

On March 31, 2012 at ten o'clock, ceremonies for the commissioning of United States Coast Guard Cutter STRATTON (USCGC STRATTON) will begin. The commissioning ceremony marks not only a significant event in the ship's life but, also marks the culmination of months of arduous labor for the crew. STRATTON's crew is excited to see the fruits of their hard work celebrated and to officially place STRATTON in service to the United States.

Commissioning a Coast Guard vessel is the act of placing a warship in active service. Today we prepare modern ships for service in a much different manner than the ships under sail of yesterday. However, we honor the traditions of the past through the commissioning ceremony. On Saturday, March 31<sup>st</sup>, in front of spectators from around the country, Captain Charles L. Cashin III will muster the crew on deck, read his orders, hoist the National Ensign and Commissioning Pennant with the permission of the Commandant of the Coast Guard, and set the first watch, officially placing USCGC STRATTON in commission.

USCGC STRATTON is the first major cutter to bear the name of a female officer. Captain Dorothy C. Stratton was the first director of the Coast Guard's Women's Reserve, the SPARS. Captain Stratton is credited with naming the unit, SPARS. It is a contraction of the Coast Guard motto: Semper Paratus and its English translation, Always Ready. Much like the Navy WAVES or the Women's Army Corps, during World War II, the SPARS engaged in support roles to allow more men to go to war. Today the United States Coast Guard is the only military branch to support women in every career field. STRATTON's crew is 25% female and includes women serving in a variety of positions and ranks.

Prior to arriving at homeport, Coast Guard Island in Alameda, CA, USCGC STRATTON was accepted from Huntington-Ingalls in Pascagoula, MS. The crew sailed to several east coast ports for training and external engagements before turning west. The crew carefully navigated STRATTON through the Panama Canal, South to the Equator, and up to California. While traveling north from the Equator, STRATTON responded to a Colombian fishing vessel in distress, saving eight lives. STRATTON also responded to a Colombian Naval vessel that was experiencing engine problems; STRATTON's highly trained engineers were able to assist the Colombians so they could continue their mission. Since arriving at homeport, the crew has worked hard to prepare STRATTON for commissioning, patrol and Tailored Ships Training Availability (TSTA).

Commissioning was not always a public affair, but, Saturday's event will be with the ship builders, supporters and our families; without their work and support, building the nation's most advanced maritime cutter would not be possible. We extend thanks to Huntington-Ingalls Shipyard for their dedication and commitment, helping the third National Security Cutter come into existence. The Navy League's contributions to the United States Navy, Coast Guard and Merchant Marine are invaluable; the ceremony would not have been possible without the many selfless volunteers and contributions from the Navy League. Lastly, a loving thanks to the families that support service members through deployments and long days. Preparing a ship for service is truly an all hands evolution.