

## Chapter One: America's Maritime Guardian

America's enduring maritime interests—its reliance on the seas for commerce, sustenance, and defense—have been constant since colonial days. The U.S. Coast Guard exists to address these enduring interests. The United States is a maritime nation, with an extensive set of interests and concerns in the seas around us and beyond. With 95,000 miles of shoreline bordering nearly 3.4 million square miles of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ), America's future will remain tied to the sea. The seas link the nation with world commerce and trade and allow us to project military power far from our shores to protect important U.S. interests, as well as to assist allies and friends at risk from common foes. The seas also serve as highways for a host of transnational threats and challenges that honor no national frontier.

The U.S. Coast Guard is one of the five armed services of the United States of America. As such, it is an important element of America's national security strategy. We protect vital interests of the United States—the personal safety and security of our population; our natural and economic resources; and the territorial integrity of our nation—from both internal and external threats, natural and man-made. We protect these interests in America's ports and inland



U.S. territorial seas and Exclusive Economic Zones.

waterways, along the coasts, on international waters, or in any other maritime region where U.S. interests may be at risk. From 1915, when the Coast Guard was established by law as an armed service, we have been a military, multi-mission, maritime service possessing a unique blend of humanitarian, law enforcement, regulatory, diplomatic, and military capabilities. These gird our five fundamental roles: maritime security, maritime safety, protection of natural resources, maritime mobility, and national defense.

Each Coast Guard role is composed of several mission areas. Each of these in turn is based on one or more mandated or authorized duties. Many Coast Guard missions benefit more than one role. For example, while our aids to navigation mission primarily supports our maritime mobility role by facilitating the movement of people and goods, the system of aids we maintain also supports our maritime safety and protection of natural resources roles by preventing accidents. This interwoven, overlapping combination of roles and missions calls for Coast Guard resources that are similarly multi-mission capable.

## COAST GUARD ROLES AND MISSIONS

### Maritime Security

Maritime law enforcement and border control are the oldest of the Coast Guard's numerous responsibilities, dating back to our founding as the Revenue Marine in 1790. Congress established the Revenue Marine specifically to patrol the coasts and seaports to frustrate smuggling and enforce the customs laws of the fledgling Republic.

Two centuries have passed and that early challenge has evolved into a full open ocean responsibility for the maritime sovereignty of our nation. Our maritime law enforcement role and the task of interdicting ships at sea provide the foundation upon which our much broader and complex present-day mission set has been built.

As the nation's primary maritime law enforcement service, the Coast Guard enforces or assists in enforcing federal laws, treaties, and other international agreements on the high seas and waters under U.S. jurisdiction. We possess the authority to board any vessel subject to U.S. jurisdiction to make inspections, searches, inquiries, and arrests. We wield this extraordinarily broad police power with prudence and restraint primarily to suppress violations of our drug, immigration, fisheries, and environmental laws.

As the designated lead agency for maritime drug interdiction under the National Drug Control Strategy and the co-lead agency with the U.S. Customs Service for air interdiction operations, the Coast Guard defends America's seaward frontier against a virtual torrent of illegal drugs. For more than two decades our cutters and aircraft, forward deployed off

#### Maritime Security Missions

- ◆ Drug Interdiction
- ◆ Alien Migrant Interdiction
- ◆ EEZ & Living Marine Resource Law/Treaty Enforcement
- ◆ General Maritime Law Enforcement

South America and in the transit zone, have intercepted many tons of cocaine, marijuana, and other illegal drugs that otherwise would have found their way to America's streets.

Coast Guard alien migrant interdiction operations (AMIO) are also law enforcement missions with a significant humanitarian dimension. Migrants typically take great risks and endure significant hardships in their attempts to flee their countries and enter the United States. In many cases, migrant vessels interdicted at sea are overloaded and unseaworthy, lack basic safety equipment, and are operated by inexperienced mariners. The majority of alien migrant interdiction cases we handle actually begin as search and rescue cases, once again illustrating the interwoven nature of our roles and missions. Between 1980 and 2000, we interdicted 290,000



Coast Guard members unload bales of marijuana after a bust.

migrants, mostly from Cuba, Dominican Republic, People's Republic of China, and Haiti.



A boarding team from the medium-endurance cutter *Courageous* (WMEC 622) prepares to board a vessel carrying Haitian migrants.

In 1976, Congress passed what is now known as the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. By creating an Exclusive Economic Zone, this act pushed out our nation's maritime border to 200 nautical miles. In the years that followed, international fisheries agreements went even further, extending U.S. jurisdiction to high-seas areas beyond the EEZ. Today, we patrol these areas, as well as our EEZ—where we focus primarily on maritime boundary areas such as the U.S./Russian Convention Line in the Bering Sea—to uphold U.S. sovereignty and protect America's precious resources.

Maritime law enforcement is a continuing theme running through our proud history of service to America. It requires a wide breadth of experience and skills: seamanship, diplomacy, legal expertise, and combat readiness. We have honed these skills for more than two centuries. No other U.S. armed service or federal agency possesses this combination of law enforcement capabilities and responsibilities, together with the legal authorities to carry them out. Controlling the use of the seas in the best interests of the United States is what maritime security is all about.

#### Maritime Safety

One of the most basic responsibilities of the U.S. government is to protect the lives and safety of Americans. In the maritime realm, the lead responsibility falls to the Coast Guard. In partnership with other federal agencies, state and local governments, marine industries, and individual mariners, we preserve safety at sea through a focused program of prevention, response, and investigation.

#### Maritime Safety Missions

- ◆ Search and Rescue
- ◆ Marine Safety
- ◆ Recreational Boating Safety
- ◆ International Ice Patrol

Our prevention activities include developing commercial and recreational vessel standards, enforcing compliance with these standards, licensing commercial mariners, operating the International Ice Patrol to protect ships transiting the North Atlantic shipping lanes, and educating the public. We develop operating and construction criteria for many types of vessels, from commercial ships to recreational boats. The Coast Guard is America's voice in the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which promulgates measures to improve shipping safety, pollution prevention, mariner training, and certification standards. We also are the agency primarily responsible for developing domestic shipping and navigation regulations. We ensure compliance with safety regulations in many ways. We inspect U.S. flag vessels, mobile offshore drilling units and marine facilities; examine foreign-flag vessels based on the potential safety and pollution risk they pose; review and approve plans for vessel construction, repair, and alteration; and document and admeasure U.S. flag vessels. The Port State Control program, which is aimed at eliminating sub-standard vessels from U.S. ports and waterways, is a key element in our safety enforcement program, for 95 percent of passenger ships and 75 percent of cargo ships operating in U.S. waters are foreign-flagged.



An HC-130 overflies an iceberg during an International Ice Patrol mission.

As National Recreational Boating Safety Coordinator, the Coast Guard works to minimize loss of life, personal injury, property damage, and environmental harm associated with recreational boating. Our boating safety program involves public education programs, regulation of boat design and construction, approval of boating safety equipment, and courtesy marine examinations of boats for compliance with federal and state safety requirements. The all-volunteer Coast Guard Auxiliary plays a central role in this program.

Coast Guard prevention activities in pursuit of maritime safety are often inseparable from those we perform to protect the marine environment or police the U.S. marine transportation system. Actions in one area often reinforce those required for other roles and missions. As a result, our numerous accident-prevention efforts have saved countless lives and contributed to the economic and environmental health of the nation.

Nevertheless, the maritime arena is massive and complex and the sea powerful and unforgiving. Mishaps will occur despite our best efforts. When they do, the Coast Guard has a long heritage and proud tradition of responding immediately to save lives and property in peril. As the lead agency



Coast Guard members prepare to rescue fishermen from their sinking vessel.

for maritime search and rescue (SAR) in U.S. waters, we coordinate the SAR efforts of sea and airborne Coast Guard units, as well as those of other federal, state, and local responders. We also leverage the world's merchant fleet to rescue mariners in distress around the globe through the Automated Mutual-assistance Vessel Rescue (AMVER) system.

Finally, in addition to responding to a wide variety of time-critical maritime emergencies and accidents, we investigate their causes and determine whether laws have been violated or whether changes should be made to improve safety through our prevention programs.

#### Protection of Natural Resources

America's marine waters and their ecosystems are vital to the health, well being, and economy of the nation. Our marine environment is among the most valuable and productive natural resources on Earth, containing one-fifth of the world's fishery resources. It is also a region of extraordinary recreation, minerals-development, and transportation activities. For these reasons our role in carrying out the nation's mandates to protect our marine environment is of vital importance.

The Coast Guard's protection of natural resources role dates to the 1820s, when Congress tasked the Revenue Marine to protect federal stocks of Florida live oak. As the exploitation of the nation's valuable marine resources—whales, fur-bearing animals, and fish—increased, we were given the duty to protect these resources as well. Today, with our U.S. EEZ supporting com-

mercial and recreational fisheries worth more than \$30 billion annually, we serve as the primary agency for at-sea fisheries enforcement. But our role has expanded over the last few decades to include enforcing laws intended to protect the environment as a public good. As a result, we now actively protect sensitive marine habitats, marine mammals, and endangered marine species, and we enforce laws protecting our waters from the discharge of oil and other hazardous substances.

Protection of Natural Resources  
Missions

- ◆ Marine Environmental Protection
- ◆ Domestic Fisheries Enforcement
- ◆ Protected Living Marine Resource Law Enforcement

We conduct a wide range of activities—education and prevention, enforcement, response and containment, and recovery—in support of our primary environmental protection mission areas: maritime pollution enforcement, offshore lightering zone enforcement, domestic fisheries enforcement, and foreign vessel inspection. We also provide mission-critical command and control support and usually are the first responding force to environmental disasters on the seas.

In addition, we are typically the lead agency for any ensuing response effort. Under the National Contingency Plan, Coast Guard Captains of the Port (COTP) are the pre-designated Federal On-Scene Coordinators (FOSC) for oil and hazardous substance incidents in all coastal and some

inland areas. The FOSC is, in reality, the President's designated on-scene representative. As such, the FOSC is responsible for forging a well coordinated and effective response operation involving a diverse set of government and commercial entities in many emotionally charged and potentially dangerous emergency situations.

### Maritime Mobility

The U.S. marine transportation system facilitates America's global reach into foreign markets and the nation's engagement in world affairs, including protection of U.S. national interests through a national and international regulatory framework governing trade and commerce. This system includes the waterways and ports through which more than 2 billion tons of America's foreign and domestic freight and 3.3 billion barrels of oil move each year, plus the intermodal links that support our economic and military security. It also includes international and domestic passenger services, commercial and recreational fisheries, and recreational boating. The



An HH-65A responds to an oil spill after the bulk tanker *New Carissa* ran aground one mile north of Coos Bay, Oregon, in February 1999.

Coast Guard is a leading force for providing a safe, efficient marine transportation system.

#### Maritime Mobility Missions

- ◆ Aids to Navigation
- ◆ Icebreaking Services
- ◆ Bridge Administration
- ◆ Waterways/Vessel Traffic Management



The crew of the cutter *Hornbeam* (WLB 394) prepares to lift a buoy out of the water off Yorktown, Virginia.

The Coast Guard carries out numerous port safety and security, waterways management, and commercial vessel safety missions and tasks. We are responsible for providing a safe, efficient, and navigable waterway system to support domestic commerce, international trade, and the military sealift requirements for national defense. The services we provide include: long- and short-range aids to navigation; charting, tide/current/pilotage information through Notices to Mariners; vessel traffic services; domestic and international icebreaking and patrol services; technical assistance and advice; vessel safety standards and inspection; and bridge administration standards and inspection. The Coast Guard is also America's principal point of contact for international marine transportation issues in the IMO.

#### National Defense

Throughout our history, the Coast Guard has served alongside the U.S. Navy in critical national defense missions, beginning with the Quasi-War with France in 1798, through the Civil War, World Wars I and II, to the Vietnam War and the Persian Gulf War. The close relationship between our services and between our parent agencies has evolved through more than two centuries of cooperation, culminating in a 1995 agreement between the Secretaries of Defense and Transportation. This agreement assigns to the Coast Guard five specific national defense missions in support of the Unified Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs) in addition to our general defense operations and polar icebreaking duties. These missions—maritime interception operations; military



The cutters *Katmai Bay* (WTGB 101) and *Biscayne Bay* (WTGB 104) break ice in the Straits of Mackinaw on the Great Lakes.



environmental response operations; port operations, security, and defense; peacetime military engagement; and coastal sea control operations—require the Coast Guard to execute essential military functions and tasks in support of joint and combined forces in peacetime, crisis, and war.<sup>1</sup>

In recent years, the CINCs have requested Coast Guard cutters to conduct military interception operations, peacetime military engagement, and other supporting warfare tasks in all key areas of operations. They have done so because we offer unique and non-redundant capabilities and perform a vital, complementary role no other armed service can provide. Unlike the other services, we reach out to all elements of other countries' maritime interests and agencies, and our international humanitarian reputation often makes a Coast Guard presence much less threatening to foreign nations than would a purely military one.



The crew of the high-endurance cutter *Midgett* (WHEC 726) renders honors to the *Constellation* (CV 64) off the coast of Pusan, Republic of Korea, at the beginning of a six-month deployment to the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf in 1999.

### National Defense Missions

- ◆ General Defense Operations
- ◆ Maritime Interception Operations\*
- ◆ Military Environmental Response Operations\*
- ◆ Port Operations, Security, and Defense\*
- ◆ Peacetime Military Engagement\*
- ◆ Coastal Sea Control Operations\*
- ◆ Polar Icebreaking

\* Contained in DoT/DoD Memorandum of Agreement.

Like the other U.S. armed services, warfare is one of the Coast Guard's primary reasons for being. Because of our special multi-mission capabilities our units play unique roles in peacetime military engagement, humanitarian support, peacekeeping and peace-enforcement, crisis-response, and combat operations across the spectrum of U.S. global strategies and policies.

We maintain a high state of readiness to operate as a specialized service within the

Navy, and provide enormous value as a naval augmentation force for the nation to call upon as needed. We exercise command responsibilities for the U.S. Maritime Defense Zones (MDZ) and our extensive involvement in coastal and port maritime functions at home give us vital capabilities that can be used anywhere in the world they are needed.

Finally, we operate the nation's only polar icebreakers, which enable our Service to project U.S. national presence and protect national interests in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. These polar vessels re-supply America's polar facilities and support the research requirements of the National Science Foundation.

The Coast Guard's ability to fulfill its roles—saving lives and property at sea;

protecting America's maritime borders and suppressing violations of the law; protecting our marine environment; providing a safe, efficient marine transportation system; and defending the nation—makes us truly a unique instrument of national security. More than simply "guarding the coast," we safeguard the global commons and bring critical capabilities to the full-spectrum, multi-agency response needed to address America's national and maritime security needs.



A Bear-class medium endurance cutter fires its 76-mm/62-caliber gun during live-fire exercises.