

Rear Admiral James A. Watson IV, USCG (Retired)



Rear Admiral James Watson retired in June 2012 after assignment to the Department of Interior as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. He had been Director of Prevention Policy for Marine Safety, Security and Stewardship, Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington DC since July 2011, where he had been responsible for Seaport Security Assessments, Boating Safety, Commercial Vessel Safety and Security, Ports and Cargo Safety and Security, Maritime Investigations, and Quality Traveling Inspectors. Prior to this he was the Deputy Commander, Coast Guard Atlantic Area Command and the Atlantic Area's first Director of Operations with operational assets that include 147 cutters, 97 aircraft and 1,106 boats in 26 Sectors east of the Rocky Mountains. In April 2010, Rear Admiral Watson was deployed to New Orleans to help direct the Gulf of Mexico oil spill following the MODU Deepwater Horizon disaster. He served as Federal On-Scene Coordinator from June 1 to July 14, 2010.

Rear Admiral Watson was promoted to flag rank in 2007. His first flag assignment was to establish the Prevention Policy Directorate which he managed until June 2009.

He served as Chief of Staff of the Seventh Coast Guard District in Miami FL from 2006 to 2007. From 2004 to 2006 he was Chief, Office of Budget and Programs, Coast Guard Headquarters.

Prior field assignments include: Commanding Officer Marine Safety Office Miami (2001-2004), Commanding Officer Marine Safety Office San Diego (1995-1998), Executive Officer Marine Safety Office Savannah (1992-1995), Chief of Port Operations Marine Safety Office Puget Sound (1989-1992), and Engineering Officer/Student Engineer USCGC Bibb (1978-1980).

Headquarters staff assignments have included: Program Reviewer - Office of Budget and Programs (1998-2000), Staff Naval Architect - USCG Marine Safety Center (1986-1989), Staff Engineer – Marine Technical and Hazardous Materials Division (1980-1983).

Rear Admiral Watson is a native of Baltimore, Maryland. He graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1978 with a Bachelors of Science degree in Marine Engineering. In 1985 he earned two Master of Science degrees in Mechanical Engineering and Naval Architecture from the University of Michigan. In 2001 he graduated from the Industrial College of the Armed Forces with a Master of Science degree in Strategic Studies.

Rear Admiral Watson has been a member of the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers since 1978. He was recognized as the International Propeller Club of the United States "Southeast Region Person of the Year" in 2004. His personal military awards include the Distinguished Service Award, five Legions of Merit, two Meritorious Service Medals, and six Coast Guard Commendation Medals.

Rear Admiral Watson continued public service until September 2013 as Director of the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, where he was responsible for implementing a new organization with new authorities for permitting and inspecting all offshore oil and gas exploration and production in the U.S.

Rear Admiral Watson is currently the American Bureau of Shipping, Americas Division president. He leads hundreds of surveyors and marine engineers who provide classification and certification services for thousands of marine and offshore vessels and structures.