

"TO
SUPPORT THE
WARFIGHTING
CINCS"

*Interview
With
Coast Guard
Commandant
Adm. Robert E.
Kramek*

Editor in Chief
James D. Hessman
and Editor
Emeritus L. Edgar
Prina interviewed
Coast Guard
Commandant Adm.
Robert E. Kramek
for this issue of
Sea Power.

Kramek emphasizes that today's Coast Guard is "prepared to contribute jointly" with the Navy and the CINCs by providing port security units, harbor defense commands, and navigational resources. In this photo, the 110-foot patrol boat Key Largo escorts a cargo ship of the Military Sealift Command out to sea.



SEA POWER: Admiral Kramek, can you tell our readers what you consider to be the state of the Coast Guard today?

KRAMEK: I am very pleased about the Coast Guard's performance. Our men and women have worked hard to live up to our mission statement of being life-savers and guardians of the sea. In every mission area they have really done their job, and it makes a strong statement when I have to testify before Congress or OMB [Office of Management and Budget] or before the secretary of transportation in order to get enough resources.

What does the Coast Guard bring to the Navy's order of battle?

KRAMEK: We're a force in being—43,000 people militarily trained to become part of the Navy whenever the Navy wants us to become part of it. But in today's terms we are really prepared to contribute jointly. More often than not, we're a supporting commander to the CINCs [commanders in chief], providing port security units, harbor defense commands, ships or planes, search and rescue resources, or navigational resources.

Sometimes we're the appropriate pro-



Interviewee: Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Robert E. Kramek

Educational Background: Graduated from USCG Academy 1961, B.S. in Engineering; post graduate studies at University of Michigan, Johns Hopkins University, University of Alaska; M.S. degrees in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Engineering Management. Also graduated from Naval War College "with Highest Distinction."

Career Highlights: Extensive service in all CG regions including Atlantic, Pacific, Caribbean, and Alaska. Served as USCG chief of staff and commanded two Coast Guard districts; also commanded USCG Base on Governors Island, N.Y., and heavy-endurance cutter

USCGC *Midgett*. Appointed by President Clinton to be U.S. interdiction coordinator for the national drug control program.

Awards and Honors: Two CG Distinguished Service Medals, two Legion of Merit Awards, Meritorious Service Medal, four CG Commendation Medals, numerous other medals and citations. Under his leadership Coast Guard was awarded Transportation Department's DOT Gold Medal.

Personal: Physical fitness enthusiast. Married to the former Patricia Havard of Washington, D.C.; they have four children: Tracy, Joseph, Suzanne, Nancy.

portional response for an operation other than war, such as after the recent Cuban shootdown [of a civilian aircraft]. The president did not want to use a naval armada to protect the Cuban-Americans who were going down to memorialize the ceremony and to conduct the search and rescue operation to look for survivors. He directed the Coast Guard to do that and directed the Defense Department to provide support.

Because we train with the Navy and because all of our command, control, communications, and intelligence systems are compatible we were able to achieve total synergy in a joint environment. So there was a Coast Guard task force doing all this, but what the public didn't see was an AWACS overhead, on the port side the USS *Ticonderoga*, and on the starboard the USS *Mississippi* with cruise missiles and surface-to-air missiles ready to go. What they also didn't see were the F-15 Eagles on the runway at Homestead Air Force Base—all linked together with Link Eleven.

What is the size of the Coast Guard fleet today?

KRAMEK: We have about 200 cutters and we use a mix of them, but only 12 are high-endurance cutters of the Hamilton class, which are really outfitted for naval warfare missions. We also have about 13 medium-endurance cutters—270-footers—that also are outfitted to be command and control ships for warfare missions.

Please discuss your memorandum of agreement [MOA] with the CNO and how it fits in with your war-planning.

KRAMEK: The MOA was an idea that Admiral Boorda and I initiated and that was validated by the Navy/Coast Guard (NAVGARD) Board, which is headed by the vice chief of naval operations and the vice commandant of the Coast Guard—they meet several times a year to make sure that the Coast Guard is taking into account what it needs to support the warfighting CINCs.

When a supported CINC needs something, I usually chop it to the naval component commander of that CINC. It's usually law-enforcement detachments or ships or search and rescue

aircraft. But the chain of command that we had to go through was a tedious one. So we [Kramek and Boorda] put together an MOA that was fairly broad, but geared specifically for three missions—maritime interdiction, port security, and environmental defense, like when they [the Iraqis] burned the rigs in the Persian Gulf.

Those are missions that I can work on directly with the CNO to provide assets to naval commanders without requiring approval every time by the secretary of defense and the secretary of transportation. Now we can immediately get forces to where they have to go without worrying about bureaucratic arrangements.

Doesn't the agreement also cover how you align your forces with the Navy's forces?

KRAMEK: Yes. That is what the NAVGARD Board does. They take a look at whether the Defense Department concept of "C4I for the Warrior" is being implemented for Coast Guard ships that would chop to naval component commanders for different jobs—in other words, whether or not our weapons and our armaments are appropriate to the current threat nowadays. That is why we scaled back on ASW, for example. I'm more interested in some patrol boat operations and port-defense types of things right now. That is why, in the ships of the future, it is so important that we have the capabilities to fight or to interdict in the event that low-end naval combatants are not built.

Will the Coast Guard be launching a new class of cutters next year?

KRAMEK: We are building 30 new ships right now. We are pursuing a design to replace our Hamilton-class cutters, and I've asked the Center for Naval Analyses to help us with describing the warfighting capabilities that the ship has to have so it will complement what the Navy is planning for their ships of the future.

When I look at naval shipbuilding for the next 30 years it appears to me that the Navy is going to favor—to meet budget

Kramek says that, of the Coast Guard's fleet of approximately 200 cutters, only 12 Hamilton-class high-endurance cutters are configured primarily to carry out major naval warfare missions. This photo shows the Hamilton-class cutter USCGC Mellon and the 210-foot Reliance-class USCGC Venturous underway.



Because of its emphasis on search and rescue, drug interdiction, maritime law enforcement, and waterway-safety missions, most Americans view the Coast Guard as "the cop on the beat." Shown here are Coast Guardsmen inspecting a buoy on an inland waterway.



constraints—the high end: the carriers, the cruisers, the Arleigh Burke destroyers, the submarines.

Both the CNO and I felt that, if the Coast Guard has to replace the high-endurance cutters, we need to have C4I [systems] and warfighting capability for the low-end frigates so they could fill that role. That makes good sense, because 90 to 95 percent of the time we will be doing humanitarian peacetime missions. So both the Navy and the Coast Guard won't have to invest in that. I can fill that low-end combat mission.

How fares the Coast Guard's budget on Capitol Hill? I understand you need \$112 million more than last year.

KRAMEK: We probably won't get it. Congress will probably approve a budget, but the House will probably approve less than we asked for. I'm not sure what the Senate is going to do yet. I am very concerned; I asked for the same amount of money I asked for last year, which I didn't get. If it were not for the Senate transferring some Defense Department funds to us, we'd really be in trouble. I've reduced 4,000 people and

\$400 million a year from the Coast Guard in the last few years and I've done that the same way the other services have—mainly through infrastructure changes. But I have no more infrastructure changes to make. I've moved from high-cost areas, I've closed inefficient bases, and I've tried to preserve our services to the public—interdiction of drugs and migrants, clean oceans, search and rescue.

You won't see any significant savings from infrastructure reductions for several years, I assume.
 KRAMEK: You have to invest for two years in "exit costs." But I only picked the things that return dividends in less than three years. By 2002 I will have saved \$2.6 billion in operating costs. That's a lot of money for the Coast Guard. Our budget is only about 1.5 percent of the entire defense budget. I told Congress that I can't reduce any more without sacrificing missions, and the American public hasn't identified anything that it doesn't want us to do.

Your ACI [acquisition, construction, improvement] backlog has gone up tremendously, hasn't it?

KRAMEK: I think all the services are in the same boat. You need to recapitalize your plant, your planes, your ships. The recapitalization rate for us is about \$700 to \$750 million a year; we'll be lucky if we get half of that this year. I have a lot of 50-year-old ships. I'm still running the oceangoing tugs we got in World War II, with the same engines, without helicopter platforms on them, without proper command and control equipment. That's crazy. I'm running 50-year-old icebreakers.

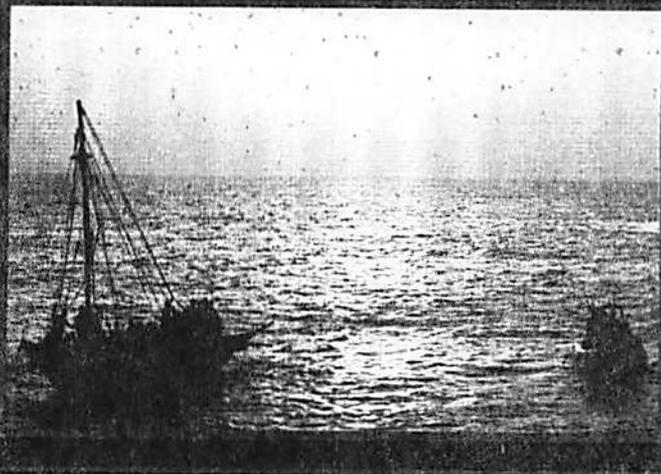
I have replacement programs but the capital investment funds are not there. The ships can still do the job, but they are people-intensive. They are not the "smart ship" concept that the Navy is putting on [the Aegis guided missile cruiser USS] *Yorktown*, but the new ships I'm building are smart and they have two-thirds the crew size. They can go faster, they can go further, and there will be fewer of them. I'll have tremendous O&M [operations and maintenance] savings as a result.

THE MULTIMISSION

TODAY'S COAST GUARD

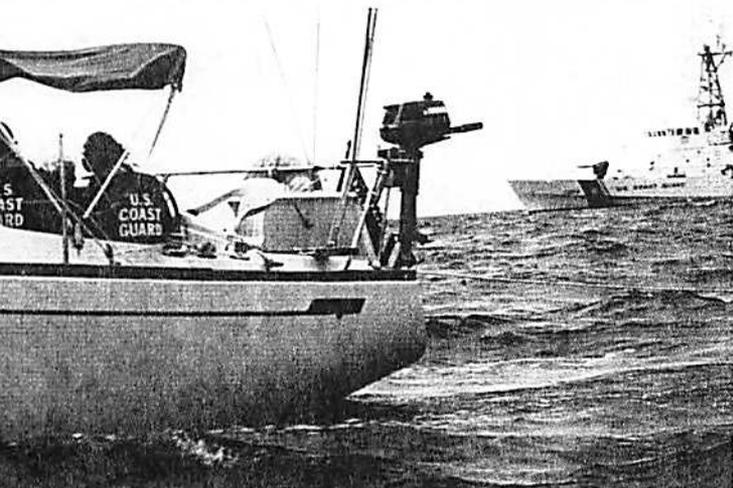


SERVICE





The USCG commandant says that the Coast Guard is developing new equipment and tactics to counter the threat of terrorism against passengers embarked on the numerous cruise ships entering and departing from U.S. ports. This photo shows the 210-foot Famous-class medium-endurance cutter USCGC Forward monitoring the passage of a large cruise ship.



Boating safety is a primary mission of the 35,000-member Coast Guard Auxiliary, which, Kramek points out, provides critical support to the Coast Guard in many other areas, as well. Shown here are Coast Guardsmen conducting a close-up inspection of pleasure craft.

We've designed a new boat—being built by Textron Marine. At 47 feet, it's just a few feet longer than the current boats, but it goes twice as fast, 25 knots, through heavy surf, and can roll over and come back up through 360 degrees. It can stay out four times as long and the big news is that the crew can be protected from the icy waves and wind [by staying] in the cabin below.

What will this new boat do for us? You know I have performance standards: When you call Mayday I have to get there in less than two hours, save 90 percent of the lives and 70 percent of the property. The public wants to know why not 100 percent of the lives—we're working on that.

Will the new boat help you cut any of the boat stations that you have to cut to save money?

KRAMEK: I have recommended that for the last two years, but

Congress will not permit it. I think that says something. I was trying to use technology to be more efficient. We can prove on paper that our response time is less, so we can eliminate or reduce in size some stations, but the American public is not happy with that.

We are the cop on the beat. Our presence is important for more than search and rescue. It's also important to eliminate drug smugglers and to stop migrants from coming in. The performance standard is to be there in two hours—but the water is cold in New

England and Alaska, so you have to be there in 25 minutes. People don't want those stations to go away, so Congress legislated that I keep those stations open. However, they gave me the flexibility to reallocate my manpower, so some stations will be open only in the summer, and others will be augmented by members of the Coast Guard auxiliary and reserve.

I understand that you called up the reserves four times last year.

KRAMEK: Yes. There were voluntary and involuntary call-ups because of flooding on the rivers. We have a special law under which the secretary of transportation may call up the reserves involuntarily to respond to natural disasters and/or for national emergencies, but not for warfare or port security missions—that call-up still has to come from the secretary of defense.

Are you facing the same problem that the Navy is—that personnel costs take a bigger chunk of the budget each year?

KRAMEK: We're out there with the men and women doing the job to serve the public. When you are an operating agency, about 65 percent or two-thirds of your costs are for personnel—because it's people doing things. When you get a budget cut you can't make cuts without reducing personnel. Every pay raise the military has gotten recently has been a little less than [needed to offset] inflation. Personnel costs do go up in high-cost areas like San Francisco or New York. If our people didn't get those pay raises they'd be on food stamps; they are just short of it in the lower ranks.

The question is: how do you pay for those increased personnel costs? I have no new money to pay for that—I've paid for it by streamlining the Coast Guard. Each year I have about \$80 million in increased costs due to entitlements, a higher cost of living, and pay raises. And there is just so much you can save through streamlining.

The attorney general has just released the annual terrorist



Interdiction of illegal migrants remains a major Coast Guard responsibility and is becoming an increasingly demanding one, as migrants seek new routes to the United States. This photo shows a Coast Guardsman guarding apprehended illegal migrants from China.

report. Have you had to devote more of your resources to combat terrorism?

KRAMEK: It has caused a heightened awareness for us. With the Olympics, for example, it means I can't use as many auxiliary and reserve personnel as I would like; I have to have more active-duty people who are trained to identify terrorist threats.

In terms of port security, we have more of a threat with cruise ships carrying American passengers. Public hearings are being held for cruise ship safety because of the threat of terrorism in terminals. There are extraordinary security provisions you have to go through with your luggage, credentials to get on and off, and for passage through different ports. So we attack the problem as a partner with industry and with harbors and terminals, rather than providing an armed guard type of operation.

But cruise ships are still the safest form of travel?

KRAMEK: Yes, but in the last two years there have been a number of cruise ship accidents. There always are some. But 15 years ago the cruise ship industry almost didn't exist. Now we have about 70 cruise ships in the United States carrying over five million passengers. The ships are foreign-flagged, except for one or two. So we have initiated unusual safety measures and inspections on all of them.

When a cruise ship has an accident, it's big news because the ship is carrying hundreds, maybe thousands, of passengers. Recently, some ran aground or were in collisions. But nobody died or got injured. The safety systems we had installed worked. The fires were put out, the lifeboats worked, and the passengers got ashore. We have to keep inspecting the ships to make sure they meet very stringent standards.

You said you have to do more with less, but also that you have to cut down on the Coast Guard's 92-hour work week. Isn't that a contradiction?

KRAMEK: Nobody is going to tell us to do less. We have 15 percent more work than we can do. We have to pick the most important missions in terms of national security and economic security. The cutters are underway 185 days a year. The tempo has not changed.

Migrant interdiction: Are smugglers loading Chinese illegals in the Dominican Republic and attempting to transport them to Puerto Rico?

KRAMEK: There are some Chinese, some Yugoslavs, some Indians, but 95 percent are Dominicans. If they get by us, the

Border Patrol picks them up and gives them back to us. We return them to the Dominican Republic, with whom we have a repatriation agreement. If they get within two blocks of the shoreline they blend in; they have safe houses in Puerto Rico. The Dominicans run the drug mafia in Puerto Rico. The illegal migrants get inside Cuban waters, skirt the coast, and we have to shadow them for three or four days, catch them when they pop out, and establish probable cause.

Has the flow of illegal Chinese migrants been halted?

KRAMEK: We've got the East and West Coasts cordoned off pretty well. Now they go to Central America or Mexico as waystations.

What is the status of the Coast Guard's "cultural audit," and what is the tie between the cultural audit and Work Force 2015?

KRAMEK: There is a direct linkage. Both are part of our strategic planning. If we are to continue to be the premier maritime service in the world we need to have the best people. You can't have the best people if you attract only one type. I call your attention to the valedictorians and salutatorians in the high schools today; there probably is a higher percentage of minorities in those groups than ever before. Our standards will be the same, but I want all barriers eliminated.

We've seen some success, especially with women. We've had women on duty since the 1970s, as have the other services. Our difference, initially, was that we opened up all the jobs to them. Last year we had 33 percent women accepted in the new class of the Coast Guard Academy. That's because women know they can be very successful in the Coast Guard; they are not restricted in their duties.

What is the Coast Guard grant program?

KRAMEK: The Coast Guard gives grants to 49 states for their boat safety programs—Alaska does not qualify, because the Indians don't want to wear life jackets in their canoes. The Coast Guard Auxiliary—about 35,000 volunteers—has a number of missions, but its primary mission is boating safety.

Is there anything else you would like to say to our Navy League readers?

KRAMEK: Yes. If the president and Congress agree on a balanced budget by 2002 they will have a point on the budget chart they want to meet. The lines to get there will be different for the Congress and the president. Those lines have been drawn without respect to public policy, without looking at how reductions are going to affect different agencies in the government, and how those agencies serve the American public, especially in the saving of lives, providing clean oceans and safe waterways, and interdicting drugs. I don't think we should jeopardize people's lives or let cocaine rain down on our kids. I think we have to be very careful about how to achieve a balanced budget and recognize the effects, good and bad, that can result. ■