight	9200 lbs.
Empty Mission Weight	6092 lbs
Fuel Capacity	291 gal / 1900 lbs
Powerplants	Two Lycoming LTS-101-750B -- rated 742 SHP each
Maximum Range	300 nautical miles
Radius of Action	150 nautical miles
Maximum Speed	165 knots
Cruising Speed	120 knots
Maximum Endurance	3.5 hours
Service Ceiling (Hover)	7500 feet above sea level
Cargo Sling Capacity	2000 lbs
Rescue Hoist Capacity	600 lbs
Crew	Number of pilots 2 Number flight crew 2

A SRR mission analysis began in 2000. An upgraded version of the HH-65, redesignated as a Multi-Mission Cutter Helicopter (MCH), under the Integrated Deepwater Program, will undergo a Service Life Extension Program (SLEP), including airframe upgrades, landing gear upgrade, improved fenestron (tail rotor), updated avionics, increased payload, additional fuel carrying capabilities and increased cruise speed. A re-engining was originally part of the MCH conversion. Due to in-flight loss of power events, the Coast Guard decided to perform re-engining as soon as possible to restore safe and reliable operations. This has commenced. The engine selected is the Turbomeca Arriel 2C2-CG giving the HH-65 greater power, better maneuverability with an increased power margin.

1987 – Coast Guard Aviation establishes an air-interdiction role in the Drug War:

In the first years of the 1980s Cocaine was not on the DEA radar and the Carter administration saw no health hazard associated with it. The Bahamas were a trans-shipment point for both marijuana and cocaine. It was here that Carlos Lehder in conjunction with the Medellin Cartel revolutionized the cocaine trade. Previously drug dealers relied on human “mules” to smuggle drugs on regular commercial flights. Utilizing Norman Cay, an island in the Bahamas owned by Carlos, as a trans-shipment facility, much greater quantities of cocaine could be transported with far less risk. Cocaine would be transported to the Bahamas and then transferred to small personal type aircraft which were used to transport it to pre-arranged locations in the United States. Norman Cay was closed but many remote trans-shipment landing sites remained. In addition the smugglers began dropping shipments at pre-arranged drop points to be recovered by high speed boats referred to as “Go-Fasts”. If packaged properly “coke” will float. The primary means used by the Medellin Cartel to transport cocaine to the drop points was light twin engine aircraft.

The Cocaine threat had become highly publicized by 1986. Congress was not pleased with the existing effort and began developing its own strategy. Critics wanted increased air interdiction activities and faulted the El Paso Intelligence Center for not providing timely tactical information to interdiction agencies. Congress proposed all source Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence Centers (3CI) and provisions to enhance the capabilities of the interdiction agencies. Admiral Paul Yost had just become Commandant and he believed strongly that the Coast Guard should be assigned the expanded air interdiction responsibilities because it had a secure command and control system and a complete infrastructure to train personnel and support its equipment whereas the Customs Service did not.

Even though the Coast Guard was charged under Title 14 for the enforcement of laws on and over the high seas, naked expediency and somewhat naive probity created a void. The Commissioner of Customs, William Von Raab, astutely exploited this and by means legitimate activism built a fleet of small boats and an air force. To this end Customs had four P-3A aircraft with sensors, a small fleet of interceptor/tracker aircraft, and some Blackhawk helicopters on loan from the Army. The Navy had previously offered the Coast Guard 5 P3 aircraft for

interdiction purposes. They were old and would have had to be upgraded. Paul Yost who was Chief of Staff to the Commandant, ADM Gracey, strongly recommended that Coast Guard take them. The Commandant declined because he did not have money in the budget to upgrade, and support the aircraft. Customs took them, went to congress and got the money to upgrade, installed proper radar, obtained and trained pilots, obtained support and put four in service. ADM Yost stated in his oral history that as Commandant he would not let this happen again.

A Commandants Air Interdiction Study Group composed of COMDT G-O, G-ole, G-OAI G-OAV, G-EAE, CAA (AO), CCGD7 (oil) and G-L convened in July of 1986 and produced a finished Coast Guard Air Interdiction Plan. Armed with this information the Commandant briefed and convinced the Secretary of Transportation, Elizabeth Dole, that the Coast Guard already had the necessary infrastructure and trained personnel to accomplish the mission and was the logical choice for the expanded air interdiction effort. Realizing that he would face strong opposition he arranged to personally brief President Reagan at the White House. With Secretary Dole, Secretary of the Treasury Jim Baker, Chief of Staff Howard Baker, and Ed Meese present he made his presentation. The result was that the Coast Guard became involved in the air-interdiction mission.

The Anti Drug Abuse act was passed and signed by the president on October 27, 1986. It was an omnibus drug bill providing funds for education, treatment, and interdiction. In addition to establishing mandatory minimum penalties for drug offenses funds were provided for Department of Defense Interdiction assistance, Customs enforcement, Coast Guard drug interdiction enhancement, the United States Bahamas Drug Interdiction Task Force, and three Command, Control, Communications, Intelligence Centers (C3I).

Congress determined that eight Navy E-2C AWAC aircraft should be dedicated to the air interdiction mission. The Navy was to operate four and initially the Coast Guard was to operate four. This was later amended to four Navy, two for the Coast Guard and two for Customs. The C3I East facility was jointly operated by the Coast Guard and Customs Service. In addition, congress funded APG-66 intercept radar capable of multi-tracking and high resolution FLIR for nine Coast Guard HU-25 aircraft to be used as interceptors and trackers. Funds to add long range surveillance radar to the C-130 inventory was also provided. In addition HH-3F helicopters with FLIR were assigned to OPBAT operations. Within three years, based on operational performance criteria, the Coast Guard operated four E2Cs.

This legislation was the basis for the initial formal participation of the Coast Guard in the air interdiction mission. Up to that time Coast Guard aviation's role in drug interdiction was solely in support of the maritime forces. Helicopters were carried onboard cutters to enhance surveillance capabilities and contributed effectively to the operation. Long range fixed wing aircraft flew patrols in areas of transit identifying smuggling vessels by means of profile and intelligence information. The position of the drug traffickers was relayed to the surface vessel which moved in and accomplished the intercept.

The establishment of a Coast Guard role in air-smuggling interdiction was not without controversy. The execution of drug interdiction had been subject to inter-agency disagreements and politics since the beginning.

Coast Guard E2C AWAC

Coast Guard Air Facility Norfolk CGAW1

Contained in the Drug Abuse Act was a provision for an air facility to support the Grumman E2C Hawkeye aircraft. The Coast Guard was to form an air interdiction unit operating Navy E2C aircraft. The Navy was to provide the aircraft and provide support facilities to operate the aircraft. Naval Air Station Norfolk was the designated Naval support facility for E2C aircraft and became the initial site of CGAW1. The Coast Guard met with the Navy and the Grumman Corporation to discuss the implementation of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). During the discussion it became evident that NAS Norfolk had no hangar space, no buildings, no excess furniture, and no phones available for Coast Guard use. There was vacant area next to the VAW squadron seawall which was utilized. The MOA was signed off on 2 January 1987 and orders were issued for a pre –commissioning detachment to report to Norfolk and begin forming the unit.

Temporary office spaces were obtained and hundreds of details had to be taken care of. Everything from service records to procurement of basic office supplies had to be looked after. The Coast Guard had never flown the E2C so aircrew qualification was required and Grumman assisted in maintenance training. The Hawkeye was equipped with an electronically advanced radar package which additionally required specialized maintenance and operational training.

Intense on the job training was commenced. Flight Officers, necessary to interpret radar data and coordinating intercept targets, were obtained from the Navy and direct commissioned in the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard did not have Flight Officers and did not have the time to train them. This would be modified later on. The unit was formally commissioned on January 22 under the command of CDR. Norman Scurria.

Amazingly the first operational mission was flown on 9 February and on the 10th the unit got its first bust bringing down a twin engine aircraft full of cocaine. This is a testament the skill level of the crewmembers and the pre-planning, asset allocation and operational procedures established by CCGD7 during the previous three months. Further amplification of pre-planning and operational procedures is included under the C3I heading.

For the first two months the aircraft were flown at a 600 hour per year level which was the Navy programmed level. In month three the unit increased that to 800 and by the end of six months the aircraft were at the 1000 hour level. Customs was getting barely 500 hours per year and it was not long before the Coast Guard was also operating the E2Cs initially assigned to Customs. This lead to the transfer of assets to St. Augustine, Florida.

The E-2C was an ideal platform to initially acquire targets, closely control intercept aircraft, data link a "real time" picture to an operations center, and provide command/control services for other aircraft. The E-2c long range, 360 degree AN/APS-125 search radar was capable of detecting small targets at great range.. An example of this capability was demonstrated during the training period. CCGD5 reported a tug had arrived Norfolk and had lost a tow of three barges the previous day. They asked if the E2C would do a radar sweep from altitude to see if they could attempt to locate them. The E-2C radar picked up a blip, not accounted for, at over 200 miles. An Aircraft was vectored to investigate the blip. It was the lost barges.

Initially intercept missions were assigned by the South Florida Interdiction Center. This was a joint operation of CCGD7 and the USCS. CGD7 also assigned many planned and dedicated Air Interdiction missions based on intelligence inputs and using resources from multiple agencies in pulse type operations. When C3I became operational the E2Cs, COMLANTAREA assets "Chopped" to C3I for mission assignment and control.

C3I East

In the mid 1980's drug interdiction forces went on the offensive. A series of multi-agency sea-air operations to block drugs from Caribbean sources began. These would evolve into an ongoing concept. The Coast Guard was the lead agency for marine interdiction. The value of aviation resources to Coast Guard counter-narcotic interdiction efforts had been demonstrated repeatedly. Recognizing the need for direct aviation input on the planning of large Caribbean drug operations CAPT John Hearn, CCGD7 Operations/Law Enforcement, requested an Aviator billet for his staff. LT Dan SLYKER, a helicopter Aircraft Commander

and a former Chief Gunners Mate with extensive law enforcement experience, was assigned. BY the fall of 1985 these operations included rudimentary air interdiction procedures – mainly instructions for aircrews and search radar capable vessels when observing aircraft that fit the profile and/or engaged in airdrops of contraband. The procedures were expanded and became more detailed OPORDS for on-going drug interdiction operations that followed.

The National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS) was established in 1983 to provide interagency counternarcotics intelligence coordination and drug interdiction planning. The NNBIS was divided up into regions. The South Florida Task Force (SFTF) was the regional center covering the lower Atlantic coast from Florida to North Carolina and most of the Florida Gulf Coast. The SFTF had an Operations Information Center (OIC) and an Intelligence Information Center (IIC). The regional center evaluated and collated intelligence from participating agencies. They identified targets and determined those with seizure potential. The target vessel or aircraft was tracked in OIC and the OIC watch officer located an interdiction resource in the targets path. It was the agency that owned the interdiction resource that made the decision to intercept, board, search, seize and arrest.

Upon enactment of the Anti Drug Abuse Act the Commandant wanted immediate Coast Guard involvement. Lt. Slyker, CCGD7 Air Operations/Air Interdiction Officer, was a participant in the Commandant Yost's Air Interdiction Study Group and was tasked with the implementation of Coast Guard Air Interdiction operations. Operational areas were chosen based on intelligence from SE NNBIS, JFTF, and OPBAT. Air intercept procedures were developed. Coast Guard aviators could make a hoist in extremely adverse situations or drop a pump on a dime, but they had no experience in covertly approaching and identifying a possible drug smuggling aircraft. Rules of engagement, communication plans, and operational procedures were developed and implemented. Air intercept operations began in mid December utilizing available assets. The E2Cs began flying in February.

Upon initial entry of the Coast Guard into air interdiction, the Customs Service (USCS) and the Coast Guard (USCG) jointly manned a South Florida Air Interdiction Center (AIC) in coordination with the Federal Aviation Administration's Miami Control Center. Air intercept controllers were provided by the Customs Service and the FAA. The increased air-interdiction operations placed a significant additional burden on the FAA controllers and as a result the Coast Guard decided to obtain personnel with a Radarman rating and train them as dedicated air intercept controllers. The job title of Detection Systems Specialists (DSS) was chosen to match that used by Customs to eliminate confusion in a joint operation.

C3I East was dedicated on 27 April 1987. It was a highly sophisticated facility capable of receiving input from a number of radar and intelligence sources – sort and evaluate the information – dispatch assets and coordinate intercept operations by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies. Commissioner of Customs William von Raab and Commandant of the Coast Guard Admiral Paul A. Yost both spoke at the dedication extolling the capabilities of C3I East. President Bush did the same and emphasized that the facility provided the best example of how agencies would work together to wage war on drugs. This would not be the case. Customs saw the entry of the Coast Guard into air-interdiction and

Miami C3I facility as an erosion of their authority and mission responsibilities and reacted accordingly.

CAPT Jim Leskinovitch, the Coast Guard Officer in Charge, with the assistance of LT. Dave Masiero headed up the pre-commissioning detail. Pre-planning requirements were determined and procedures were detailed. Operational inputs were obtained from Coast Guard sources as well as other agencies. Manning requirements were established. Watch Officers and 38 Radarmen had to be trained for air interdiction operations. Lt Slyker was assigned as the Tactical Air Missions Planning Officer in June. Lt Masiero was the Senior Command Duty Officer and was responsible for training. A dual operation took place at C3I and the Air Interdiction Center at the Miami ARTC for several months to facilitate a smooth transition.

Realizing that intensive training would be required to fully qualify the Coast Guard watch-standers in a field they had never been exposed to before, CAPT Leskinovitch obtained assistance from U.S. Air Force Training Specialists and Subject Matter Experts. Air intercept training was provided at Tyndal AFB where the Air Force had a training facility set up that duplicated "real-time" intercept information at the Southeast Sector Operations Center (NORAD). This was combined with weather, FAA operation procedures and terminology. A quality training program was established. Customs was invited to participate but Mr. Denmat, the Customs Officer-in-Charge at the local level, declined the invitation. They were later directed by Customs Headquarters to participate. The result was high caliber well trained operators.

C3I used an automated system with a computerized display. The system accepted feed from the FAA, tethered Aerostat balloons, all Customs and Coast Guard aircraft and vessels, inputs from JTF4.* This information was sent to all work stations giving each watchstander updated information. A radar contact could be traced from the beginning to the end of its trip. In addition to the radar contact the watchstander had the location of all law enforcement vessels and aircraft in the area and the projected destination. The instant access provided was invaluable in interdiction efforts.

A hypothetical scenario is as follows. ----- A Coast Guard E2C airborne detection aircraft on patrol picks up a radar blip on the monitor. It is a small aircraft, more than 150 miles away, headed north from Columbia, flying close to the water. The contact is fed into the system and a computer data base shows that there has been no flight plan filed. While the E2C continues its radar patrol, a Coast Guard or Customs jet is dispatched to intercept. Intercept is made. The jet matches speed and moves to within 15 yards to obtain aircraft identification number. It is phony. The jet continues surveillance or, depending on the point of intercept. a propeller driven aircraft designed for long flights takes over the intercept and trails the suspected aircraft. This can continue for an extended period of time with the pilot of the suspected drug running aircraft either unaware that he is being followed or trying to figure out how to lose the pursuer. Finally the drug-runner makes a move toward a remote airstrip in central Florida. An alerted Customs or Coast Guard helicopter, with night vision capabilities, is dispatched with armed lawmen on board. When the suspected drug-runner

touches down the helicopter is behind it. the Federal agents jump from the helicopter and rush the plane. If the hunch is right, a drug bust has been made.

* The FY 1989 National Defense Authorization Act designated the Department of Defense as the lead agency for the detection and monitoring program targeted against the aerial and maritime traffic attempting to bring drugs into the United States. Three task forces were established to direct the anti-drug surveillance efforts. JTF4 was located in Key West Florida. They coordinated through the controlling agency and were very effective.

Coast Guard Air Station St. Augustine:

CAPT Tom Johnson assumed command of CGAW1 in July of 1989. He had earlier initiated increased Coast Guard aviation activities in the Operation Bahamas, Turks, and Caicos (OPBAT) and had been directly involved in initial Coast Guard acquisition of the E-2Cs. Shortly after his arrival Air Facility Norfolk (CGAW-1) was disestablished and relocated to St. Augustine, Florida. Again working out of trailers, the high tempo air interdiction operations continued. Construction of a new hangar complex, a state-of-the-art 78,000 square foot facility, was completed in November. Two additional E-2C previously operated by the Customs service had been obtained and the station's personnel complement was increased to 140. Coast Guard Air Station St. Augustine was formally commissioned on 26 January 1990.

Whenever narco-smugglers felt that the law enforcement agencies were on to their operation they would make changes in methods and procedures. Based on best intelligence and habit patterns basic air interdiction operations were developed. In the early 1980s the Custom Service significantly curtailed smugglers flying loads of drugs directly into remote/rural fields by putting radar operators into the FAA Miami Control Center to sort low/slow inbound aircraft targets that met the profile of operations. They would deploy enforcement teams on helicopters and track the smuggler to point of landing where an arrest and seizure would occur. These operations took place in the arrival zone which was the Custom Services area of responsibility. The Coast Guard had been given marine interdiction responsibility for the transit zone which extended from the U.S. shore line to the 12 mile limit of the source country. When the Coast Guard became actively involved in air interdiction a good deal of emphasis was placed on the transit and departure zones. With the change in mode of operation the E-2cs were deployed to six foreign Forward Operating Bases in the Caribbean stretching from Belize to Carioca to Grenada. In addition many CONUS bases were routinely used as staging areas. Deployment locations were based on known methods of operation and intelligence information that was getting better and better. This

type operation proved to be most effective. During the last year of operation E2 aircraft were deployed 293 days out of the year.

With Tactical control of assets exercised at the C3I center the Coast Guard operation became the model for joint interagency cooperation. As the Joint Task Force 4 (JTF4) came on line in 1989, the E-2Cs became an integral part of their AEW operations. Jorge Ochoa, a principle of the Medellin Cartel, testified to the effectiveness of this operation stating that the interception rate was high enough that they established new routes through Central America.

Coast Guard Air Station St. Augustine, CGAW-1, was disestablished 22 November 1991. VADM Welling, Atlantic Area Commander spoke words of praise and tribute to the men and women who for a period of five years flew, operated and maintained sophisticated E-2C Hawkeye AEW aircraft in an exemplary manner.

In 1987, LTJG Norm Schweitzer reported to Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida as one of the first two Coast Guard officers selected for the Coast Guard Flight Officer program in support of the newly acquired E-2C Hawkeye aircraft. Previous to this all Flight Officers were direct commissioned out of the Navy or Naval Air Reserve, He went on to earn aviator wings and was the Commanding Officer of the Houston Air Station during the Hurricane Katrina response in 2005. ADM Yost had promised all direct commissioned Flight Officers a career in the Coast Guard. This promise was kept. Five Flight Officers were selected to receive pilot transition. The others chose to embark on new and challenging career paths within the Coast Guard.

Air Intercept Aircraft:

Initial intercepts were made using HU-25A and HU-25B aircraft while waiting for the modified HU-25C to come on line. This was difficult and required intercept control from the E-2Cs to be effective. By means of training exercises, utilizing Coast Guard Auxiliary aircraft as Targets of Interest (TOI), crewmembers learned to use their weather radars to roughly gauge closure rates. The HU-25C was equipped with an APG-66 radar for air-to-air intercept, improved Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) radar for close-in tracking, and an Electro-Optical day color Electro-Optic device and military satellite communications. An advanced tactical workstation, with data base, capable of tracking up to 30 surface contacts simultaneously, significantly improved command, control, communications, computers and intelligence

capabilities. The APG 66 radar made available to the pilots, on a radar display, the target closure rate, altitude, speed and heading. With the HU-25C operational it became a "whole new ball game."

The HU-25Cs were also forward staged to many locations throughout the Caribbean including GTMO Boringuen, Nassau, Curacao, Grenada, Panama, Honduras and Belize. They were used effectively. They might fly in support of a Coast Guard E-2C on one day, a USCS P-3 or USAF E-3 the next day, or a French, Dutch or British West Indies Guard (WIG) ship, GTMO radar, a USN Aegis-equipped vessel, or Relocatable Over-The-Horizon Radar (ROTHOR) on any other given day of any given deployment.

A HU-25C was maintained at the ready with a qualified Air Intercept crew. If a suitable aircraft and qualified crew was not airborne and available for divert a HU-25C was be placed on ready alert. The aircraft was preflighted with all flight gear on board. The Inertial Navigation System (INS) was aligned and then shut down in order to be able to perform a rapid alignment at launch. Intercept procedures were established by which identification of an aircraft by means of aircraft number and general description was made and a trail position established both during daylight and night hours. Proficiency was obtained and maintained by performing intercepts.

EC-130V

The E2C was a single mission aircraft with an air endurance designed for Naval Aircraft Carrier Operation. The Lockheed EC-130V Hercules AEW&C aircraft was first developed for the United States Coast Guard as a proof of concept aircraft in 1991 by the General Dynamics Company. It was designed as a multi-mission aircraft that combined a C-130H airframe (CG1721) with the APS-125 Radar and Mission System of the US Navy E2 Hawkeye. This aircraft was for counter-narcotics missions requiring greater endurance than the E-2 could provide, but was also evaluated for Search and Rescue, Fisheries Patrols, EEZ enforcement and as a support aircraft for NASA Space Shuttle launches. Externally the EC-130 differs from a standard Coast Guard C-130 with the fitting of a large rotodome housing the APS-125 radar. Internally the mission system is palletized and was rolled into the C-130 cargo bay to complete the conversion. The thinking was to take a known radar system and put it into a known, trustworthy airframe with an extended range of operation.

The EC-130V was flew out of Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater during an 11 month operational evaluation of the aircraft. It was utilized in as many mission functions as

possible. It proved very effective in coordinating and directing multiple assets and could work more than one case at a time. Due to budget reductions and the existing fund distribution emphasis within the Coast Guard, the EC-130V program was terminated. This aircraft was transferred to the USAF in 1993 as the NC-130H for further development including upgrading to the latest APS-145 Radar. That airplane was at Edwards AFB and flown as a test bed in the late 1990s (1995-1999). By mid-1999 the Navy had the plane NAS Patuxent River as a test platform for avionics related to the Navy's Hawkeye 2000 program.

The De-Emphasis:

The Drug War interdiction efforts were in reality a war of attrition. The object was to make it too costly for the smuggler to continue the operation. The response of the smuggler was to adapt and/or change the methods of operation. Maritime interdiction of marijuana in the Caribbean was an example of this. Because of interdiction efforts the main source of supply no longer came through the Caribbean into South Florida; it came from Mexico and home grown sources in the United States. Air interdiction was more costly and less effective because natural “choke points” did not exist. It did have an impact however. Jorge Ochoa, a principal of the Medellin Cartel, was asked in a debrief after turning himself in, what percentage of cocaine was interdicted. His response was that in the beginning none but by 1990, because of the Coast Guard radar aircraft and tighter controls eliminating possible airstrips, the amount interdicted was about 30%. He went on to say that because of this they started to move cocaine through Central America; initially by air via Cuba and direct flights to Mexico. Overland shipments to Mexico through Central America were also used. This evolved into a western Caribbean corridor and a more frequently used eastern Pacific corridor to Central American or southern Mexico for trans-shipment of drugs to the United States.

The Coast Guard initially became involved in drug interdiction in 1974. During the next sixteen years the drug interdiction mission grew to the point where it was 25% of the Coast Guard budget. Admiral J. William Kime became Commandant of the Coast Guard in 1990. He stated he wanted to provide balance among all the operating forces the Coast Guard had; law enforcement, environmental protection, aids to navigation, boating safety and search and rescue. He further stated that the Coast Guard had overemphasized drug interdiction and military readiness to the detriment of other missions. As a result the military mission was de-emphasized and drug interdiction was cut back to 9% of the budget. The E2C aircraft were returned to the Navy and Air Station St. Augustine was closed. Hurricane Andrew destroyed the C3I building in 1992 and C3I never became fully operational again. Beginning in 1993 17 HU-25 aircraft were placed in storage. The procurement of the EC-130V was terminated.

A 1995 DEA paper reported that cocaine traffickers were increasingly using routes employed four to six years previously resulting in greater use of the eastern Caribbean and the eastern Bahamas as well as increased importation into the eastern United States.

1988 – RG-8A Condor – covert surveillance aircraft enters Coast Guard service:

The RG-8A was developed by the U.S. Air Force under a “black” procurement program in 1986. It was a derivative of the Schweitzer motor-glider and was engineered and used to perform covert surveillance missions. Mission versatility was designed into the aircraft. The Coast Guard acquired three of these aircraft in 1986. They were used for drug interdiction, locating illegal immigrants, documenting fisheries violations and detecting the pollution of oceans and rivers.

Careful matching of the aerodynamic design with the propeller, engine and mufflers enabled the RG-8A to operate with engine RPMs between 1,000 to 1,300 during the “quiet” mission mode. It was equipped with a six cylinder reciprocating Lycoming T10-540 engine rated at 250 horsepower but required only about 65 horsepower to maintain altitude in the “quite” mode. The engine was highly muffled with exhaust vents over the low wing. The low RPM propeller speed vastly reduced the noise generated by the prop tips. The aircraft was painted with low contrast, low IR paint and was fully night vision goggle compatible. This combination permitted safe operation in the night sky, with virtually no chance of detection, at altitudes as low as 600 feet above the water.

The RG-8A was equipped with an AAQ-15 Forward Looking Infra-Red image system (FLIR). The FLIR data was recorded on a VHS tape along with voice narrative by the pilot

and the sensor operator indicating time, location and a description of activities. Navigation avionics consisted of a VOR and DME as well as RNAV. Offshore, Omega was utilized modified by GPS, providing position accuracy within 100 feet. A complete communications suite of VHM-AM, secure UHF and HF, a protected VHF-FM, and a GEOSTAR satellite communication system was installed. A Sperry WX-11 Stormscope was added for weather avoidance. Crew safety was addressed by obtaining a special low profile parachutes with an integral seat pan raft utilizing a new boat hull design.

The aircraft was flown by a single pilot, assisted by a Surveillance System Operator (SSO) who was trained to operate both navigation and surveillance equipment. A typical night mission profile would have been a coordinated patrol with a Coast Guard cutter or other search asset, flying a search area of approximately 500 track miles. Upon location of the target, using night vision goggles, the RG-8A transitioned to covert "quite" mode operation using a very low power setting, then descended to an altitude allowing the SSO to classify and record the target and its activities on the FLIR.

A twin turbine design, designated as RU-38B evolved directly from the RG-8A. In addition to the twin turbines the RU-38B had a larger cockpit, higher useful load capabilities, improved sensors, and noise signature reduction. In September 1999 two of these aircraft were delivered to Coast Guard Air Station Miami replacing the RG-8A aircraft. They operated over the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean in support of drug interdiction operations. The program was halted in mid 2000 due to problems with the aircraft meeting mission requirements.

In 2008 the improved RU38 surveillance aircraft was again acquired as a surveillance sensor platform and will be operated jointly by the Coast Guard with US Customs as part of the homeland security mission. Its primary mission applications include border integrity protection, counter drug activities, intelligence collection against regional instabilities, fisheries patrol, environmental monitoring, and search and rescue. For many missions, the RU-38B will be equipped with a Sea Search Radar, Moving Target Indicator (MTI) Radar, or Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR); a Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) System; a Low Light Level Television (LLTV), or High Resolution Zoom Television; and electro-optical, digital or conventional imaging systems.. Precise GPS position data is integrated into the payload operator's display and the EO imagery recorded on the RU-38B's dual recording system.

Specifications:

Never Exceed Speed (KIAS)	165
Service Ceiling	24000 FT
Mission Speed (KIAS)	85
Take Off Distance	1473 FT
Landing Ground Roll Distance	1230 FT
Endurance	Up to 7 Hours
Endurance (Quiet Mode)	Up to 12 hours

Wing Span	71.2 FT
Wing Area	201.1 SQ FT
Length	28.83 FT
Gross Weight	4300 lbs
Empty Weight	2550 lbs
Payload	710 lbs
Fuel	600 lbs
Power Plant TIO-540-AB1AD Six Cylinder Air Cooled Turbo Charged	
Rated Horsepower	250@2575 RPM
Constant Speed Propeller	3 Blades
Useable Fuel	99 Gallons
Crew	2

1990 - HH-60J Jayhawk helicopter enters service:

HH-60J rescue operations

The HH-60J Jayhawk is a medium-range recovery helicopter built by Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation. It is used to perform search and rescue, law enforcement, military readiness, and marine environmental protection missions.

Implementation of the HH-60J began in March of 1990 with the delivery of the first airframe to NAS Patuxent River, Maryland for developmental testing. ATC Mobile, Alabama was the first Cost Guard unit to fly the aircraft as instructor pilots prepared for pilot training in March 1991. Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City was the first operational unit with the Jayhawk.

The United States Coast Guard purchased 42 HH-60Js. They replaced the Sikorsky HH-3F Pelican helicopters that the Coast Guard had used for over 20 years. The HH-60J is similar to the HH-3F in many ways, and the assigned missions are the same. However, the HH-60J has numerous upgrades including a state of the art electronics package. The HH-60J is lighter, faster and the engines have more power. The HH-60J requires considerably less maintenance than the HH-3F. The de-icing system on the aircraft's rotor blades is a plus. The Jayhawk's drawback is

the lack of space due to a cabin that is one-third the size of the HH-3F. Additionally, it does not have the water landing capability that the HH-3F had.

The twin T700-GE-401C engines, each rated at 1662 shaft horsepower, give the aircraft a maximum takeoff weight of 21,884 pounds and enables a cargo sling load of 6,000 pounds. The Jayhawk can fly 300 miles offshore, remain on scene 45 minutes, hoist six people on board, and return to its point of origin with a safe fuel reserve. Normal cruising speeds of 135-140 knots can be increased to a "dash" speed of 180 knots when necessary. It will fly comfortably at 140 knots for 6-7 hours.

State-of-the-art radar, radio, and navigation equipment enables the helicopter to carry out the Coast Guard's search and rescue, law enforcement, military readiness, and marine environmental protection missions efficiently and effectively. The Jayhawk uses the NAVSTAR Global Positioning System as its primary long range navigational aid. The Collins RCVR-3A radio simultaneously receives information from four of the system's 18 worldwide satellites and converts it into fixes, pinpointing the helicopter's position.

Though normally stationed ashore, the Jayhawk can be carried aboard 270-foot WMEC and 378-foot WHEC Coast Guard Cutters. These cutters are capable of refueling and supporting the helicopter for the duration of a cutter patrol. They assist in the missions of search and rescue, enforcement of laws and treaties including drug interdiction, marine environmental protection, and military readiness.

Manufacturer	Sikorsky
Primary Mission	Medium range recovery (MRR)
Maximum Gross Weight	21,884 lbs
Empty Weight	14,500 lbs
Main rotor Diameter	54 ft
Tail Rotor Diameter	11 ft
Overall Length	65 ft
Length, Blades Folded	45 ft
Overall Height	17 ft
Overall Width	54 ft
Fuselage Width	8 ft
Fuel capacity	6460 lbs
Power plants	Two General Electric T700-GE-401C rated at 1980 HP
Maximum speed	160-180 knots
Cruise Speed	140 knots

Service Ceiling (Hover)	5,000 feet above sea level
Maximum Range	700 nautical miles
Maximum Endurance	7 hours
Radius of Action	300 miles off-shore 45 minutes on scene
Rescue Hoist Capacity	600 pounds
Number of Pilots	2
Number Flight Crew	2
Total Number of Aircraft	42

1990 – CASA 212-300 Light Transport Aircraft Obtained:

CASA212-300

The Coast Guard leased a CASA 212-300 as a utility aircraft to provide lower cost logistic support for the drug and alien interdiction programs that were conducted in the Caribbean area. The primary mission of the 212 was to transport personnel and equipment to remote locations without readily available commercial transportation. The aircraft had a high volume cabin with a rear loading ramp. The variable costs for the CASA-212 were approximately $300/hr versus $1500/hr for the HU-25 and $2000/hr for the C-130's.

The aircraft was based out of Air Station Miami. Scheduled flights to the Guantanamo AVDET delivered Coast Guard personnel traveling on orders plus assorted ship and aircraft parts, mail, and miscellaneous supplies. OPBAT was supported. The aircrafts short landing and take-off

(STOL) capabilities made virtually any runway an option. Material for shipboard and deployed HH-52 operations could be transported to secondary airfields and picked up by ship helicopter. The cutters also requested drop-offs in George Town and Great Inagua.

Additionally the aircraft was used to transport Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) personnel and was used in conjunction with other law enforcement agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Cocaine and marijuana from seizures as well as prisoners for Customs and the DEA were regularly transported.

Because of the multiple mission functions, this aircraft played a part in the restoration of the elected Haitian government beginning in September 1994. Operation Restore Freedom, known by several names, was originally planned as a forced invasion but it became a permissive entry operation. For a period of ten days prior to the scheduled invasion the CG Casa made trips into Port O Prince taking pictures of the surrounding area and then proceeding to Guantanamo Bay Cuba where the pictures were relayed back to Washington D.C .

Even though the aircraft was instrumental in greatly improving the logistics operations the lease was terminated because of budget shortfalls.

Total Length :	53.150 ft
Greatest height :	20.669 ft
Wingspan :	66.929 ft
Max take off weight :	16978.5 lbs
Weight empty :	10650.2 lbs
Max. weight carried :	6328.4 lbs
Max. speed :	200 kts
Landing speed :	83 kts
Cruising speed :	166 kts
Initial climb rate :	1574.80 ft/min
Service ceiling :	26083 ft
Range :	329 nm
Kind :	PTL
Type :	AlliedSignal TPE 331 10R
Count :	2
Total power rating (max.) :	1324 shp
Crew :	2
Payload :	23-pax

1990 – CDR. Bruce Melnick – First Coast Guard Astronaut:

Selected by NASA in June 1987, Commander Melnick became an astronaut in August 1988 and qualified for assignment as a mission specialist on Space Shuttle flight crews., Melnick flew on STS-41 in 1990, and STS-49 in 1992. He logged over 300 hours of space flight.

Melnick graduated from the Coast Guard Academy His initial assignment was as a deck watch officer aboard the USCG Cutter STEADFAST, homeported in St. Petersburg, Florida. After 16 months sea duty, he was sent to Navy flight training in Pensacola and participated in the CNTRA's Masters Program. After earning his wings in 1974, and his degree in 1975, he served two 3-1/2 year tours as a Coast Guard Rescue Pilot at CGAS Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and at Sitka, Alaska where he helped save 115 people from the sinking cruise ship PRISENDAM. He was then assigned to the Aircraft Program Office in Grand Prairie, Texas, where he conducted many of the developmental and acceptance tests on the Coast Guard's HH-65A "Dolphin" helicopter. In 1986 he was transferred to CGAS Traverse City, Michigan, where he served as the Operations Officer until his selection to the astronaut program.

Melnick first flew on STS-41. The five man crew launched aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery on October 6 from the Kennedy Space Center, Florida, and landed at Edwards Air Force Base, California, on October 10, 1990. During 66 orbits of the earth the STS-41 crew successfully deployed the ULYSSES spacecraft, starting this interplanetary probe on its four year journey, via Jupiter, to investigate the polar regions of the Sun; operated the Shuttle Solar Backscatter Ultraviolet instrument (SSBUV) to map atmospheric ozone levels; activated a controlled "fire in space" experiment (the Solid Surface Combustion Experiment (SSCE); and conducted numerous other mid-deck experiments involving radiation measurements, polymer membrane production and microgravity effects on plants. Mission duration was 98 hours 10 minutes 04 seconds.

On his second mission, Melnick served as a crewmember on STS-49, May 7-16, 1992, aboard the maiden flight of the new Space Shuttle Endeavour. During 141 orbits of the Earth, the STS-49 crew rendezvoused with, captured, attached a new rocket motor to, and deployed the Intelsat VI communications satellite, and conducted the Assembly of Station by EVA methods (ASEM) evaluation. The mission included the most EVAs (4) during a Shuttle flight, the first ever 3 person EVA, and the two longest EVAs in Shuttle history. Melnick performed the duties of flight

Engineer (MS-2) and was the principal Remote Manipulator System (RMS) operator throughout the mission.

Commander Melnick retired from the U.S. Coast Guard and left NASA in July 1992. He received numerous awards including two Department of Defense Distinguished Service Medals, Two Distinguished Flying Crosses and the Secretary of Transportation Heroism Award. In August 2000 he was inducted into the United States Coast Guard Aviation Hall of Fame.

1991 – Desert Storm – Coast Guard aviation participation:

Iraq was responsible for intentionally releasing some 11 million barrels of oil into the Persian Gulf contaminating more than 800 miles of Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian coastline. The amount of oil released was 20 times larger than the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska and twice as large as the previous world record oil spill. In response to the Iraqi action of firing oil wells and pumping stations that caused oil spills in the Gulf. A Coast Guard aviation detachment (AVDET) supporting HU-25B Falcon jets equipped with Aireye technology was deployed to Manama Bahrain as part of the Interagency Assessment Team (USIAT).

The deployment of a self-sustaining Coast Guard AVDET into a war zone was something new for the Coast Guard. Preparation and planning was a priority. AVDET personnel were assigned. Wills, medical records and passports were made current. Provisions were made to coordinate flight planning, international clearances, provide for refueling and security. Aircrews underwent short-notice training in desert survival, theater intelligence, chemical, biological, and nuclear warfare. Protective chemical suits were obtained for AVDET personnel. The aircraft were not armed but small arms training in the M-16 and 9MM was conducted prior to deployment. The aircraft were not repainted because high visibility was desired. Mode IV Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) was installed to provide in-theater electronic identification. Army Battle Dress Uniforms (BDUs) were obtained along with an initial issue of basic field equipment. Realizing that they would be operating in a harsh desert environment over 6000 miles from the normal supply source, a comprehensive Pack up Kit (PUK) was developed to support the aircraft and AIREYE systems.

Ten days after the initial request the AVDET was ready! On 7 February official word came to deploy. The Forward Operating Base (FOB) was located in Bahrain, a small nation located 12 miles off the coast of Saudi Arabia. An Advance Team departed for Bahrain two days later to verify planning assumptions, possible changes to PUK support, AVDET structure and obtain administrative, berthing, messing and operating facilities. On the evening of 16

HU-25B with Aireye pod

February two HU-25Bs arrived at Bahrain and were met by the advance team and members of the USIAT. Two Coast Guard C-130s arrived several days later with the support equipment

Prior to AIREYE arrival, all oil spill observation was done visually by Navy C-12 aircraft and helicopters at an altitude of 500 feet. The HU-25's AIREYE operations were flown at altitudes between 6,000 and 12,000 feet using a straight line course with an extremely powerful radar emitter. Everyone, both friendly and unfriendly with an electronic warfare (EW) receiver, within 100 nm of the HU-25Bs would know their exact location. USIAT had operational control but the Navy had tactical control. A Navy EP-3 unit with a similar mission profile provided invaluable assistance. They provided intelligence and aircrew briefing support. Threats were defined. The biggest threat was "blue on blue" engagements or friendly fire. Second was possible Iraqi ground fire from oil platforms or small patrol boats. The ground threat consisted of SA-2 (long range radar guided), SA-7 (short range hand held IR guided), SA-13 (short range IR radar guided) surface to air missiles (SAMS) and standard Anti-Aircraft Artillery. The mapping profile area was well within the effective envelope of all weapons. Additionally, it was determined that the APS-127 surface search radar electronic signature closely matched the fire control radar mounted on Iraqi F1 Fighter/bomber for their Exocet missiles. Considering there was over 60 AAW missile-equipped warships in the Persian Gulf, HU-25s were flown with the APS-127 circuit breakers tie wrapped in the off position. The APS-131 SLAR radar, the primary oil mapping tool, did not present this problem.

Missions were scheduled on the Air Tasking Order (ATO) which was prepared by CENTCOM headquarters. Each sortie was listed by line number, aircraft type, time on scene, assigned IFF mode, altitudes, airspeeds and a brief mission description. Take off was made in accordance with schedule and the crew immediately checked in with Anti-Aircraft Warfare Coordinator (AAWC – an Aegis cruiser) which verified aircraft and IFF code. The AAWC worked non-stop checking aircraft in, providing vectors for air to air refueling and handled strike packages (groups of attack aircraft) off to E-2Cs (strike control) working to the north.

The AIREYE system worked extremely well. In less than three hours the crew was able to map over 40,000 square miles and virtually show every drop of water. There were two mapping missions flown each day. USIAT used the mapping product to produce a daily updated surface analysis of the location, condition and drift projection of the oil. After the cessation of hostilities, the mission was expanded to also provide observation of the smoke plume created by hundreds of oil well fires burning throughout the Kuwaiti oil fields. Mission requirements were reduced to one a day as the released oil dissipated,

Sadam's Flames: Kuwait

sank, or washed ashore. At the end of April the AVDET was released and returned to the United States.

The Coast Guard AVDET arrived "mapped" over 40,000 square miles completely identifying the oil spill, conducted photo reconnaissance, smoke determination, and deployed sea current drift buoys. Photographs confirmed the source as the oil terminals at Mina Al Bakr. The AVDET was deployed 84 days, flew 427 flight hours and maintained an aircraft readiness rate of over 96%. All of this was accomplished 6,000 miles from existing maintenance and supply facilities with a high degree of professionalism and competency.

AIREYE is a sophisticated airborne sensor system consisting of Side Looking Radar (SLIR), an Infrared/Ultraviolet Line Scanner (IR/UV), a Laser Illuminated Low Light Television System, a Mapping Photo Camera, and a computer based Sensor System Operator Console. The system produces computer enhanced "near real time" imagery aboard the aircraft. The system has multi-mission capabilities. One of which is the efficient detection of oil pollution violators. The SLIR is the primary sensor. The IR/UV line scanner can detect very thick to extremely thin oil slicks, day or night.

1994 - Alien interdiction – The flow becomes a flood:

In 1994 the Coast Guard was involved in its largest operation since the Vietnam War. Responding to two mass migrations at the same time – first from Haiti and then from Cuba. Over 63,000 migrants were rescued and prevented from illegally entering the United States in OPERATION ABLE MANNER and OPERATION ABLE VIGIL. At its height, OPERATION ABLE MANNER involved 17 Coast Guard cutters, nine aircraft and five US Naval ships patrolling the coast of Haiti while OPERATION ABLE VIGIL involved 29 Coast Guard cutters, six aircraft, and nine US naval ships patrolling the Straits of Florida.

136 Harriet Lane Haitian refugees on the flight deck of the US Coast Guard cutter Harriet Lane

Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

A military lead coup overthrew the elected government of Jean Bertrand Aristide, the first democratically-elected president in Haitian history, on September 30, 1991. Despite the coup, there was no immediate exodus. Then in late October the first boatload was intercepted carrying a small number of people. Following the established practice, the passengers were taken on board the Coast Guard cutter and interviewed for "refugee-like characteristics" by Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) officers flown to the cutter by helicopter. Policy makers in Washington, DC were

concerned over events in Haiti and because of the sensitive nature of the situation final refugee status determination was to be made in Washington.

By early November an increased number of Haitian vessels were interdicted and as one cutter became crowded, additional cutters were brought into the area. By mid-November several hundred Haitians were on Coast Guard Cutters circling in international waters between Haiti and Cuba. On 18 November the government announced that the program of forced repatriation of "screened-out" Haitians would resume. The next day the first of what would become many legal challenges against the government were filed. The judge in the case suspended all forced repatriations until February 1992. Consequently; a tent camp at the U.S. Naval Station at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba was opened to accept the migrants. Hundreds and then thousands of Haitian migrants were interdicted and brought for further processing. This program ended when President Bush issued Executive Order 12807 authorizing the repatriation of interdicted Haitians to Haiti to pursue their claims through in-country U.S. refugee processing established under section 101(a)(42)(B) of the INA.

Operation ABLE MANNER

This operation commenced in January of 1993. It concentrated Coast Guard patrols in the Windward Passage, the body of water between Haiti and Cuba, interdicting Haitian migrants and returned them to Haiti.. Both fixed wing and helicopter aircraft, supported out of Coast Guard AVDET Guantanamo Bay, were used to enhance the surveillance capabilities of the surface vessels. A total of 14,000 flight hours were expended during the interdiction operation.

Infra-red image of a Haitian sailboat

HU-25 locates a monitors an overcrowded Haitian migrant sailboat

As events in Haiti continued to unfold, the Cost Guard was a full participant in the plans to forcibly occupy the island. As one of the Armed Forces the Coast Guard air and sea assets were used where appropriate. Of particular value was the Coast Guard aviations familiarity with night, over water operations, and the sensor capabilities of its aircraft. When the plan was formed to move a large force of Army helicopters from South Florida to Great Inagua in the Bahamas, the essential job of Search and Rescue went to the Coast Guard. This night time helicopter

movement positioned a critical portion of the helicopter assets for the planned invasion. Coast Guard helicopters provided navigation and escort, while HC-130s and cutters performed duckbutt duties during the movement. In addition, a Coast Guard C-130 performed a covert insert of an Air Force Aircraft Control Unit. The Coast Guard air station at Borinquen Puerto Rico was designated and equipped as the emergency divert base for any C-141 or C-5 experiencing problems. The Coast Guard CASA212 took pictures of the facilities at Port au Prince during a series of diplomatic flights. In addition, Coast Guard surface units had many roles.

The operation was originally planned as a forced invasion but it became a permissive entry operation. The Coast Guard Cuter Chase was the first ship into the Port au Prince Harbor.

Haitian migrants still leave Haiti attempting to reach the U.S. Many travel to the Bahamas and enter on smaller boats, while some attempt direct entry to the U.S. in large boat loads. There is a Coast Guard Liaison Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Port au Prince, Haiti, who handles various migration, counter-drug, and international engagement issues with Haiti.

Operation ABLE VIGIL

During the summer of 1994 a Cuban tugboat and several ferries were hijacked by Cuban migrants trying to leave the country. On August fifth crowds numbering in the hundreds gathered in Havana drawn by the news of the ferry hijackings. Confrontations with the police occurred. Castro again took advantage of the situation blaming the clashes on the United States and warned that Cuba would stop putting obstacles in the way of Cubans trying to leave the island if Washington did not change its immigration policy. The United States said it would not allow a repeat of the Mariel boatlift of 1980. The Cuban security forces were ordered to monitor but to not facilitate nor obstruct illegal maritime departures. This resulted in a number of people leaving Cuba in small boats and rafts. In response to an increase in Cuban migration, Coast Guard patrols were enhanced to rescue these people and to deter potential U.S. vessels from going to Cuba to make pick-ups.

On 19 August the Coast Guard initiated OPERATION ABLE VIGIL, a Cuban Mass Emergency Plan in response to uncontrolled migration from Cuba. President Clinton announced that undocumented Cuban migrants would be prohibited entry into the United States and those intercepted would be transported to safe havens. Several Latin American and Caribbean nations expressed a willingness to shelter Cuban refugees led by Panama's offer to take 10,000 and Honduras' announcement that they would accept up to 5000. Guantanamo Bay was utilized do shelter the remainder. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered Department of Defense (DOD) assets into action to support OPERATION ABLE VIGIL. This included US Navy units

to transport migrants; US Army units to construct and provide security at migrant camps; US Marine Corps units to provide security at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and US Air Force units to transport DOD assets to Guantanamo Bay and Cuban migrants to Panama. The Coast Guard established an effective "barrier patrol" of cutters supported by aircraft. During the week of 22 August 10 more Cubans were interdicted than had been rescued during the previous decade. Fidel Castro issued a directive to his security forces on September 11 to prevent further illegal maritime departures. During Operation ABLE VIGIL 30,224 Cuban migrants were interdicted. HC-130, HU-25 HH-60 and HH65 aircraft from Miami and Clearwater air stations were utilized and flew in excess of 1,200 total hours.

HH-65A "Dolphin" coming aboard

The United States Cuban immigration policy was changed. In negotiations with Cuba the United States agreed to allow 20,000 Cubans to immigrate each year. In return Cuba pledged to stop any further exodus of Cubans aboard makeshift rafts and small boats trying to reach the shores of Florida. All others who attempted to illegally migrate and were picked up at sea would be taken back to Cuba. Those who reached U.S. soil would be allowed to stay. On April 25 1955, the remaining 21,000 refugees remaining at Guantanamo Bay were allowed to resettle in the United States.