

A few armed vessels, judiciously stationed at the entrances of our ports, might at a small expense be made useful sentinels of the laws.

— Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury
Federalist No. 12, The Utility of the Union in Respect to Revenue
From the *New York Packet*
27 November 1787

Earliest recorded reference to what would become the U.S. Coast Guard

It had the desired effect.

— Captain John Faunce, USRCS
Commanding Officer, USRC *Harriet Lane*
Comment to *Harper's Weekly* about firing the
first naval shot of the Civil War in Charleston, South Carolina

Did they get off?

— Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, Signalman First Class Douglas Munro, USCG
Inquiring of the 400 Marines he rescued, just before
dying of wounds he suffered in the effort

These poor, plain men, dwellers upon the lonely sands of Hatteras, took their lives in their hands, and, at the most imminent risk, crossed the most tumultuous sea ... and all for what? That others might live to see home and friends.

— Annual Report of the U.S. Life-Saving Service, 1885

The lighthouse and the lightship appeal to the interests and better instinct of man because they are symbolic of never-ceasing watchfulness, of steadfast endurance in every exposure, of widespread helpfulness.

— George R. Putnam, the first Commissioner of Lighthouses
U.S. Lighthouse Service, 1906-1935

Having fought as a part of the Navy in all our wars, and taking an especial pride in being fully prepared to perform credible service in the Navy whenever called upon, the officers and men of the Coast Guard are inspired not only by the high traditions and fine history of their own service, but also by the splendid traditions, history, and indoctrination of the United States Navy. They have thus two rich heritages to be proud of and two standards of the same lofty character to live up to.

— Rear Admiral F. C. Billard, USCG
Commandant of the Coast Guard, 1924-1932
U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, May 1929

Foreword

From the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard

I am pleased to present *America's Maritime Guardian: U.S. Coast Guard Publication 1* to the military and civilian men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve, and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

The subtitle, *U.S. Coast Guard Publication 1*, deserves some explanation. Published 211 years after the founding of our Service, *Publication 1* is clearly not the Coast Guard's first publication, but it is the first official publication to synthesize who we are, what we do, and how we do things.

Why is *Publication 1* necessary? Every organization worth its salt has a "handbook" to tell its members and anyone else who is interested just what the organization is all about: its history, its ethos, its values, and its reason for existence.

The Coast Guard is a military, multi-mission, maritime service. Though we are America's smallest armed service, we perform an astonishingly broad range of services to our country—so broad that it is possible to devote a fulfilling career to one or even several major mission areas without understanding how the whole Service works together for our nation's benefit. *Publication 1* attempts to supply that understanding. It is designed to let the right hand know what the left is doing and to remind both hands of the magnificent body to which they are joined. This is our common understanding about ourselves. My hope is that it will enable every Coast Guard service member, civilian employee, and volunteer to serve more effectively.

Read it to learn. Read it with pride.

Semper Paratus,



James M. Loy
Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard



Introduction

In 1790, the First Congress of the United States established a small maritime law enforcement agency to assist in collecting the new nation's customs duties. For the next eight years, this Revenue Marine (later called the Revenue Cutter Service) was the nation's only naval force and so was soon assigned military duties. Over time, the Revenue Cutter Service acquired new responsibilities and either merged with or absorbed several other federal agencies. The Service acquired new responsibilities based upon its ability to perform them with existing assets and minimal disruption to its other duties. It acquired other agencies because their maritime responsibilities were seen as intersecting with or complementing its own. The result is today's U.S. Coast Guard—a unique force that carries out an array of civil and military responsibilities touching on almost every facet of the maritime environment affecting the United States.

What makes the Coast Guard unique is that in executing our diverse missions as America's Maritime Guardian, we harmonize what seem to be contradictory mandates. We are charged at once to be policemen and sailors, warriors, humanitarians, regulators, stewards of the environment, diplomats, and guardians of the coast. Thus, we are military, multi-mission, and maritime.

As a practical matter, while Coast Guard men and women and the units in which they serve are prepared to act across the entire range of Coast Guard missions, some responsibilities will absorb more time, effort, and resources than others. A practical emphasis on specific mission areas should not, however, cause us to lose focus on the broad roles of the Coast Guard and the way in which these roles affect how the Service is organized, equipped, and conducts operations. Indeed, it is the multi-mission nature of the Coast Guard that is our greatest strength. Every Coast Guard member needs to understand our Service as a whole. This document is designed to provide context for that understanding.

Publication 1 explains *what we do*; that is, it describes the fundamental roles today's Coast Guard fulfills in support of the *U.S. National Security Strategy* and the missions we perform in pursuing those roles. It traces our organizational history, to explain how the Coast Guard acquired its diverse mission set. It explains the unique characteristics and qualities, derived from our history, roles, and missions, that together define *who we are*. Finally, it lays out principles of operations that flow from our unique organizational nature and identity. In other words, it also describes *how we do things*.

The principles of operations discussed in this publication are Coast Guard doctrine; that is, fundamental principles that guide our actions in support of the nation's objectives. They are rooted in our history and are the distillation of hard-won experience. They provide a shared interpretation of that experience. This in turn provides a common starting point for thinking about future action. With training and experience, this shared outlook leads to consistent behavior, mutual confidence, and more effective collective action, without constraining initiative.

Because this doctrine is rooted in history, it is enduring. But it also evolves in response to changes in the political and strategic landscape, lessons learned from operations, and the introduction of new technologies. Doctrine influences the way in which policy and plans are developed, forces are organized and trained, and equipment is procured. It promotes unity of purpose, guides professional judgment, and enables Coast Guard men and women to best fulfill their responsibilities. *Publication 1* tells us how we became and why we are America's Maritime Guardian.