

THE COAST GUARD AND COMMERCE



Often eclipsed by the area's robust Navy presence, the US Coast Guard does more to both regulate and stimulate commerce than you might think.

BY JOSH NEWBY | PHOTOS COURTESY OF US COAST GUARD





COASTAL CITY THAT PRIDES ITSELF ON ITS beautiful beaches, accessible waterways and maritime commerce, Pensacola has a Coast Guard that may not be the first thing you think of when you consider area business, but its role in responding to and regulating Gulf Coast industry is a valuable one.

The protectors and inspectors of offshore, coastal and inland waterways and vessels, the local Coast Guard employs almost 400 enlistees, all of whom work to maintain one of Northwest Florida's greatest selling points. The Coast Guard falls under the Department of Homeland Security, as opposed to the Department of Defense that the other four military branches fall under. This delineation stems from the Coast Guard's law enforcement tasks and its interest in national security.

As our nation's waters are vital to its wellbeing and economy, it makes sense

safe and legal is very important to us. Large commercial ships must check in with us at least 96 hours in advance of reaching a US port."

In 2012, the Coast Guard screened more than 436,000 vessels, including over 117,000 commercial vessels and 29.5 million crew members and their passengers prior to arrival in US ports.

One of the ways the Coast Guard keeps the Gulf Coast safe is through traffic markings. Just as drivers on land use signage like stop signs, traffic lights and marked roads to assist them in safely navigating a city, so a ship's pilot

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that by extension the Coast Guard it equally vital. But the local Coast Guard does more than just enforce laws and treaties, seize drugs, inspect ships, and promote national security. Its members also help ensure the safe and efficient use of the intercoastal waterways, so that businesses along the coast can focus on import, export and growing the economy.

"A large percentage of this region's trade comes through the waterways," said Amy Florentino, who is a lieutenant commander in the Coast Guard. "The water is very important to this area, and making sure the ships that sail here are

will use buoys to ensure his or her cargo reaches its destination safely.

These buoys, often 26 feet in length and weighing more than 12,000 pounds, are maintained by the Coast Guard.

"A lot of people view the Coast Guard as search and rescue or drug seizures," said Florentino. "And that's certainly a part of it. But a majority of our work involves things you wouldn't notice unless we stopped doing them. Buoy maintenance, marine life regulation, and marking underwater hazards are just as important to people's safety and business in general as those other things. We keep things on the water

4
ways
the
military
impacts
the
local
economy

\$1.2 Billion
Annual salary paid to local military members, much of which is spent locally

22,000
Active duty and military/federal employees

\$103 Million
Value of annual contract agreements between the local military and other organizations

\$5.1 Billion
Total economic impact produced annually by our local military's presence



moving smoothly for trade, the fishing industry, oil and so on. That in turn positively impacts the local economy.”

Another way the Coast Guard positively impacts the local economy is guaranteeing the safety of the actual products being shipped.

“Between Panama City and southern Texas, with all the ports in-between, you have huge ships with petroleum, sand, gravel, food, products, cars, you name it,” said Florentino. “Those are important commodities. One of the ways you make sure they arrive at their destination safely is by inspecting the ships and keeping an eye on any hazards or security concerns.”

LOCALLY, COAST GUARD personnel do inspections on commercial vessels and respond to pollution. There are entire careers and specialties within the branch dedicated to inspection. With recent oil and natural gas spills, this has become even more important.

“We have a variety of other missions that have recently gotten a lot of attention,” said Florentino, referring to the natural gas leak in the Gulf in July of 2013. “For that, we were sent to serve as an on-scene commander coordinator, where we enforced a safety zone and

provided the interagency unified command center with near real time footage of wreckage/fire.”

Port security also falls within the purview of the Coast Guard, which works closely with the Port of Pensacola. During the 20th century, the Coast Guard’s authority was expanded greatly to include port protection, due mainly to poor management and protocol that resulted in many groundings and oil spills. Today, the Coast Guard helps prevent and investigate pollution, facilitates drills and exercises, monitors handling of hazardous cargo, and routinely inspects containers and their facilities. In 2012, the Coast Guard conducted 25,500 container inspections, 5,000 facility safety and marine pollution related inspections, and 1,195 cargo transfer monitors to ensure safety and environmental stewardship of the maritime domain.

It is not all regulation, safety and licensing, though. Regionally, Coast Guard leadership try to award contracts to small businesses whenever possible. This is in line with the federal government’s preference for doing business with locally- or minority-owned businesses whenever possible. Contract opportunities for small, veteran-owned or female-owned businesses are available on the Coast Guard’s website, and many local contracting companies

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receive much of their business from the armed service branches.

“Federal acquisition regulations exist to ensure that procedures are standard, consistent and conducted in a fair manner. With that said, federal procurement policies and procedures are designed to favor small business participation. If the bids between small and large businesses are similar, the government and armed services prefer to award contracts to those that may face more substantial challenges than a national or international company,” said Florentino.

The Coast Guard is active in local communities as well. The Sea Partners Campaign, for example, is an education and outreach program focused on communities at large to develop awareness of marine life and Coast Guard opportunities. In the private sector, the Coast Guard employs almost 8,000 civilians in over 200 different job types including Coast Guard Investigative Service special agents, lawyers, engineers, technicians, administrative personnel, tradesmen, and federal firefighters. Civilian employees work at various levels in the Coast Guard to support its various missions.

Additionally, the Coast Guard Auxiliary offers free boat inspections to citizens and does not cite them for any shortcomings. Once the boat passes inspection, the owners receive a free certificate that makes any Coast Guard boardings in the future much easier.

ON A GLOBAL SCALE, THE Coast’s Guard importance increases dramatically.

As increased economic globalization continues and dependence on foreign maritime trade is expected to triple by 2020, the Coast Guard’s role in sustaining our economy and maintaining national security will only increase. According to a document detailing the Coast Guard’s future initiatives, more efficient maritime transportation will become critical to America’s economy and competitiveness as trade with Asian-Pacific and Latin American nations increases more than with other world regions. Increased dependency on imports and

exports is also expected to bring larger numbers of large, deep-draft and minimally crewed ships. Greater volumes of oil, hazardous materials, and bulk commodities are also expected to increase. Consequences of disruptions will become more severe as the market struggles to keep up with demand, which will emphasize the importance of the marine transportation system’s reliability. This huge spike in waterway congestion will create a greater need for well-integrated intermodal transportation systems with close links among the sea, land, and air components.

According to the report, more than 95 percent of US foreign trade tonnage, excluding that to Canada and Mexico, will continue to move by ship. Over 25 percent of domestic goods will be shipped by water, and half the nation’s oil will arrive by sea. America’s economic competitiveness, as well as the safety and security of all Americans, will depend on the Coast Guard’s managing of the demands of growing seaborne trade.

Florentino emphasized the struggle of encouraging



recent increases in trade-based earnings with making sure it is all done in a legal, regulated manner.

“From an economic standpoint, all this increased traffic is good,” said Florentino. “We just have to make sure it’s safe and sustainable.”

With the US population expected to reach more than 350 million by 2020, higher proportions of people will live on the coast, taxing oceanside resources like fish and offshore drilling. These creatures and resources will require both international and regional protection, a primary mission of the Coast Guard. As more residents live and vacation near the water, Coast Guard Search and Rescue teams work overtime to secure their safety. In 2012, the service responded to 19,790 search and rescue cases, saved 3,560 lives and over \$77 million in property.

“All of these combined events are a huge strategic concern to Coast Guard officials, and are often the topic of conversation among Coast Guard commanders,” said Florentino. “The expansion of the Panama Canal and increased oil/gas exploration in the Gulf of Mexico has really shown just how cluttered the sea can become.”

Few entities are better equipped and competent at maintaining the security, resources and efficiency of America’s maritime culture than the Coast Guard, and with a plan to upgrade the nation’s waterways and overhaul the presently decentralized waterways management infrastructure, this military branch will play a crucial role in the growth of Florida’s and America’s increasingly globalized economy. **BC**

28th Annual Naval Aviation Symposium



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ne hundred years of Naval Flight Training and the 40th anniversary of Women in Naval Aviation will be among the topics discussed at the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation’s annual Symposium Wednesday, May 7–Friday, May 9. The three-day event held at the National Naval Aviation Museum will host a variety of activities highlighting the unique history and proud heritage of Naval Aviation including a golf tournament, luncheon, banquet and panel sessions. Three distinct panel sessions will feature milestones in Naval Aviation history and the people who have made and are currently making that history.

Beginning in 1987, the Symposium aims to preserve the rich history and proud heritage of Naval Aviation by highlighting historical events in which US Naval Aviation has played a major role. Each May, the Symposium attracts attendees including active and retired military flag and general officers to industry executives and the general public.

The 2014 Symposium schedule of events includes:

Wednesday, May 7

Golf Tournament. Noon–4 pm at A.C. Read golf course aboard NAS Pensacola

Thursday, May 8 at the National Naval Aviation Museum

Trailblazers: Women in Naval Aviation - celebrating 40 years of female Naval Aviators. 9:45 am

Luncheon – guest speaker former astronaut and retired Navy Captain Robert “Hoot” Gibson. Noon. (Ticket required for luncheon, Cost \$25 per person)

Ups and Downs: 100 Years of Naval Aviation Flight Training – celebrating 100th anniversary of NAS Pensacola. 2 pm

Reception & Banquet – guest speaker Admiral William Gortney, USN, Commander U.S. Fleet Forces Command. 6 pm. (Ticket required for reception & banquet, cost \$70 per person)

Friday, May 9 at the National Naval Aviation Museum

Naval Aviation: Today and Tomorrow-Flag Officer panel. 9:45 am.

Winging Ceremony - guest speaker Vice Admiral Robin Braun, USN, Chief of Naval Reserve. Noon.

The Symposium panel discussions are FREE and open to the general public, active duty and retired military.