



# Delivering the Goods

News from the U.S. Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate

August 2010

## First Lady's Christening of National Security Cutter Stratton Marks a Multitude of 'Firsts'

By Rebekah Gordon

**P**ASCAGOULA, Miss. - Celebrating a multitude of "firsts" for the U.S. Coast Guard, first lady Michelle Obama christened the third National Security Cutter (NSC) Stratton here at Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding on July 23, marking the first time that a U.S. president's wife has sponsored a cutter and broken a champagne bottle across the bow.

Stratton is the namesake of Capt. Dorothy Stratton, who was the first woman accepted into the service in 1942, leading the Coast Guard Women's Reserve, or SPARs, during World War II. Stratton died in 2006 at the age of 107, but members of her extended family attended the ceremony. They were joined by 23 living SPARs, who traveled with their families from across the country for the event.

The prospective commanding officer of the Stratton, Capt. Bruce Baffer, is also a trailblazer in his own right, as this is the first time a cutter's captain has previously led the vessel's project and program offices in the Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate.

Ten thousand enlisted and 1,000 commissioned officers comprised the SPARs, coined from the Coast Guard's motto,



First lady Michelle Obama christens the Stratton by breaking a champagne bottle over the bow of the cutter July 23. Mrs. Obama is the first first lady to sponsor a Coast Guard cutter in the service's 220-year history. *U. S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Casey J. Ranel*

Semper Paratus – Always Ready, until they were released from service in 1946. Freeing men up for war, the SPARs worked in positions such as radio operators, air traffic controllers and machinists' mates.

"Thank you for the great honor of being the first first lady to

sponsor a United States Coast Guard cutter," Obama said at the ceremony before a crowd of about 3,000. "Believe me, I am humbled that its namesake is the first woman to serve as a commissioned officer in the United States Coast Guard—one of the true pioneers in American history.

"The legacy of Capt. Stratton and her SPARs lives on in all those who followed in their footsteps," she continued. "After World War II, it would be another 30 years before women started to be fully admitted to the Coast Guard and other services. But ask any of those women—including those here today—and they'll tell you that it was Capt. Stratton, the SPARs and the women of World War II who opened the door so that they could walk through and proudly serve this country."

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## Forging an Acquisition Career Path

Today, Capt. Baffer, prospective commanding officer of the Stratton, is forging the pathway for a military career in acquisition. In an interview the day before the christening at the NSC Project Resident Office here, he called it an opportunity to bridge the worlds of acquirers, operators (also called sponsors) and technical authorities that all play a key role in acquisition projects. "With an established military acquisition specialty, you shouldn't just be doing acquisitions, but rotating in and out of projects as you become more senior," Baffer said. "It's driving a ship, building a ship, driving a ship, being in a program office – that sort of thing.

"The active duty shouldn't be the acquisition experts. We have highly qualified civilians providing that expertise, but they do need to have the operational perspective and understand what the user needs," Baffer said. "Having been in their shoes, you can speak their language and understand their priorities.

"Being able to see both worlds and understand what's negotiable and what is not, allows you to work all sides of the acquisition triangle with the sponsors and technical authorities. That's really what you want the active duty folks doing."

Baffer, who has served on every class of Coast Guard medium



(Left to right) Vice President & General Manager of Lockheed Martin Ship & Aviation Systems Dan Schultz, First Lady Michelle Obama, Capt. Bruce Baffer and Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano acknowledge the crowd of 3,000 assembled at Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding for the Stratton christening.

*U. S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Casey J. Ranel*

and high endurance cutter, said his experience operating small boats was invaluable as acquirers and sponsors revamped the NSC's small boat concept of operations to effectively meet real-world mission needs. And, as he returns to being an operator, his time spent managing the NSC project and the acquisition program for surface assets will inform his newest command.

Working in the Acquisition Directorate during the acceptance trials for the first two NSCs, Bertholf and Waesche, Baffer became familiar with the bugs and kinks typical in any new ship. "You understand what's changeable and what's not," he said. As he moves to command the Stratton, he added, "I want to focus on the things that are doable and fixable, and mostly at

this point they're incremental improvements. But you add them all together and the ship becomes a more effective operational platform."

The 418-foot-long Stratton is nearly 50 percent complete. It will be delivered to the Coast Guard before the end of fiscal year 2011 and will arrive in its homeport of Alameda, Calif. sometime in early 2012 to prepare for commissioning. Construction efficiencies continue to be realized in the shipyard, which has reduced the number of hull assemblies and grand blocks—multiple assemblies stacked together—that are constructed in halls away from the waterfront.

Thirty-two assemblies were used in the construction of Bertholf,

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Approximately two dozen members of the Coast Guard Women's Reserve during World War II, called SPARs, traveled from all across the country to participate in the historic events surrounding the christening of the 418-foot Stratton.

*U. S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Casey J. Ranel*

29 for Waesche, and Stratton will use only 14. This enables more sub-assembly work in each grand block to be performed in a controlled environment, enhancing oversight and inspection. Additionally, hull design and fatigue enhancements that ensure the 30-year service life requirement are already built into Stratton.

"Applying lessons learned is making a difference on Stratton and has resulted in this ship being further along at this point than the two previous cutters," Northrop Grumman Shipbuilding President Mike Petters said at the christening.

### 'Our Drive to Constantly Innovate'

The Legend-class NSCs are also a first, designed to be the

hallmark of the Coast Guard's recapitalized fleet. Capable of executing the most challenging maritime safety and security missions around the globe, they are the largest and most technologically advanced class of cutters in the service's history.

A class of eight NSCs will replace the aging 378-foot high endurance Hamilton-class cutters that have been in service since the 1960s. Each will have a base crew of 108; Stratton's crew is in the early stages of assembly and most won't begin arriving until next summer. The NSC has state-of-the-art command and control systems that enhance the Coast Guard's interoperability with its law enforcement partners.

At the ceremony, Commandant Adm. Robert Papp said that while

the day-to-day execution of duties remains the Coast Guard's highest priority, recapitalizing the service's aging fleet with new assets ranks immediately behind.

"Demand for our services continues to outpace our capacity to provide them, especially when it comes to our multi-mission cutters," Papp said. "Christening the Stratton is an important step in investing in our Coast Guard's future. Our dedicated men and women need Stratton's capabilities to execute their duties and the Coast Guard's challenging maritime missions."

Much like the SPARs were a product of Capt. Stratton's drive to heed the nation's call during World War II, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano said that the cutter named after her "embodies our drive to constantly innovate and evolve our maritime capabilities and to leverage technology to our greatest advantage. It also reflects our desire for a modern, agile and forward-leaning Coast Guard capable of handling a new era of national security threats."

To learn more about the NSC, please visit <http://www.uscg.mil/acquisition/NSC>. ■

## Operational Readiness and the HC-130H/J Program

By Michael Valliant

When Rick Seitz was an aircraft maintenance officer for the U.S. Air Force, they had a squadron of 24 authorized airplanes. But they had 27 airplanes in the squadron, meaning if they lost one to maintenance or a crash, they could insert one of three spares. That is not a luxury Seitz has as project manager for the Coast Guard's HC-130 H/J programs. If the Coast Guard loses an aircraft, "there are no backups," Seitz points out.

"That makes the work that the Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate's air program does that much more critical. And it makes congressional passage of the supplemental appropriations act on July 27 all the more timely. Through the supplemental, the Coast Guard received \$15.5 million for the replacement/refurbishment of one MH-60 helicopter. The U.S. Navy also received \$174 million to provide the Coast Guard with two new HC-130J aircraft.

"For us, all of our aircraft are either operational or in the overhaul line to come out and be put back in the condition where they are operational," said Capt. Jim Martin, program manager for the Coast Guard's air program. "So when we lose an aircraft in a mishap, it creates an operational gap in the field. These two C-130s are specific to helping replace two we lost in mishaps."

The Coast Guard has 27 air stations including the Aviation



An HC-130H displaying an historic color scheme flies in formation with a new HC-130J from Air Station Elizabeth City, N.C. The Coast Guard has been using a version of the C-130 since Air Station Elizabeth City took delivery of the first one in December 1959. *U.S. Coast Guard photo by Dave Silva*

Training Center in Mobile, Ala., the Aviation Logistics Center in Elizabeth City, N.C., and the Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron in Jacksonville, Fla., and just fewer than 200 aircraft in its fleet, spread throughout the continental United States, Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico. As a multi-mission maritime service, the Coast Guard's aviation assets support the total spectrum of missions and operations.

To this end, the aviation program oversees five major projects: upgrading existing HC-130H airplanes; missionizing new HC-130J airplanes; upgrading MH-65 and MH-60 helicopters; acquiring HC-144A aircraft and

mission system pallets; and the Unmanned Aerial Systems project, which is currently in the research and testing phase.

The HC-130 is used for long-range surveillance missions and is the platform for the HC-130H and HC-130J projects. The difference between the two projects comes down to buying a new aircraft and outfitting it for missions, as with the HC-130J, versus retrofitting an aircraft that is already in service, the HC-130H.

"With the [HC-130J], Congress appropriated money for the Coast Guard to go out and buy six brand new J models and

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our job at that point was to missionize them,” said Seitz.

“And when we say ‘missionize’ we are talking about adding the C4ISR [Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance] Mission System Suite, which includes a FLIR [forward-looking infrared radar] on the nose, belly-mounted surface search radar, flight deck mission operator station, the observer stations in the back of the airplane and the tactical control display up front in the cockpit.”

Retrofitting the HC-130H is a more complicated matter. The goal is to take a 25-to-30-year-old air frame and extend its service life and ability to perform Coast Guard missions.

### **Upgrading the HC-130H**

The process of upgrading the HC-130H airplanes involves five segments. The upgrades begin with Discrete Segment One, which involves replacing the nose-mounted APS-137 surface search radar that has become unreliable with a state-of-the-market SELEX Seaspray 7500E. The surface search radar is the airplane’s most important sensor.

To date, the Coast Guard has completed Discrete Segment One upgrades on 17 aircraft, 16 primes and one prototype that is being used to test the avionics one upgrade, which is Discrete Segment Two.

Discrete Segment Three is the replacement of the center wing

box. Discrete Segment Four is the avionics two upgrade and Discrete Segment Five is missionization, where the Coast Guard is evaluating how it will outfit the HC-130H in the same way as the HC-130J.

The difference between the HC-130J and the HC-130H projects is like buying a new house and putting in the appliances and furniture you want versus restoring a fully-furnished, existing house.

“The [HC-130]H project is far and away much more robust, where we are trying to keep viable a platform that is already in use today and enable it to perform its Coast Guard missions,” said Seitz.

The Coast Guard plans to upgrade and modernize 16 HC-130Hs, with the final airplane scheduled to be delivered in 2017.

### **Two Additional HC-130Js**

In May, the service accepted its sixth and what it thought would be final HC-130J. The two additional HC-130Js provided through the supplemental bring with them something that excites both Martin and Seitz even more than the aircrafts’ added capabilities.

“It allows us to open up a second operational C-130J air station so that we have a means of retaining the knowledge and experience in the aircraft as military personnel transfer,” said Martin.

“We typically have four-year orders and right now, those assigned to the J are operating out of a single site so everybody that shows up there is unqualified in the aircraft. And then when they leave, their experience goes with them. If we get a second location established, then we can mitigate the loss of training and experience by transferring qualified personnel back and forth between two separate sites.”

When it comes to most assets, a new one provides advantages over an older one and the HC-130J is no exception. In a study conducted by Naval Air Systems Command, the HC-130J aircraft was found to have a 20 percent capability improvement over the H model in terms of fuel efficiency, range and speed. The J models can fly higher and faster and arrive on the scene more quickly.

Two additional new HC-130Js will have a major operational impact on the Coast Guard’s air capabilities, which means more lives can be saved and more missions can be completed.

To learn more about the HC-130 H/J projects, please visit <http://www.uscg.mil/acquisition/LRS>. ■

## ASK THE MASTER CHIEF

### MASTER CHIEF AYER,

This month, I am going to take some time to answer some of the common questions I receive. Although these have simple answers, they are just as important as the more complicated ones.

**Q.** I heard we are going to stop building National Security Cutters (NSCs)?

**A.** The Coast Guard plans to build eight NSCs. The contract for NSC4 is currently being negotiated.

**Q.** Our current fleet of Response Boats-Small (RB-S) is wearing out. Do we have a plan to replace them?

**A.** Yes, we do. An RB-S replacement project was chartered in January 2010. The current schedule calls for placing the first production order in late fiscal year 2011 and delivering the first RB-S in fiscal year 2012.



**Q.** Are we going to start building new ice breakers (WAGB, WTGB)?

**A.** For right now, no. We are currently conducting a service life extension of CGC Polar Star and have been directed by Congress to conduct a business case analysis to explore the potential for constructing a new icebreaker. There is no program of record yet.

**Q.** I like the 41-foot utility boat (UTB). Why don't we just build new ones instead of the more expensive Response Boat-Medium (RB-M)?

**A.** The RB-M was designed to accomplish different missions than the UTB. Since we designed the UTB in the 1970s, our jobs have changed significantly and our platforms need to change with them. By the way, I like the UTB too; the hot cups make great ramen.

**Q.** The RB-M looks great. When are we getting one at our station?

**A.** I wish I could tell you. A full delivery schedule is not available yet. So far, we have delivered 31 RB-Ms. We're currently working on deliveries to units in Districts 7, 8, 9 and 14. We have two production facilities, and our goal is to deliver 30 RB-Ms a year until the project is complete.

That is all the space I have this month. Remember, the only thing worse than no information is bad information. There is no need for either. If you have a question, my email is listed below. Be safe.

— MCPO Brett F. Ayer, Command Master Chief, Coast Guard Acquisition Directorate

*[To submit a question for an upcoming Acquisition Directorate newsletter, please e-mail Master Chief Brett F. Ayer directly at: [Brett.F.Ayer@uscg.mil](mailto:Brett.F.Ayer@uscg.mil) or [acquisitionwebsite@uscg.mil](mailto:acquisitionwebsite@uscg.mil).]*