



U.S. Coast Guard History Program

Unimak, 1948



WHEC-379
Call Sign: NBVG

Builder: Associated Shipbuilders, Inc., Seattle, WA

Commissioned: 31 December 1943 (USN); loaned to USCG on 14 September 1948
3 January 1949 (USCG); permanently transferred to USCG 26 September 1966

Decommissioned: 29 Apr 1988

Disposition: Returned to USN

PARTICULARS, AS OF 1966:

Length: 311'7 3/4" oa; 300' 0" bp

Navigation Draft: 12' 7" full load, rear, max

Beam: 41' max

Displacement: 2,498 fl

Main Engines: Fairbanks-Morse, direct reversing diesels

SHP: 6,080

Performance, Maximum Sustained: 17.3 kts, 10,300-mi radius
Performance, Economic: 10.0 kts, 20,800-mi radius

Complement: 10 officers, 2 warrants, 77 crewmen

Electronics: Radar: SPS-23
Sonar: SQS-1

Armament: 1 x 5"/38; 6 x .50 Caliber MG's

Class History:

The Casco class ships were built as small seaplane tenders by the US Navy. They were designed to operate out of small harbors and atolls and had a shallow draft. The fact that the class was very seaworthy, had good habitability, and long range made them well suited to ocean-station duty. In fact, an assessment made by the Coast Guard on the suitability of these vessels for Coast Guard service noted:

"The workmanship on the vessel is generally quite superior to that observed on other vessels constructed during the war. The vessel has ample space for stores, living accommodations, ships, offices and recreational facilities. The main engine system is excellent. . . .The performance of the vessel in moderate to heavy seas is definitely superior to that of any other cutter. This vessel can be operated at higher speed without storm damage than other Coast Guard vessels." [Memo, CDR W. C. Hogan, Commanding Officer, CGC MC CULLOCH to Commandant "SUBJ; CGC MC CULLOCH, Sutiability [sic] for use as CG Cutter.", 12 February 1947; copy in 311-Class Cutter File, USCG Historian's Office.]

Once they were accepted into Coast Guard service, a number of changes were made in these ships to prepare them for ocean-station duty. A balloon shelter was added aft; there were spaces devoted to oceanographic equipment and a hydrographic winch and an oceanographic winch were added.

See *DANFS* for naval service.

Cutter History:

Unimak was homeported in Boston from 3 January 1949 to 1 September 1956 and used primarily for law enforcement, ocean station, and search and rescue operations. In June 1956, she patrolled the Newport, RI to Bermuda race. She was subsequently stationed at Cape May, NJ from 1 September 1956 to 7 August 1972 and used primarily for training reservists, including training cruises to Brazil and Nova Scotia. She took part in the cadet cruise of August 1965. On 7 March 1967 she rescued six Cuban refugees in the Yucatan Channel. On 10 March 1967 she

rescued survivors from F/V *Bunkie III* in Florida waters. Five days later, she rescued 12 Cuban refugees who were stranded on an island. On 29 May 1969, *Unimak* towed the disabled F/V *Sirocco* 35 miles east of Fort Pierce, FL, to safety. On 3 April 1970, *Unimak* stood by the grounded M/V *Vassiliki* near Mayaguana Island until a commercial tug arrived.

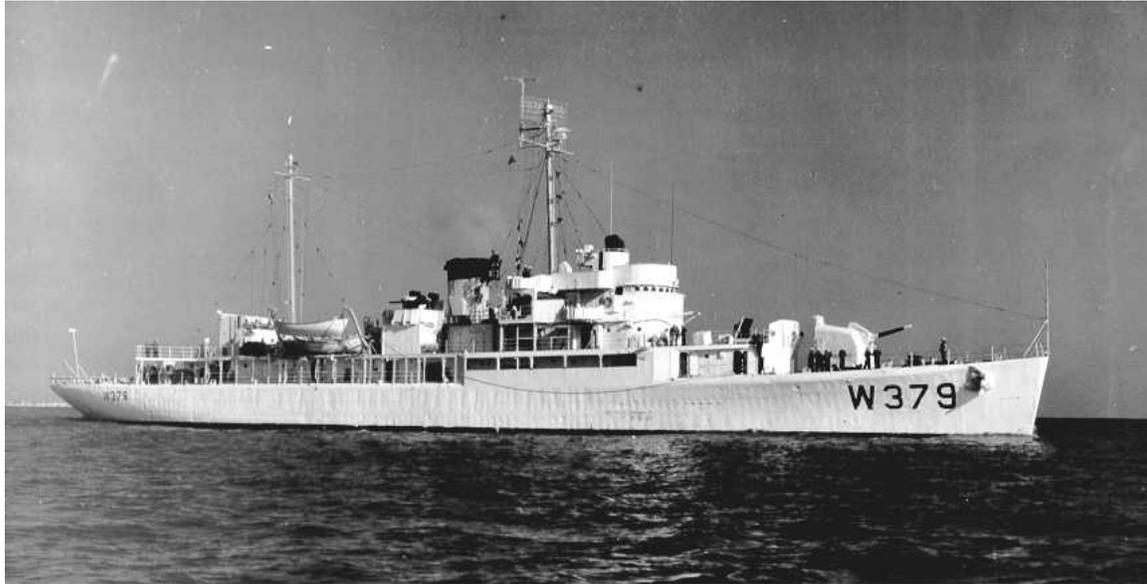
From 7 August 1972 to 31 May 1975, the *Unimak* was stationed at Yorktown, VA, and was again used to train reservists. Between 31 May 1975 and August 1977 she was placed out of commission and stored at Curtis Bay, MD. On 22 August 1977, *Unimak* was reactivated and was homeported at New Bedford, MA, until 1988. She was used primarily for fishing patrol.

On 6 October 1980, she seized M/V *Janeth* 340 miles southeast of Miami, FL, carrying 500 bales of marijuana. On 14 October 1980, she seized P/C *Rescue* carrying approximately 500 bales of marijuana and P/C *Snail* with two tons of marijuana in the Gulf of Mexico. Three days later, she seized M/V *Amalaka* southwest of Key West, FL, carrying 1,000 bales of marijuana. On 19 October 1980, *Unimak* seized F/V *Wright's Pride* southwest of Key West, carrying 30 tons of marijuana. In March of 1981, while on an OCS training cruise, *Unimak* intercepted M/V *Mayo* with 40 tons of marijuana. On 9 December 1982, she towed the disabled F/V *Sacred Heart* away from Daid Banks, 45 miles east of Cape Cod, in 30-foot seas.

Between 28 January and 9 March 1983, the *Unimak* was again deployed to the Caribbean for law enforcement patrol. On 27 and 28 February 1983, she towed the dismantled *Wandering Star* to Mathew Town, Great Iguana. On 3 March 1983, she towed the disabled M/V *Yadrina* to Mathew Town. On 30 November 1984, *Unimak* seized the sailboat *Lola* 100 miles north of Barranquilla, Colombia, carrying 1.5 tons of marijuana. Another drug bust occurred on 2 November 1985, when the *Unimak* seized tugboat *Zeus 3* and a barge 200 miles south of the Dominican Republic carrying 40 tons of marijuana.

After her return to the Navy in April of 1988, she was expended as an artificial reef off the Virginia coast.

Photographs:



Unimak, Coast Guard Photo Number 5771, July 1957. [CDR William Wilson provided the following information regarding the cutter and the photo: "It was taken in July 1957 when she was homeported in Cape May. Where it was taken, I cannot remember, possibly off Wildwood, NJ as we did a lot of day ops just offshore. FYI, I am the sailor standing alone just forward of the three men on the starboard side of the 5"-38. I was in charge of the anchor detail when taken. I was a DC-2 at the time."]



Unimak, 8 June 1987, no caption.

Sources:

Unimak, Cutter Subject File, USCG Historian's Office

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Vol. II (1963), p. 110.

"Listings: AVP's"; compiled and written by LCDR J. P. Smith, USCGR

Robert Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters & Craft, 1946-1990* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990), pp. 10-16.

Ship's Characteristics Card: USCGC Unimak, 16 June 1966

