

Commandant's Bulletin Editor PAC Brad Terrill spoke with ADM Kramek on the eve of his assuming the Coast Guard command June 1.

Bulletin: Congratulations on your selection, admiral, and thank you for taking time to let us introduce you to the readership. Over the years, Coast Guard missions have grown and shrunk as the needs of the country change. What missions do you see growing and declining in the next few years?

Kramek: I see our missions in marine law enforcement increasing, especially in migrant interdiction, in fisheries conservation, and in the war on drugs. The demands on us in all those missions are enormous.

Totally 34 percent of our budget and resources are spent on law enforcement. People may think we're doing less because we're doing less on the war on drugs, but the only reason we're doing less there is because we've had to stop the Haitians from coming in, and we've had to go find the Chinese, and fisheries have become real important because there are hardly any fish left. But there are law-enforcement missions we haven't even started yet.

Another mission which I see continued growth in is in maritime transportation safety. Here I mean regulation of our merchant marine, ensuring that we have safely constructed vessels, safe vessels entering our ports, especially foreign vessels. We'll soon be shifting from flag-state control to port-state control.

Did I mention maritime reform? Maritime reform means we need to do something to stimulate the American-flag vessels in this country — vessels sailing under the American flag. We'll be working closely with the Maritime Administration, to make sure that our rules and regulations for construction, inspection, operation and manning of American-flag vessels aren't any more stringent than international standards so that we can compete in the global marketplace with other maritime countries ... I think those are the biggest growth missions for us.

Bulletin: Do you think the service's physical plant is up to par? What areas do you think need improvement?

Kramek: I believe our physical plant is up to par. However, our physical plant is worth about \$17



Photos by PA1 Don Wagner

ADM Robert E. Kramek

billion and in order to keep it up to par, we need to recapitalize.

In order to renew it as it becomes old and worn out, and to renovate the old stations or to replace the older aircraft, we need to spend about \$600 million per year on acquisition, construction and improvement. We're in good shape but we need this recapitalization budget in order to stay that way.

Bulletin: The white-collar work force in private industry has become much more efficient in recent years. Are Coast Guard support services operating at the level you are happy with?

Kramek: I think we could do a lot better. And, in fact, we're going to have to do better because that's part of the president's mandate for change. In fact, I can tell you exactly how much better we need to do as an agency and as a going concern. We need to improve our productivity and efficiency,

and reduce our overhead costs by about three percent a year over the next four years, for a total of 12 percent, because the budget that we're going to be given is three percent less per year over the next four years, for a reduction total of 12 percent by 1999.

The only way we can maintain service to the public, save all the lives we need to, interdict all the Haitians we need to, seize all the drugs we need to, service all our aids to navigation — at the same service levels that our customers want — is to reduce our overhead and infrastructure costs by that amount.

Bulletin: What does the service's decreasing budget mean for you in terms of planning for Coast Guard missions?

Kramek: The decreasing budget is a major concern because the decrease has to be sized, and the size of the decrease I'm looking at is a reduction of 1,000 people a year for the next four

years, and a reduction of \$100 million in operating expenses per year over the next four years, which would mean in 1999, if in fact we met the targets we've been given by the Office of Management and Budget, we'd have about 4,000 less people in the Coast Guard and our budget would be \$400 million less.

We can do that through these increases in productivity and these efficiencies I'm speaking of.

Let me give you an example: We're building some new buoy tenders. Our existing large buoy-tender fleet is 50 years old.

Between the large buoy tenders and the WLMs (medium buoy tenders), which are over 30 to 50 years old, there are about 39 vessels. The new fleet we're building will consist of 30 vessels.

So I have 30 vessels replacing 39 vessels — that's a savings of nine ships. The new vessels go faster, do more, have more capability, and have about a 20 percent smaller crew than the existing fleet.

We're going to save hundreds of people and \$25 million a year in operating expense. So by recapitalization and using new equipment, we're going to be able to make some of those savings.

We need to do the same thing with our Coast Guard stations. We have a number of stations that were established when we used to row out to save lives. Today there is great technology that we're developing and using — everything from EPIRBs (emergency position-indicating radio beacons) to differential global positioning systems; high-speed helicopters with rescue swimmers, and tremendous new VHF-FM radio systems.

We can almost tell the latitude and longitude and the identity of people in distress soon after they reach that situation, and we can send either a ship or a helicopter right to where they are and take the search out of search and rescue.

By doing this we can save millions of dollars and hundreds of people, also.

So these are the types of ways we have to be able to meet this reduction. We can do it, it's the direction we're going in now. The Coast Guard has a business plan to do this but it won't be achieved without the support of the administration and Congress.

I'll make an analogy to a firehouse. The other day I met with a high government official who was the mayor of a large city. And I was discussing part of our station changes with him. He said, 'You know, your stations are like firehouses and when I was mayor of a city, I had too many firehouses. We didn't need some of them anymore because we had better alarm systems and smoke detectors and faster fire trucks.'

But you know, as mayor, I could never close down one firehouse because everybody felt really secure that that firehouse was there. And that's the way people feel about Coast Guard stations. They feel really secure, even if, in fact, you don't need that particular station anymore.'

Changing some of those stations is more important to our people than saving money. At some of our stations our personnel are working port and starboard, 82 to 84 hours a week.

At other stations they are one in four and they're only seasonal — they may be closed down in the winter. They may be closed down or not busy because salmon season is closed down for the year.

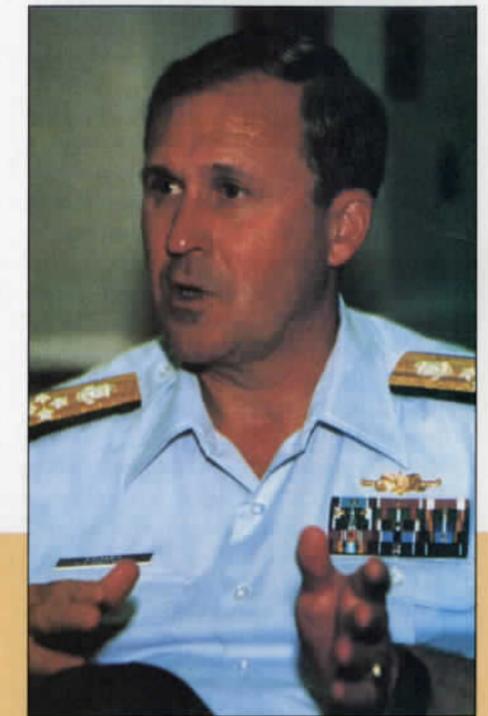
We need to redistribute our people, called reallocation of resources, for those stations, so that everybody has equal sweat — everyone is working at the same duty level and we can get back

to our standard of 68 hours per week which was pretty high already.

I don't know too many people in the United States that get paid for 40 hours a week and work 68, but the Coast Guard does and that's our standard work week at operational units.

Bulletin: How do you see the Coast Guard fitting into the current defense posture?

Kramek: We're an important part of the current defense posture, not just because traditionally we're one of the five armed forces but because we are a distinct instrument of national security. National security is embodied in almost every mission area.



Commandant sets new goals, objectives

ADM Kramek has set his strategic goals and objectives for his four-year tour. They are aligned with the Department of Transportation's Strategic Plan. His eight goals include:

- Provide the leadership and working environment that enables all Coast Guard people to reach their maximum potential.
- Attract and retain an increasingly diverse pool of top talent.
- Meet the president's mandate to streamline with no reduction in essential services.
- Maintain a strong response capability — Semper Paratus.
- Enhance and extend the Coast Guard's reputation as the world's premier maritime service.
- Strengthen transportation, safety, and systems, through partnership with other agencies in support of the DOT Strategic Plan.
- Ensure that the Coast Guard epitomizes the best in leadership and quality management.
- Pursue and acquire new technologies that meet field commanders' needs and enhance mission performance.

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I believe it's important to the nation and I've just met with all of the other service chiefs and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General (John) Shalikashvili, and they've reiterated to me how important the Coast Guard is in the joint arena that we make a contribution to.

But the current threat situation in the world today is less than it used to be as far as global war is concerned. As the threat of global war is reduced, the amount of DOD resources that are necessary to sustain our nation is reduced. As their stock goes down, the Coast Guard's stock goes up.

Bulletin: I would like to throw out some words and get your quick reaction to them: Oil Pollution Act 90. International training. Fisheries.

Kramek: Let's do fisheries first. From the beginning of our country, at the time the Pilgrims came, fisheries have been one of the most important resources of the United States. It has been a totally abundant, replenishable resource. However, new methods of finding and catching fish have absolutely depleted fishing stocks worldwide, especially around the coasts of the United States where some of the richest fishing grounds are.

Everywhere you look the stocks are down so, therefore, the Coast Guard is going to be called upon to enforce these new, stricter regulations, and make sure that people are complying with the new laws that are very, very restrictive in order to let these stocks go back up again. So fisheries are going to remain very important.

OPA90 is the largest body of legislation ever passed that the Coast Guard has been tasked to manage. There are over 70 different bills and regulations that have to be passed. Everything from Certificates of Financial Responsibility to contingency plans for facilities and ships to respond to oil spills. We're probably three-fourths of the way through crafting and promulgating all the regulations necessary to comply with OPA90. We still have about 25 percent of the regulations to promulgate.

This has created a whole new area of sensitivity for the American public, and something that the maritime industry is very concerned about because it costs them more money to operate and comply with the laws.

So the Coast Guard has spent a lot of time making sure the regulations com-

ply with the law and are fair, that it won't be detrimental to the industry, that it won't impede commerce in the United States and hurt our economy. So it's a very complicated issue. We're making excellent progress on it.

The demand for us to do international training is much higher than we can ever supply. There are over 125 nations, right now, that have asked for the Coast Guard to come and train them this year. We should be very proud of that because we're the lifesavers, we're the guardians of the sea, and we're seen as the premier maritime service in the world.

Bulletin: There are many different support services for Coast Guard men and women. Which do you feel are particularly good?



Kramek: All of our support services are good. At any period of time we need to support our personnel first and foremost. They need to be happy and well supported, so that they can do their job well.

One of my primary jobs is to make sure that we receive enough resources to keep our personnel supported with good pay and housing and health care.

I don't intend to change anything as far as the direction of our family and work-life programs. I do want to look at our work-life programs, though, and make sure that they're as effective as they can be, and not just providing referral services but providing the type of counseling and career counseling that our people need and require.

Bulletin: I know that physical fitness is rather important to you. How do you see the general fitness of servicemembers?

Kramek: I see it as improving. I've recently seen the total-wellness program that's being promulgated for our recruits at Cape May and I'm totally impressed.

I'm anxious to go and speak to some of these recruits because I'm really in favor of the type of physical-fitness program they advocate. Now we don't harass recruits with pushups. Instead, a straight bodybuilding program with the latest equipment is in place. And as I visit all of our ships and stations I not only see fitness centers everywhere, but I see our cooks being trained to provide healthy meals for our people. We're very conscious of it. I think we're very, very fit.

I don't think we need to do mandatory physical training. In my experience, every time we have had people run against the Marine Corps, we came in first. So as far as I'm concerned, we don't need a formal physical-fitness program.

Bulletin: I have heard that leadership is very important to you. Where do you perceive that leadership could be strengthened for enlisted, officers and civilians?

Kramek: Leadership is going to be the hallmark of what I hope to accomplish during the next four years. To be productive and serve the public, and to support our people, we need leadership at every element of the organization.

From petty officers to chiefs to warrants to officers to admirals, I expect everybody to be a leader in the Coast Guard and exhibit leadership in our day-to-day lives and in our professional operations.

Bulletin: What do you view as your biggest challenge in the years ahead and what can servicemembers do to help you face it?

Kramek: Obtaining sufficient resources for our personnel who are stationed where the rubber hits the road. Ninety percent of our people are working where the rubber hits the road — saving lives, interdicting drugs, flying MEP patrols. They are out there serving the public. To support our people so that they can do their job, they need the right equipment, they need the right training, they need the right support structure, for themselves and their families. That's going to be an enormous task in a declining budget.

Recently, I had a survey conducted of a representative group of COs (command-

ing officers), OinCs (officers in charge), CPOs (chief petty officers), and all the admirals and SES (Senior Executive Service) personnel in the Coast Guard.

The number-one issue they thought I should work on was the budget, but what they meant and communicated to me was to get sufficient resources to enable them to serve the public properly.

I will say that our chiefs and OinCs placed the need for training their personnel equal to the budget as one of their main concerns, and I heard them, and went out and did this series of interviews throughout the Coast Guard so I could hear from their standpoint — before I even get out there to visit them — what their major concerns were.

Bulletin: If I were a brand-new ensign today, what qualities and paths would you suggest I have or follow to shoot for the top? Same question for the brand-new seaman. What should I strive for?

Kramek: Everybody should have a personal-development plan that's based on one question: What do I want to be when I grow up?

I interview countless people and I've mentored a lot of people, also.

I'm going to require every single senior officer in the Coast Guard to mentor at least three people. But a lot of people I counsel ask me this question: 'How do I

get to the top?' 'Am I on the right career path?' 'What should I do next?'

And I usually say, 'Well, what do you want to be when you grow up?' And they say, 'What do you mean?' I say, 'What do you want to be when you self-actualize?' And they say, 'What is that you mean?' I say, 'When you have reached the top, when you achieved



your life goal, maybe you're going to be a mother with three children and a commander, or maybe you're going to be a father who put all his kids through college and you had four years in the Coast Guard but you got out, and now you're a professor teaching metallurgy at (New York's) Rensselaer Polytechnic.

You have to have some target out in the future and know what you want to

be. If you don't know what you want to be finally, then maybe try 10 years or 20 years from now.

But put together a plan because you know who you are now, especially your present role in the Coast Guard. If you're a first class petty officer or chief, you've probably already been in eight or 10 years or more.

And, if you have a life goal, all you have to do is figure out what more you need to do to get there. And that's why the more senior people who have already gone down those paths are here to help you with that, and can put together a list of developmental career assignments that will help you get there.

If you do that, you'll most likely be successful, because you're going to find out a couple of very interesting things: You'll find that you ought to check with your family on this plan, because they have their ideas of what they think you should be, and also where they think they might want to go with you or without you.

You're also going to find out that you have a tremendous amount of information (available). Talk to your career counselor or assignment officer, more lovingly known as your detailer.

In my view, you can do any mission, be any specialty in the Coast Guard, and be successful.

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Evolution of the office of commandant

★★★★ Coast Guard commandants ★★★★★

ADM Robert E. Kramek	1994-
ADM J. William Kime	1990-1994
ADM Paul A. Yost	1986-1990
ADM James S. Gracey	1982-1986
ADM John B. Hayes	1978-1982
ADM Owen W. Siler	1974-1978
ADM Chester R. Bender	1970-1974
ADM Willard J. Smith	1966-1970
ADM Edwin J. Roland	1962-1966
ADM Alfred C. Richmond	1954-1962
VADM Merlin O'Neill	1950-1954
ADM Joseph F. Farley	1946-1949
ADM Russell R. Waesche	1936-1946
RADM Harry G. Hamlet	1932-1936
RADM Frederick G. Billard	1924-1932
RADM William F. Reynolds	1919-1924
COMO Ellsworth P. Bertholf	1911-1919
CAPT Worth G. Ross	1905-1911
CAPT Charles F. Shoemaker	1895-1905
CAPT Leonard G. Shepard	1889-1895

The office of commandant, like the Coast Guard, has evolved through the years. Although the service traces its birth to Aug. 4, 1790, it was not until the 19th century that the office of commandant became established de facto. Beginning in 1894, captains of the Revenue Cutter Service served as Chief, Division of Revenue Cutter Service, when for the first time, there was a statutory requirement that the head of the service be a uniformed officer from its own ranks.

The use of the title and rank Captain Commandant first occurred in 1908 with the Revenue Cutter Service. It was subsequently formalized in the 1915 legislation which merged the cutter service with the Life Saving Service to form the Coast Guard. The essence of the role and position has been continuous, despite the changes through which both the names Coast Guard and commandant have evolved.

As the Coast Guard's size and responsibilities have increased, the rank of commandant has also elevated from that of captain to full admiral. The first four-star commandant of the Coast Guard was ADM Russell R. Waesche. Following World War II, the position was reduced to vice admiral and remained there until 1960 when it was again made a four-star position.

Source: G-C