

# The COAST GUARD Journal of Safety & Security at Sea PROCEEDINGS

FALL 2024

of the MARINE SAFETY & SECURITY COUNCIL



**U.S. COAST GUARD ABROAD**  
PROTECTING NATIONAL INTERESTS  
THROUGH PARTNERSHIP





The crew of U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Oliver Henry* greets the crew aboard a Philippine-flagged purse seiner—a type of ship using a large net to trap fish—in the North Pacific Ocean on March 31, 2023. The team was conducting a 30-day patrol supporting the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency's Operation 365 and Operation Rematau to stop illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in the Pacific. The Coast Guard has hundreds of members stationed abroad to conduct relationship- and capacity-building, as well as to support foreign governments in enforcing international treaties and agreements. Coast Guard photo by CWO Sara Muir

# PROCEEDINGS

Fall 2024

Vol. 81, Number 3

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## Marine Safety Overseas

- 6** **The Coast Guard and Global Maritime Safety** | The role of ACTEUR and FEACT in securing the MTS  
*by LT Todd Cooper and LCDR Christina Ramirez*
- 11** **It's a FEACT** | U.S. Coast Guard Activities Far East leads maritime safety in the service's largest area of responsibility  
*by LT Tim Powell and LT Todd Cooper*
- 16** **Global Passenger Vessel Inspections** | Coast Guard oversight of foreign cruise ship construction  
*by LT Devin Greenwell and LT Sam Morrison*
- 21** **Marine Casualties Beyond U.S. Waters**  
*by LT Nikolay Markov, CDR J. B. Zorn, Jason Neubauer, CWO4 Joshua Nix, and CDR Kelli Dougherty*

---

## International Port Security & Insights

- 26** **Evaluate, Inform, Warn, and Build** | The role and purpose of the Coast Guard International Port Security Program  
*by LCDR Mason G. B. Hall*
- 30** **Protecting Global Trade Routes and U.S. Interests** | International Port Security Program bolsters maritime safety around the world  
*by Ed Munoz*
- 32** **The U.S. Coast Guard's Persistent Presence in the Indo-Pacific**  
*by CAPT Erin Williams and CDR Yvonne Yang*
- 40** **Cultural Connections** | An international port security liaison officer's personal account of diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific  
*by LCDR Grant W. Johnson*

---

## Defense Operations & Law Enforcement

- 43** **U.S. Africa Command** | Stronger with the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership  
*by LT Megan Gold, CDR Amy Sung, and LCDR Derek Wallin*

**50** **Sentinels of the Middle East** | U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia  
*by CAPT John McTamney*

**54** **U.S. European Command's Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center**  
*by LCDR Anne E. Jefferson, CAPT Jennifer M. Konon, and LTC Michael R. Pasquale*

**58** **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing** | A growing international mission from a personal service perspective  
*by LT Alexander Feltman*

---

## The International Experience

- 65** **Travel Tips to Pack for Your Next Overseas Trip**  
*by Activities Europe*
- 69** **The Olmsted Scholar Program** | A global Coast Guard needs global perspectives  
*by CDR Keith Robinson, LCDR Melissa Martinelli, and LCDR Rory Yoder*
- 72** **The Unique Impact of Overseas Life on Military Families**  
*by LT j.g. Brennan J. Suffern*

---

## On Deck

**4 Commander's Perspective**  
by Vice Admiral  
Nathan A. Moore

**4 Champion's Point of View**  
by CAPT Gretchen Bailey

**77 Historical Snapshot**  
**Eddie Hernandez and smallboat operations in Vietnam**  
by William H. Thiesen

**80 Chemical of the Quarter**  
**Carbon dioxide: A tricky triple point**  
by CDR Dan Valez

**81 Nautical Queries**  
**Engineering**

**83 Deck**

**85 In The News**

**On the Cover:** U.S. Coast Guard engineering officer LCDR Jarrett Parker, left, works with a Japan Coast Guard member during a damage-control drill aboard Coast Guard cutter *Bertholf* while the cutter was moored in Port Klang, Malaysia, on March 3, 2024. These types of engagements give U.S. Coast Guard members opportunities to share best practices with international partners. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Tyler Ma



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 **PROCEEDINGS**

### Champion's Note

The champion would like to thank LCDR Angel Kwok and CDR J.B. Zorn for their dedicated assistance in getting this issue successfully across the finish line. Bravo Zulu!

**Admiral Linda L. Fagan**  
Commandant  
U.S. Coast Guard

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## Commander's Perspective

by VICE ADMIRAL NATHAN A. MOORE  
*Commander  
Atlantic Area  
U.S. Coast Guard*

Since its inception, the U.S. Coast Guard's multimission character and broad range of authorities have enabled the service to conduct distinct yet complimentary functions across the spectrum of law enforcement, intelligence, national defense, maritime safety, environmental protection, and search and rescue. This unique blend

of authorities and operational prowess serves as a model for coast guards and navies around the world.

Internationally, foreign partners are increasingly turning to the U.S. Coast Guard for assistance with bolstering their inherent capabilities to police their waters and support cooperative operations. We bridge the gap between the



## Champion's Point of View

by CAPT GRETCHEN BAILEY  
*Commanding Officer  
Activities Europe  
U.S. Coast Guard*

Greetings everyone, My name is Gretchen Bailey and I'm the commanding officer at Coast Guard Activities Europe. Yes, you read that correctly, Europe. Our small unit of 30 active-duty Coasties

is located in the southern region of the Netherlands known as Limburg, where we are bordered by Belgium and Germany. The nearest coastline is over 100 miles away. I know what you're thinking: What is the U.S. Coast Guard

law enforcement focus of the Department of Homeland Security, the diplomacy of the Department of State, and the capabilities of the Department of Defense, providing us unique access in the international sphere and solidifying our role in strengthening maritime governance around the world.

Global strategic competition is challenging the rules-based order by eroding international norms, maritime governance, and regional stability. Collaboration with the international community is essential to meet emerging global challenges. To that end, the Coast Guard has hundreds of personnel stationed around the world. Our boats, cutters, and aircraft deploy to conduct joint operations and capacity-building with many nations. We have maritime advisors, Coast Guard attachés, security cooperation officers, liaisons, and international port security specialists assigned across the globe working to bolster maritime security. Coast Guard officers are assigned to U.S. government departments and agencies, the White House, and Congress to advise senior leaders

and shape U.S. foreign policy. Our personnel further the Coast Guard's global impact through liaison positions at Department of Defense combatant and functional commands, including Pacific Command, Central Command, and Special Operations Command. In Bahrain, our largest footprint overseas, more than 250 personnel deploy to deter piracy, protect critical maritime infrastructure, and build interoperability. This distribution of Coast Guard personnel around the world is part of a multifaceted approach to strengthen force-multiplying partnerships, provide persistent presence, and maintain the international rules-based order.

The Coast Guard is a strategic element of national power. Using our partnerships, international forums, and unique access, we foster global security, economic prosperity, and improve maritime governance around the world. I am extremely proud to showcase the efforts of our personnel and how their work contributes to the overall Coast Guard and national security strategies.

doing in the Dutch countryside, let alone Europe?

While the public might more readily associate the Coast Guard with domestic missions such as search and rescue, drug interdiction, and pollution response, there is a global footprint of Coasties conducting some of the most unique missions our service offers. So, if you've ever wondered why Coasties are stationed in Japan or on assignment in Africa or Germany, read on.

A little background as to how this edition got off the ground: It all started during the typical morning coffee chat around the office with the idea to submit one article to *Proceedings*, the Coast Guard's journal of safety and security at sea. Three cups of coffee later, I was sending emails port and starboard to my peers and mentors, soliciting interest to create an overseas edition and voila—here we are. Special thanks to my overseas colleagues. Not only will you hear from Coast Guard

Activities Europe, but also various Coast Guard units around the world.

In this issue, we're uncovering those hidden gems and best-kept secrets, from expert travel tips to international programs. We'll share our cultural experiences and highlight some of our most extensive work in the marine safety field (think really big cruise ships), inter-agency efforts such as the education of foreign mariners, and how we ensure security in foreign ports and at home. These efforts overseas impact the MTS and ensure the safety and security of foreign ships arriving to the United States. Finally, we hope to inspire you to join our community of international Coasties.

Please ensure that your seat backs and tray tables are in the upright position, luggage stowed under the seats in front of you, and your seatbelts are fastened because we're about to take a trip around the world!

# The Coast Guard and Global Maritime Safety

The role of ACTEUR and FEACT in securing the MTS

by LT TODD COOPER  
*Journeyman Marine Inspector  
Activities Far East  
U.S. Coast Guard*

LCDR CHRISTINA RAMIREZ  
*Assistant Chief  
Inspections Division  
Activities Europe  
U.S. Coast Guard*

You might be surprised to learn that the long arm of the Coast Guard extends worldwide on multiple mission sets. Not only do our cutters deploy to the far reaches of the globe, but our marine safety professionals also travel to distant and sometimes unexpected locations on official business.

From Chile, to Norway, to Australia, these distant shores are bucket-list destinations for some, and

perhaps the last place you would expect to see a couple of Coasties trotting down a pier to their next job. It is a unique opportunity to be stationed abroad and most who are assigned overseas will tell you they are lucky to have the experience of conducting inspections or investigations overseas. Though it is not without some getting used to—the jet lag, currency conversion, and cultural shifts are enough to give one pause. You



CWO Christopher Cass, with Coast Guard Sector Honolulu, partners with members of U.S. Coast Guard Activities Far East on inspection and investigation work aboard commercial vessels near the Singapore Strait and the Strait of Malacca in August 2017. The straits are the busiest waterways in the world, with nearly 84,000 vessel transits each year. Coast Guard photo by Chief Petty Officer Sara Muir





Two shipriders with the Samoa Police and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries prepare to board a U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* small boat near Samoa, on February 5, 2024. The Coast Guard and Samoa have an agreement to work together to conduct fishery boardings in Samoa's exclusive economic zone. Coast Guard photo by Senior Chief Petty Officer Charly Tautfest

initially might feel out-of-place walking through a hotel lobby in Dubai wearing coveralls, but do not fret, you get used to the interested gaze of onlookers. One thing is certain: We are proud to represent the United States and we do not take the responsibility lightly.

### Overview of FEACT and ACTEUR's Roles in Maritime Safety

While the Americas and Caribbean are covered by respective stateside units, the rest of the world is divided between two offices—Coast Guard Activities Far East (FEACT) and Coast Guard Activities Europe (ACTEUR).

The activities units have multiple mission functions, and while you may expect these billets to be solely available to prevention personnel, there are opportunities for others. Each unit hosts a support department which includes a yeoman, an information systems technician, and a storekeeper—all enlisted members. The international port security mission is a special assignment also available to all officer specialties.

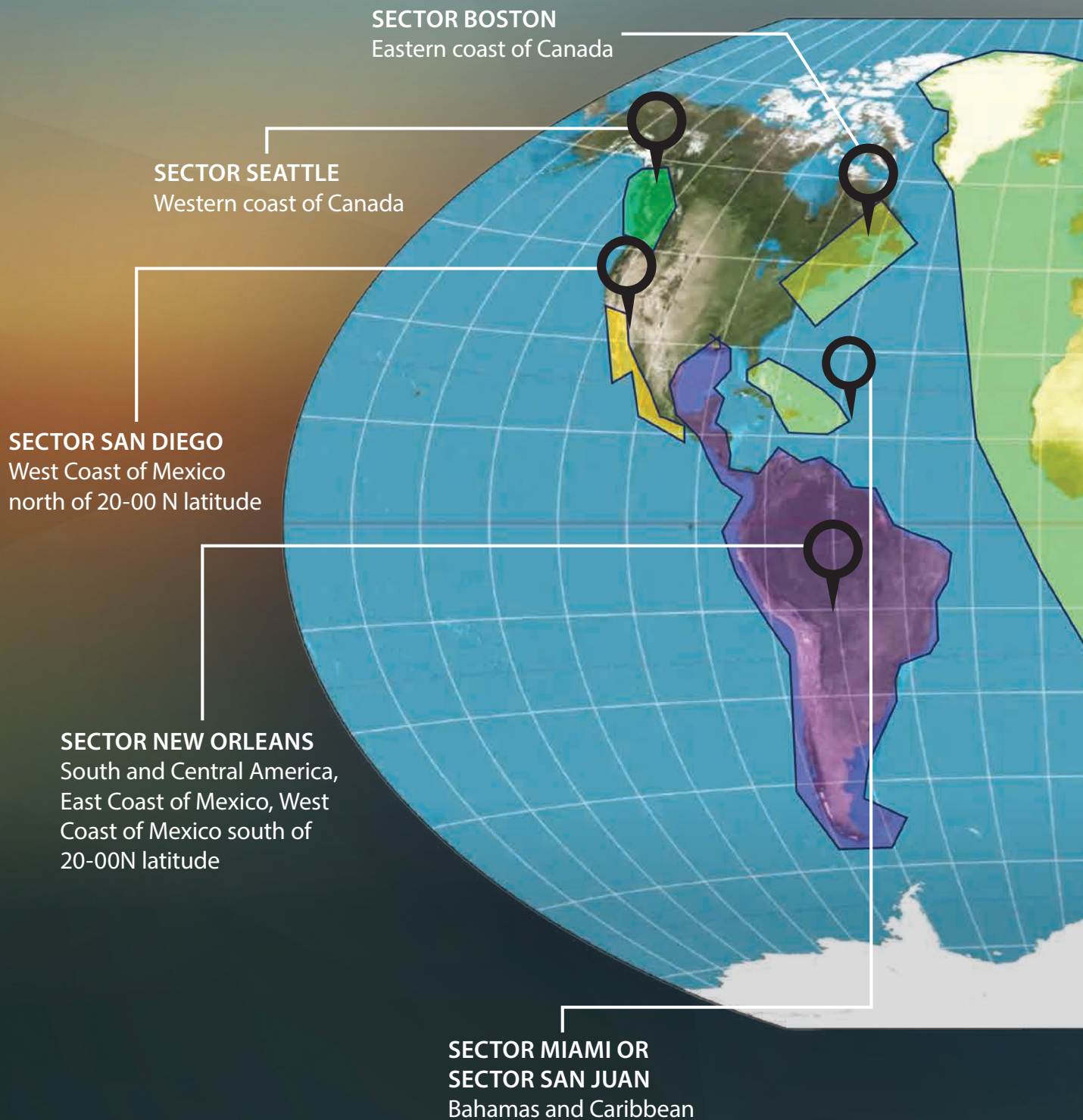
**Marine Inspections:** Marine inspections focus on the seaworthiness, machinery, lifesaving, firefighting, pollution prevention, navigation equipment, crew qualifications, and security of both U.S.- and foreign-flagged vessels, ensuring that they comply with all applicable U.S. and international laws and regulations. Marine inspectors complete initial and renewal certificate of compliance exams for newly constructed foreign-flagged cruise ships and tank/chemical vessels that plan to operate in U.S. waters. Additionally, they

conduct oversight of lifesaving equipment manufacturers and service providers of Coast Guard-approved life rafts throughout their respective areas of responsibility (AOR).

**Marine Investigations:** The investigations office discharges U.S. law through the investigation of any marine casualty that involves or occurs on a U.S. vessel—for for instance, vessel collisions, groundings, and injuries to U.S. merchant mariners—regardless of the location within the AOR. Activities investigators must use a nontraditional approach when dealing with marine casualty, personnel action, and enforcement cases because of restricted legal authorities, sovereign state requirements, and economic, security, and logistical factors faced in international settings.

**International Port Security Program (IPS):** The IPS Program works collaboratively to strengthen the security of the global Maritime Transportation System (MTS). International port security liaison officers (IPSLOs) visit U.S. maritime trading partners to learn about port security processes and practices implemented to prevent terror attacks, decrease stowaways, reduce theft, and curb illicit traffic in the international MTS. In addition to visiting countries in their AOR, IPSLOs are instrumental in organizing and leading reciprocal visits of our international partners to the United States to promote greater understanding and transparency. By establishing and strengthening relations with host government port security officials, IPSLOs promote an understanding of U.S. policies and share best practices observed during visits.

# Officer In Charge, Marine Inspections & Areas of Responsibility for Overseas Examinations





**ACTIVITIES EUROPE**



Europe, Africa, and countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and Arabian Sea

**SECTOR GUAM**

Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands

**ACTIVITIES FAR EAST**

Asia – excluding countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and Arabian Sea – Australia, and Diego Garcia

	INSPECTIONS			INVESTIGATIONS	IPS	
	Domestic Inspections	Foreign Vessel Exams/Activities	Prototype Tests	Marine Casualty Investigations	Littoral States	International Engagements
 <b>FEACT</b>	120	12+	10	70+	41	40+
 <b>ACTEUR</b>	50	60+	15	130+	49	100+

On average, personnel assigned to activities billets travel between 100 to 120 days each year conducting various missions.


### Background and Unit History

The U.S. Coast Guard has had a presence in Japan since 1947, originally to help the Japanese government establish a maritime safety agency, now called the Japanese Coast Guard. In the 1970s, with the boom in local construction of U.S. vessels and associated activities in Asia, FEACT's presence became a necessity. In December 1994, FEACT and Marine Inspections Detachment Singapore (MIDET) were commissioned with inspectors permanently stationed in Japan and Singapore. In 2023, MIDET Singapore was renamed Marine Inspection Unit (MIU) Singapore.

The Japan office comprises 17 active-duty members and two local Japanese civilians. The Singapore office comprises seven active-duty members, one civilian, and one auxiliaryist.

The Coast Guard arrived permanently in Europe near the end of World War II at the request of the Department of State and has evolved to meet dynamic mission demands over the years. Initially, Coast Guard Merchant Marine details were stood up and designed to handle the large influx of U.S. merchant ships and sailors. Later, the details were consolidated into an MIU that oversaw the construction of U.S. commercial vessels and mobile offshore drilling units outside the United States. Finally, at the conclusion of the vessel construction boom, ACTEUR was established to support the command and coordination of the many Coast Guard long-range navigation stations located throughout the region and presently

provides overseas inspections to U.S. flag vessels, foreign cruise ships, and international port security. The office is currently located at U.S. Army Garrison Benelux-Brunssum in the Netherlands and is staffed by 30 active-duty members.

Regardless of whether the greeting is “Goedemorgen” or “Ohayou gozaimasu,” your Coast Guard is there and Semper Paratus. 

#### About the authors:

*LT Todd Cooper is a journeyman marine inspector stationed at Coast Guard Activities Far East. Following Direct Commission Officer School, he completed his apprentice marine inspector training from 2019 to 2022 at Marine Safety Unit Portland in Oregon. Prior to commissioning, LT Cooper was a seaman serving in the Sector Miami Engineering Division. He is originally from Florence, South Carolina, and lives in Tokyo with his wife and two children.*

*LCDR Christina Ramirez served as the assistant chief of inspections (ACID) at Coast Guard Activities Europe. Her previous tours include serving as ACID at Marine Safety Unit Portland, waterways management at Sector San Francisco, and engineer officer in training on Coast Guard cutter Stratton. She joined the Coast Guard through the College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative Program in 2011 and resides in Fort Collins, Colorado, with her wife, Sophie, and their children.*

#### Endnotes

1. ctivities Far East. [www.pacificarea.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/District-14/D14-Units/Activities-Far-East-FEACT](http://www.pacificarea.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/District-14/D14-Units/Activities-Far-East-FEACT)
2. Activities Europe: Schinnen, The Netherlands. [www.atlanticarea.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Area-Units/Activities-Europe/Contact](http://www.atlanticarea.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Area-Units/Activities-Europe/Contact)

# It's a FEACT

## U.S. Coast Guard Activities Far East leads maritime safety in the service's largest area of responsibility

by LT TIM POWELL  
*Journeyman Marine Inspector/Assistant Chief  
of Inspections (Japan)  
Activities Far East  
U.S. Coast Guard*

LT TODD COOPER  
*Journeyman Marine Inspector  
Activities Far East  
U.S. Coast Guard*



While a majority of the members in the Coast Guard serve in the continental United States, there are numerous opportunities to serve abroad. Serving with Coast Guard Activities Far East, or FEACT—the primary unit responsible for marine safety operations and international engagements within the Indo-Pacific—is one unique opportunity.

The unit covers over 40 countries and supports the Coast Guard's largest area of responsibility (AOR), spanning 48 million square miles. Routine travel for the marine inspectors includes Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Philippine, Thailand, Australia, and the British island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. Strategic locations within Japan and Singapore, home base for Marine Inspection Unit Singapore (MIU SG), enable members to use major international airports and travel hubs to expeditiously cover the AOR.

### Maritime Safety Overview

#### *Inspections and Investigations*

The unit's primary focus is maritime safety, which encompasses inspection of U.S.- and foreign-flag commercial vessels to verify compliance with international and domestic regulations. Projects include oversight of new vessel and floating production unit (FPU) construction, liquefied natural gas (LNG) fuel conversions, marine casualty investigations, and U.S. merchant mariner assistance for licensing inquiries.

Military Sealift Command Far East (MSCFE) operates U.S. naval supply ships worldwide in support of Department of Defense (DoD) missions. In accordance with memorandums of agreement between the Coast Guard and Military Sealift Command (MSC), these ships are voluntarily inspected for compliance with

international safety regulations and dangerous cargo carriage requirements. On average, FEACT conducts more than 400 MSCFE inspections per year, including damage surveys, repair examinations, underwater surveys in lieu of drydocking, hull examinations, and annual/renewal inspections. Inspectors routinely conduct inspections of oil tankers, military vehicle carriers, explosive munitions carriers, cable-laying ships, and subocean surveillance vessels in direct support of national defense strategic objectives. The MSCFE fleet includes approximately 54 ships, with an average vessel age of more than 20 years old.

### So Who's Responsible? FEACT.

As the U.S. flag state authorities in the Indo-Pacific, FEACT inspectors are directly responsible for maritime governance and oversight of all U.S.-flagged vessels operating in the region.

The Coast Guard team in the Japan inspections shop consists of two lieutenants and two chief warrant officers, while the Singapore shop consists of one lieutenant, four chief warrant officers, and one civilian third-party oversight officer. The chief of inspections is a lieutenant commander who is stationed in Singapore and serves as the U.S. Embassy team lead there. Our inspections team comprises of some of the most senior inspectors in the Coast Guard, with multiple members on their third or fourth inspector assignments. Most of our inspectors are double-ended, which means they can inspect both the deck/navigation and machinery equipment during inspections. Our inspectors travel on average about 35% of the year and inspect everything from U.S. military replenishment vessels, to LNG carriers, to newly constructed cruise ships across Asia.



Coast Guard inspectors LT Todd Cooper and LT Tim Powell conduct an internal inspection of a ship's diesel generator following a fire. The picture is taken from the catwalk above the engine bay looking down at the exposed heads of the engine cylinders. Coast Guard photo by LCDR Walter Hutchins

Visibility for the fleet is at an apex, as shown by the following shipping industry statistics in Asian waters:

- Asia is the leading maritime cargo center of the world, supporting 42% of exports and 64% of imports as of 2021.<sup>1</sup>
- The maritime industry continues to rapidly grow, with Asia projected to have the highest percentage of growth.<sup>2</sup>
- Japan has the fourth-largest marine industry; Singapore is ranked fifth.<sup>3</sup>
- FEACTION and MIU SG conduct about 42% of global MSC inspections and 66% of MSCFE inspections. MSCFE's area of operation covers 36 maritime countries and 50% of the world's population.<sup>4</sup>
- The United States–Japan alliance serves as the cornerstone of peace, security, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific. Japan is one of the United States' strongest allies and directly aligns with national strategic policy for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

In addition to supporting the MSCFE fleet and DoD missions, inspectors oversee a plethora of vessel types and oversight activities, including:

- New FPU construction projects destined for the Gulf of Mexico.
- Maritime Security Program reflags of strategic commercial assets into the U.S. flag registry in support of military contracts.

- New foreign cruise ship construction and structural fire protection exams.
- Alternative fuel conversions to meet stricter international air pollution requirements—MARPOL Annex VI sulfur oxides, nitrous oxides, and carbon intensity indices.
- Foreign oil, chemical, and gas carrier certificate of compliance (COC) exams.
- Production and prototype testing oversight for lifesaving equipment manufacturing.
- Oversight of life raft servicing and approval of Coast Guard facilities.
- Recognized organization oversight and quality management system review.

FEACTION's largest customer in the Indo-Pacific is the MSC. Oversight ranges from scheduled repair periods, to drydocks, annual inspections, lifesaving servicing, and casualty investigations.

Starting in 2022, as part of reciprocal engagements between the U.S. secretary of state and Indian cabinet officials, MSC's repair area extended to India to support the world's third-largest economy and cultivate bonds between the nations. FEACTION inspectors attended a vessel repair availability, essentially a short contract to service equipment and conduct structural preservation of the ship, at Larson & Turbo shipyard in Chennai in Southern India. As part of a conceptual test, inspectors

worked with MSC officials and U.S. Embassy contacts in New Delhi to secure official travel and conduct quality management system oversight of the shipyard to verify worker conditions, welding standards, and inspection programs for international compliance.

Inspection oversight included verification of approved welding procedures, welder qualifications, and quality management system implementation. From 2022 to 2023, two separate teams traveled to India and successfully completed oversight, demonstrating to MSC increased repair capacities and lessons learned for future contracts, which strengthened a vital partnership with an emerging global maritime power. While an inspector's regulatory knowledge is paramount, international relations and engagements have become a major cornerstone to unit operations in Asia and facilitating travel to new countries as contracts shift and commerce expands.

While most inspections are scheduled, inspectors must always be ready to deploy in response to serious marine casualties and their subsequent investigations to determine causal factors. In December 2022, FEACT inspectors received an alarming call from a vessel captain reporting a major machinery fire and fuel oil leak. The vessel was loaded with 2 million tons of explosives and tensions were high as inspectors briefed the chain of command. Fortunately, the fire was quickly extinguished using the fixed-water suppression systems in the engine room and no crewmembers were hurt.

Inspectors quickly deployed to southern Japan during the December holiday season to assist the U.S. Navy with investigations and determine the best path forward to address required repairs. Through joint efforts with marine inspectors, senior investigations officers, and engine mechanics, the team uncovered inadequate servicing of fuel pumps, which ultimately led to bolts loosening with vibrations and shearing off due to internal pressures within the fuel pump casing. As the casing opened, atomized fuel was sprayed directly onto the engine and ignited. The flames were 15 to 20 feet high and melted most of the surrounding electronics, primarily power and control cabling for the generators. Repairs took several months, with numerous trips by inspectors to verify conditions and oversee testing prior to the ship's departure back to the United States for a major drydock to replace damaged equipment.

As part of the investigation, machinery inspections for the rest of the fleet were carried out to inspect fuel pump conditions and revised servicing instructions were distributed to prevent future incidents. The repair of damages on board the ship, as well as follow-up actions to ensure holistic fleet safety, highlights the Coast Guard's role in marine inspections and verification of robust safety management systems with adequate shoreside support.

Given the expansive shipyards and massive drydocks in Asia, new FPU construction projects are normal for our inspectors. They routinely oversee multiyear FPU construction projects being built by Shell and Chevron in Singapore and South Korea. The value of these projects is estimated in the billions and the shipyards have constructed custom cranes to handle them.

The latest delivery for Shell included the first ultra-high pressure FPU with a production capacity of 75,000 barrels of oil a day, valued at \$3 billion annually. The inspectors follow these construction projects from start to finish, working hand-in-hand with company management, and the Coast Guard District 8 Outer Continental Shelf division. Oversight typically includes steel hull construction, stability tests, integration of housing systems and offshore energy systems, and final delivery. A usual FPU construction project may take several years, and numerous inspectors are involved throughout the phases, with long-term duty assignments to provide daily support as delivery approaches. These projects are all-encompassing and present professional opportunities for the inspectors to develop working relationships with industry and classification society surveyors.

One of the most labor-intensive areas of a cargo ship drydock is the internal inspection of its cargo tanks and holds which often total 1 million cubic feet or more. The sheer size and volume of the spaces present a unique conundrum. How does an inspector verify welds and structural supports throughout the space? Previously, these tanks were inspected by constructing scaffolding, which was costly and potentially dangerous for personnel using them.



The Vito FPSO is shown in Singapore in 2021 before the semisubmersible was delivered to Shell in December of that year. The FPSO, the company's first deep-water platform in the Gulf of Mexico to employ a simplified, cost-efficient host design, went into production in Spring 2023 with an estimated peak production of 100,000 barrels of oil per day. Coast Guard photo by Mike Smith

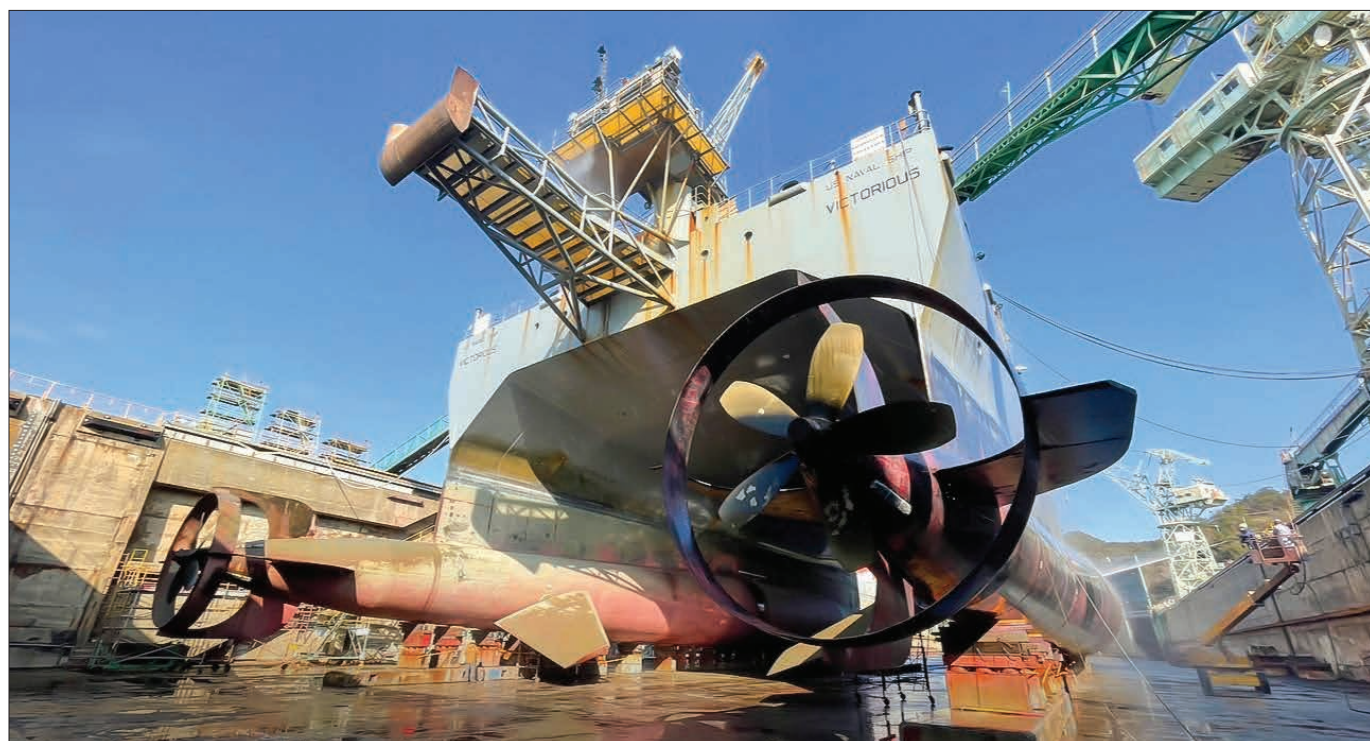
An older style of inspection was referred to as “floating” the tank, where the tank was slowly filled with water. Inspectors used a small boat or a floating platform to traverse the space at various fill levels. This required intensive planning. To reduce costs and dangers associated with this necessary inspection, the maritime industry adopted unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) technology via drones with high-resolution optics to replace archaic inspection methods. FEACT first began seeing these technologies proposed in 2019 during drydock oversight of oil tankships in Singapore. To strengthen the argument for UAV use, operators highlighted that inspection footage would be recorded and reviewed with regulatory/classification oversight similar to modern-day underwater hull inspections. UAV technology has made internal tank inspections more efficient, decreased risk to personnel, and cut operator costs by eliminating the need to install scaffolding or flood the tanks. As a sign of worldwide recognition, classification societies have started reviewing and approving companies that offer UAV services for maritime inspections, verifying equipment standards and drone operator licensing.

As international pollution standards become increasingly stringent and decarbonization initiatives are prioritized, FEACT has become heavily involved with oversight of LNG conversion projects. Several U.S. companies have elected to modify their ships’ main propulsion and power generation to support the use of LNG

as fuel. Given recent studies into the effectiveness and price comparison of LNG versus marine diesel, it has been shown that LNG is both cost-effective and more environmentally friendly. “LNG releases roughly 90-95% less sulfur oxide (SOx) than marine diesel fuel, and carbon dioxide emissions are reduced by 25%. To further the environmental advantages, nitric oxide releases are approximately 80% less than a typical diesel engine.”<sup>5</sup>

As the marine industry adapts to environmental control areas and the adoption of these zones near Southeastern Asia, LNG offers the unrestricted movement of vessels in and out of these areas. Inspectors from FEACT recently attended a vessel for commissioning trials in South Korea, sailing onboard for five days and completing over 1,000 tests to verify the LNG fuel supply system was installed correctly and safely before sailing into U.S. waters. The focus of the oversight was verification of LNG fuel system safety shutdowns, gas detection, and changeovers from LNG operation to diesel fuel in the event of emergencies. Members from the Coast Guard traveling inspectors and Liquefied Gas Carrier National Center of Expertise attended the underway testing as subject matter experts. As a result of the collaboration, commissioning checklists and an updated liquefied gas as fuel inspection guide were created and released nationally, as demand for oversight increases.

From a port state control perspective, FEACT conducts voluntary COC exams for oil, chemical, and gas



Coast Guard inspectors with FEACT visit the USNS *Victorious*, a Military Sealift Command vessel in drydock at Japan Marine United shipyard in Innoshima, Japan. The *Victorious* has a unique twin hull design that assists with stability and maneuvering. Coast Guard photo by LT Tim Powell





Coast Guard LCDR Irving Cintron, a FEACT inspector, conducts an external hull examination of the *Maersk Michigan*, a U.S.-flagged oil and chemical tanker, off the coast of Japan. Coast Guard photo by LT Tim Powell

carriers throughout Asia. Typical locations for these inspections are Japan and Singapore. While these exams are voluntary and secondary in our scheduling for the U.S. flag fleet's requests, they demonstrate support to Coast Guard units in the Gulf of Mexico. The LNG industry has grown every year from 2000 to 2023, with the United States as one of the top exporters of LNG in the world.<sup>6</sup> Gas carriers requesting exams in Asia are destined for the States, where they plan to load cargo and distribute LNG throughout Asia, which accounts for the largest share of LNG imports globally.<sup>7</sup>

The United States averaged an export capacity of 10.59 billion cubic feet per day to 34 countries in 2022, with a majority of the LNG being transported by vessels.<sup>8</sup> FEACT's support of these COC exams reduces wait times for foreign gas carriers entering U.S. waters and conducting cargo operations. The reduced wait time directly correlates to increases in U.S. maritime commerce and gas infrastructure profits.

## Conclusion

Overall, FEACT not only supports DoD strategic assets throughout the Indo-Pacific, but also a growing fleet of commercial vessels and the maritime industry. Its foothold within Asia is increasing and its oversight is expanding as the marine energy sector evolves to meet ever-increasing emission standards. Inspectors are consistently involved with unique projects and tested daily, and the opportunities afforded them are unparalleled. //

### About the authors:

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*LT Todd Cooper is a journeyman marine inspector stationed at Coast Guard Activities Far East. Following Direct Commission Officer School, he completed his apprentice marine inspector training from 2019 to 2022 at Marine Safety Unit Portland in Oregon. Prior to commissioning, LT Cooper was a seaman serving in the Sector Miami engineering division. He is originally from Florence, South Carolina, and lives in Tokyo with his wife and two children.*

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# Global Passenger Vessel Inspections

## Coast Guard oversight of foreign cruise ship construction

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The cruise industry recently navigated through one of the toughest economic challenges in its history. It emerged from the pandemic era with a renewed emphasis on growth and innovation. Central to this journey is the role of the Coast Guard in the oversight of new cruise ship construction, and at the forefront stands U.S. Coast Guard Activities Europe (ACTEUR), a small, 30-member unit based in the Netherlands.

The Coast Guard's involvement in the cruise industry stems from a commitment to ensure the safety of these vessels and the millions of U.S. passengers they carry each year, while also working with industry stakeholders to help bring innovations into focus. Throughout the shipyards of Europe, the blend of safety and cutting-edge construction comes to life with critical support from Coast Guard personnel.

### A Brief History

Modern cruise ships have existed since the early 20th century, but it was not until the 1960s that the industry gained traction. As transatlantic passenger transportation shifted predominantly from vessels to aircraft, a few opportunistic shipyards capitalized on an emerging demand for seagoing entertainment, becoming industry leaders in a market that would balloon in the decades ahead.

In 2000, the cruise industry drew about 7 million passengers worldwide. By 2019, the number had grown to nearly 30 million and showed no signs of slowing down. Then in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought passenger numbers down to near 2000 levels, a 75% decline in passenger count.<sup>1</sup>

However, uncertainty about the future of the cruise industry was dispelled as passenger counts recovered to about 14 million in 2021 and 20 million in 2022. In 2023, numbers nearly surpassed all previous years at 31.5 million total passengers. With a seemingly insatiable appetite for seagoing tourism intact, the industry is

expected to continue this trajectory well into the foreseeable future.<sup>2</sup>

### Major Players

When it comes to cruise ships, many are familiar—Carnival, Royal Caribbean, and Norwegian—but fewer may know Fincantieri, Meyer Werft, or Chantiers d'Atlantique. The latter group represents some of the major shipyards responsible for building these floating behemoths, and their impact on innovation is as significant as the companies sporting the names across their hulls.



Fincantieri, an Italian shipbuilding company established in 1959, has 18 production facilities across four continents, including this one in Venice, Italy. Its history is deeply connected to Italy's storied shipbuilding tradition, with origins dating back to the Roman and Venetian eras. Coast Guard photo by LT Devin Greenwell



Meyer Werft's enclosed dry dock bay in Papenburg, Germany, allows for year-round construction. It is one of the largest facilities of its kind in the world and shields ships from rainy weather in Northern Europe. Coast Guard photo by LT Devin Greenwell

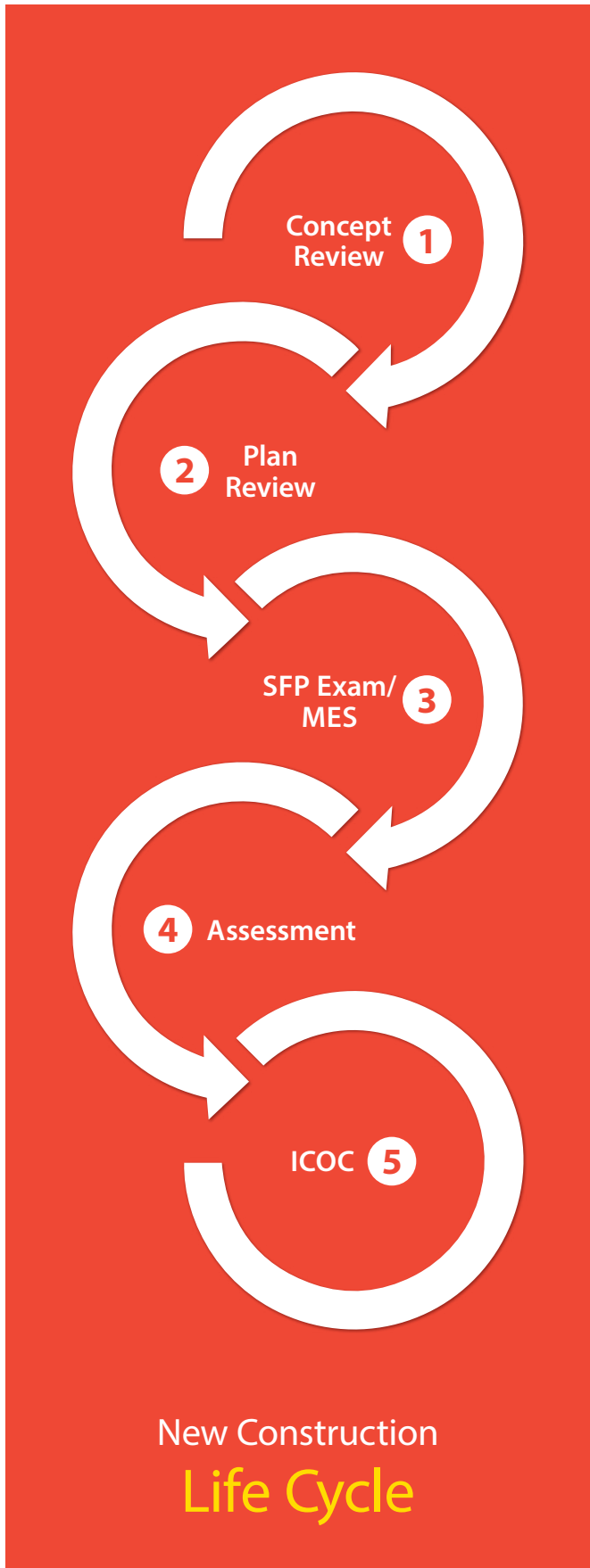
Fincantieri, an Italian shipbuilding company, is one of the most prominent players in the global cruise ship industry. Founded in 1959, its history is intertwined with Italy's rich shipbuilding heritage, with roots tracing back to the Romans and Venetians. It has become a leader in designing and building ships for many of the world's major cruise lines such as Carnival, Holland America, Princess, and Cunard. Fincantieri's reputation is built on its ability to deliver luxurious, technologically advanced, and environmentally friendly vessels. Its large-scale production capabilities enable it to manage multiple complex projects simultaneously.<sup>3</sup>

Meyer Werft is a shipbuilding company based in Papenburg, Germany, with a significant presence in the cruise ship industry. Founded in 1795, its history spans two centuries and is one of the oldest family-owned shipyards in the world. In the 1970s, the company entered the cruise ship construction market and has built vessels for many prestigious cruise lines including Royal Caribbean, Norwegian, and Disney. One of the hallmarks of the shipyard is its covered building dock, which is one

of the largest in the world and allows for year-round construction regardless of Northern Europe's notoriously rainy conditions. Meyer Werft's success in the cruise ship industry is attributed to its commitment to quality, innovation, and a strong customer focus.<sup>4</sup>

Based in Saint-Nazaire, France, and founded in 1955, Chantiers de l'Atlantique is a prominent shipyard with a distinguished history in the cruise ship industry. Renowned for its expertise in building large, complex vessels, it has been a major contributor to the evolution of the modern cruise ship. The shipyard gained international acclaim for constructing some of the most iconic ocean liners of the 20th century and continues to solidify its position building some of the largest and most sophisticated cruise ships in the world. Notably, Chantiers de l'Atlantique has produced several record-breaking ships in terms of size and passenger capacity, continuing its reputation for pushing the boundaries of cruise ship design.<sup>5</sup>

There are other notable shipyards, including Meyer Turku of Finland, a subsidiary of Meyer Werft, which



recently produced the current world’s largest cruise ship—Royal Caribbean’s 1,197-foot *Icon of the Seas*. Vard of Norway, a subsidiary of Fincantieri, has produced many polar-class vessels. These shipyards and others have kept Coast Guard marine inspectors busy in recent years as industry demands for more innovative experiences continues to grow.

### New Construction Life Cycle

Of the 23 cruise ships delivered globally in 2023, ACTEUR oversaw the critical steps in the construction process of 17 of them, underscoring how pivotal the collaborative relationship is between the Coast Guard and shipyards when it comes to cruise ship safety. However, well before marine inspectors set foot aboard these vessels, plenty of Coast Guard oversight has already taken place.

#### Step 1: Concept Review

When a new construction project begins, concept review is one of the first discussions the Coast Guard is involved in. At these meetings, the shipyard presents novel or alternative designs that may not be covered by existing regulations. The goal is to determine what measures must be taken to pursue these innovations while maintaining the requisite level of regulatory compliance. The Marine Safety Center (MSC), a Washington, D.C.-based unit of active-duty and civilian engineers responsible for commercial vessel plan review, is the primary Coast Guard representative at concept review meetings.

The Cruise Ship National Center of Expertise (CSNCOE), a Florida-based unit for passenger vessel subject matter experts, may also attend and serves as a bridge between regulation and application. Its field experience paired with MSC’s technical knowledge helps drive the discussion for interpretation of regulations or policies that might be unclear. Finally, the local Officer in Charge, Marine Inspections (OCMI) may also attend the meeting. The OCMI is the commanding officer responsible for overseeing maritime safety and security in a specific geographic area, but qualified marine inspectors often serve as OCMI representatives while on inspection-related duties. The primary role of the OCMI at this stage is simply for awareness. For new construction projects, ACTEUR usually serves as the OCMI.

#### Step 2: Plan Review

The next phase of Coast Guard involvement is plan review, where shipyards submit their drafts to the MSC ahead of major construction efforts. The primary mission of the MSC is to review and approve plans for design and construction. They are the engineers who verify that each piece of structural fire protection, electrical circuits, and piping systems meet international safety standards. This phase evolves throughout the remainder

of construction, with regular correspondence between the MSC and shipyard engineers on how the draft plans must be addressed to achieve full compliance.

### **Step 3: Structural Fire Protection Exam**

The first in-person attendance is generally the Structural Fire Protection (SFP) exam, which takes place about four to six months ahead of the scheduled vessel delivery. At this stage, marine inspectors from the local OCMI, along with MSC staff engineers, verify that plan review comments are being addressed, space categorization construction matches the submitted plans, and SFP installation is satisfactory. SFP is particularly important as fires pose the greatest risk to safety of life at sea, and its primary purpose is to slow the spread of fire to better facilitate containment or provide more time for evacuation. Once installed, bulkhead or ceiling paneling will likely prevent the SFP from ever being seen again, making it imperative to verify the correct materials were installed in accordance with manufacturer's specifications. Because this is the first time the Coast Guard attends the vessel construction, this visit is also used as an opportunity to evaluate the oversight process of the shipyard itself.

### **As Needed: Marine Evacuation System**

Depending on the configuration of the vessel, inspectors may also need to witness a marine evacuation system (MES) deployment. The MES is an alternative lifesaving system that replaces life rafts and supplements lifeboats with an inflatable apparatus. First developed in 1979, they have since gone through several technological innovations that have resulted in improved safety and reliability. They function by enabling many passengers to quickly evacuate via a chute into an inflated life



In addition to marine evacuation systems, marine inspectors, shown here in Belfast, Northern Ireland, also witness tests on life rafts and other lifesaving systems. Coast Guard photo by LT Devin Greenwell



Coast Guard marine inspectors observe structural fire protection installation at the Monfalcone Shipyard in Trieste, Italy. Coast Guard photo by LT Sam Morrison

raft below. The rafts are then towed by a rescue boat to the nearest safe haven. A typical life raft can accommodate up to about 150 passengers, whereas some marine evacuation systems (MES) can carry more than 1,000 passengers in a relatively small vessel footprint. The systems are designed to be easily operated by only a few crewmembers, but the evolution requires many synchronized events to happen correctly for a deployment to be considered satisfactory. If so equipped, the MES is one of the primary lifesaving systems relied upon in an abandon-ship scenario, so the Coast Guard is required to witness a full deployment of the system before the ship can operate in the United States.

### **Step 4: Assessment**

Roughly two weeks prior to scheduled delivery, marine inspectors conduct an in-person assessment of construction progress. This visit is meant to evaluate the readiness of the ship for the Initial Certificate of Compliance (ICOC) Exam. At the assessment, marine inspectors gage the overall status of the vessel's main machinery, navigational, lifesaving, and fire protection systems. Much of this assessment relies upon the professional relationships established between the Coast Guard and the shipyard, and understanding the typical pace of construction each yard is capable of. The attending marine inspector will determine if the vessel is far enough along to proceed with the exam, or if it must be rescheduled.

### **Step 5: Initial Certificate of Compliance**

Finally, the ICOC Exam takes place just before the vessel



The world's largest cruise ship, Royal Caribbean's *Icon of the Seas*, sits at the Navantia Shipyard in Cadiz, Spain. Coast Guard photo by LT Devin Greenwell


delivery and is the last time ACTEUR visits the vessel. If the vessel passes the exam, it can be delivered from the shipyard to the client. The ICOC is a multiday exam that tests nearly every major system. This is a massive undertaking that requires significant coordination between the shipyard, owners/operators, vessel crew, and other major stakeholders.

The MSC and CSNCOE also support this comprehensive exam and each unit offers a unique layer of experience, knowledge, and technical expertise. A typical exam is divided into three teams, and although there are considerable crossover inspection points between these teams, they are generally arranged as such: One focused primarily on topside systems like navigation and lifesaving, one focused on fire control systems, and one focused on machinery systems. Each team is composed of Coast Guard, shipyard, and company representatives.

### The Future of the Cruise Industry

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the cruise ship industry has responded with a renewed focus on resiliency and sustainability. Cutting-edge technology has paved the way for enhanced guest experiences and heightened safety culture while also continuing to meet environmentally focused regulatory initiatives. The adoption of alternative fuels such as liquefied natural gas and biofuels, along with advancements in waste reduction technologies and energy-efficient design, underscores a pivotal shift to elevate guest confidence. It also aims

to minimize the carbon footprint of cruise ships while protecting the marine ecosystems they explore.

The integration of cutting-edge technologies such as AI-driven personal assistants and smart cabins equipped with voice-controlled amenities will redefine convenience and luxury. With all these new advancements and more on the horizon, the Coast Guard will continue to join forces with shipbuilders to ensure a focus on safety while forging a path for adherence to regulations. The industry's proactive engagement with the Coast Guard has helped provide safe and memorable experiences at sea for years to come.<sup>6</sup> 

#### About the authors:

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# Marine Casualties Beyond U.S. Waters

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Casualties occurring on vessels have been an unfortunate reality since the first time people looked to the water as a means of transportation. Seafaring has never been, and likely will never be, without peril. To quote the Royal Canadian Navy Captain Thomas George Fuller, “He that will not sail till all dangers are over must never put to sea.” Nevertheless, the continued efforts to improve safety in shipping is a proud-yet-humbling task routinely performed by Coast Guard marine casualty investigating officers.

August 4, 1790, marks the creation of the Revenue Cutter Service (RCS) and ultimately the Coast Guard’s birthday. The RCS was established at the end of the golden age of piracy with the purpose of enforcing import tariff laws, reducing rampant smuggling operations, and combatting pirates at sea. From 1790 until 1798, it also served as the only armed maritime service in the United States. The success of the service led to the continued growth of the responsibilities and missions assigned by Congress. In 1871, this expansion incorporated marine safety and the creation of the Steamboat Inspection Service which later merged into what we know today as the Coast Guard.

Due to the unpredictability of the sea, constant technological advances, and the global nature of the shipping industry, improving marine safety has always been a delicate balancing act. Sometimes, the Coast Guard can anticipate industry-wide safety issues and adjust the regulatory requirements proactively, but that is not always easy to do. The phrase, “safety regulations are written in blood,” is a well-known expression that stems from the

fact that in some past instances maritime fatalities have provided the justification needed to advance regulatory initiatives. As a result, many of the most impactful maritime safety regulations have originated from devastating maritime disasters.

The International Convention of the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), encapsulating arguably the most important safety regulations for international shipping, was spurred by the loss of the RMS *Titanic* in 1912. The 1983 sinking of the SS *Marine Electric* led to the formation of the Coast Guard rescue swimmer program and overhauled the commercial vessel inspection program. The *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in 1989 led to the Oil Pollution Act requiring all tankers to have a double hull, and the 2015 sinking of the SS *El Faro* was the impetus for the Maritime Safety Act of 2018, requiring numerous technological improvements to vessel safety.

With the ever-changing maritime industry, the Coast Guard continues to evolve and adapt its investigative skills and tools. However, the fundamental goals of identifying the causes of an incident and making recommendations to prevent future occurrences remains the focus of the marine casualty investigation program.

## Marine Safety has no Boundaries

The global nature of the shipping industry requires a global approach to marine safety, which expands jurisdiction to conduct marine casualty investigations beyond U.S. boundaries. The jurisdiction extends to casualties on U.S. vessels anywhere in the world and casualties affecting U.S. passengers on foreign passenger vessels.



The *Viking Polaris* is shown in Ushuaia, Argentina, in December 2022 following a deadly incident at sea that killed one American citizen and injured four other passengers. The *Polaris* was caught in a storm and was hit by a rogue wave as it made its way from Antarctica toward Argentina. Coast Guard photo by LT Samuel Kulp

Additionally, it includes any foreign vessel outside of the United States when the death or serious injury of a U.S. citizen occurs, making the United States a substantially interested state in accordance with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Casualty Investigation Code. A cadre of Coast Guard officers conducts this mission domestically, while only a handful of officers handle marine casualties occurring throughout the rest of the world.

U.S. Coast Guard Activities Europe (ACTEUR) is one of the few international units conducting marine casualty investigations and they have a vast area of responsibility, including the Arctic, the Atlantic Ocean, Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and the Antarctic. At the request of the Department of State, the Coast Guard established a permanent presence in Europe near the end of World

War II to handle a large influx of U.S. merchant ships and U.S. merchant seamen. Since then, the unit's location has shifted several times, starting in London, then to Rotterdam, Schinnen, and now Brunssum, Netherlands.

### **Challenges of a Global Approach**

Marine casualties span a wide range of scenarios and frequently involve merchant mariner conduct and vessel equipment failures affecting generators or propulsion machinery. For ACTEUR, this often involves U.S. vessels making transatlantic voyages and sailing between European, Middle Eastern, and African ports. Other casualties include deaths or serious injuries to U.S. crewmembers or passengers that may occur as far away as the Arctic or off the coast of Antarctica.





Challenges, such as funding and limited personnel, require careful review and keen determinations on the best use of resources. Frequently, many of these investigations can be conducted remotely, which includes detailed virtual interviews of the crew, company representatives, and technical specialists, and obtaining additional evidence ultimately needed to determine the cause of the incident. For investigations that require on-scene responses, prompt and deliberate planning are required to account for sometimes rigorous international travel restrictions and to limit further delays to shipping schedules whenever possible. Other challenges are also ever-present, such as the six-hour time difference between Coast Guard offices. It is certainly worth mentioning that this is all accomplished by a team of only

two investigating officers who share a 24/7 duty rotation.

The ACTEUR staff is frequently called upon to serve as the Coast Guard representative in an international arena, especially across Europe. Recently, the ACTEUR investigations office expertly filled this role as the U.S. representative at the Marine Accident Investigators' International Forum and its European equivalent in 2023 and 2024.

The investigative coordination under IMO protocols is focused solely on determining the causes of incidents and improving the overall safety framework to prevent reoccurrences. However, investigating officers also have the authority to suspend or revoke mariners' credentials/licenses and issue monetary civil penalties against mariners and vessel operators who violate maritime safety

laws and regulations. This enforcement side of marine safety is being increasingly pursued to ensure operators are complying with the mandatory regulations for safe manning on commercial vessels, an issue exacerbated by the growing shortages of U.S.-credentialed mariners.

### Antarctic Casualties Spark Investigations

As the cruise industry continues to grow and find new and exciting tour locations, the responsibilities of the Coast Guard and our international regulatory and shipping partners to ensure the safety of global shipping and passengers anywhere in the world also expand. The expansion of cruise line travel includes new European destinations, as well as more remote locations such as Drake's Passage near the Antarctic. Many cruise ship operators organize trips from the southern parts of Argentina to the Antarctic shores via state-of-the-art passenger vessels. At the destination, vessels offer excursions into the frigid waters using inflatable small boats. These exciting opportunities allow passengers to get even closer to the wildlife and magnificent scenery in these remote areas.

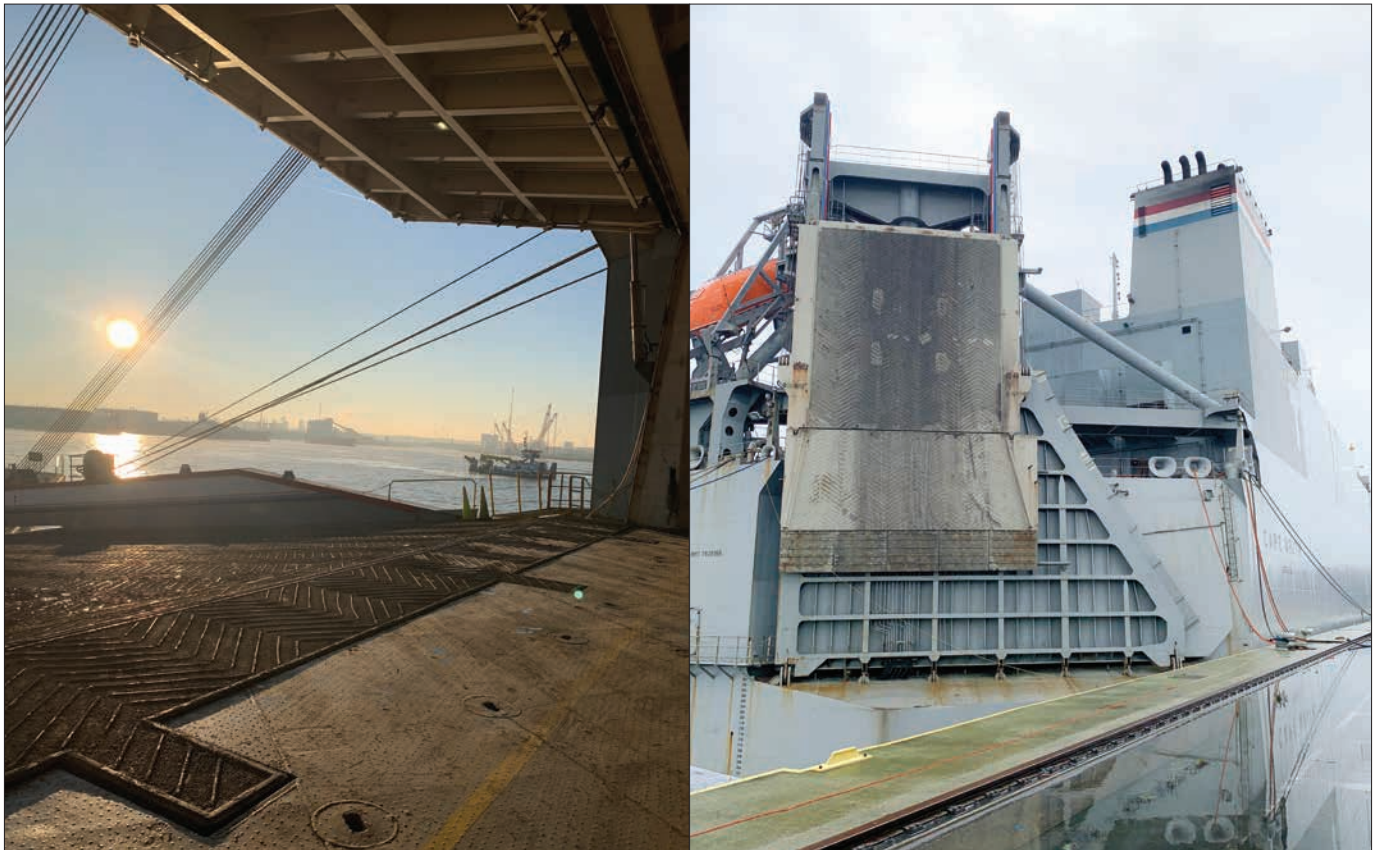
Unfortunately, the increase in popularity of these less-forgiving environments has resulted in an increase

of reported marine casualties which have included serious injuries and deaths of U.S. citizens on foreign cruise ships.

In the winter of 2022, several significant casualties occurred off the coast of Antarctica over the span of a month. These casualties prompted ACTEUR investigators to travel to Ushuaia, Argentina, known as "The Gateway to Antarctic Cruising," for several extensive and revealing investigations.

One casualty involved an inflatable excursion vessel which was launched from a nearby cruise ship for a wild-life sightseeing excursion. It capsized after being struck by a wave and eight people fell into the subzero-degree water. Six passengers suffered from varying degrees of hypothermia and two U.S. citizens died.

A second casualty involved a new cruise ship designed and built for the optimal passenger experience in the South Pole. In this case, an inflatable excursion vessel suffered a spontaneous rupture and explosion of a keel bladder, causing one passenger to be ejected into the water and another passenger to suffer severe injuries. To ensure the injured passenger received timely medical care, the crew promptly returned to Argentina because the vessel was beyond the reach of emergency air evacuation capabilities. During the cruise ship's transit back



The roll-on/roll-off carrier *Cape Wrath* is shown in Brugge, Belgium, during the 2023 investigation of the vessel's loss of propulsion which ultimately led to a flag state detention for the 697-foot ship. Built in 1982, the vessel was acquired by the U.S. Department of Transportation in 1993 and assigned to the Maritime Administration's Ready Reserve Force in 1994. Coast Guard photos by LT Nicolay Markov

to South America, a large, breaking wave struck the 672-foot vessel with immense pressure, breaking seven cabin windows and causing extensive internal structural damage to the vessel, injuries to several passengers, and the death of a U.S. citizen, also a passenger.

Due to the severity of the incidents, ACTEUR investigators visited both cruise ships in the port of Ushuaia, Argentina, and conducted multiday investigations.

### **International Collaboration Proves Beneficial**

Conducting investigations in Argentina and the Antarctic was a novel operation, requiring swift planning and critical thinking to navigate international travel requirements, internal Coast Guard policies, and international collaboration demands and restrictions. The team worked with the State Department to obtain last-minute visas to Argentina and rapidly establish a working relationship with the Argentinian border protection and customs authorities. They further opened communications with investigators from the vessels' flag states of Portugal and Norway. Due to differences in national procedures for marine casualty investigations regarding public transparency and evidence handling, investigators worked together to develop unique international collaboration agreements. This approach enabled all parties to benefit from each other's expertise and authorities.

The persistence to overcome logistical and governmental challenges proved highly fruitful. The investigations pinpointed significant gaps in several areas including international regulations, operator policies and procedures, weather and nautical data availability, and vessel engineering design rules and parameters. After pinpointing the issue of over pressurization of the inflatable boats, the investigators quickly published a safety alert to the industry to make sure other operators are not repeating the same mistakes.


As the remainder of the investigations unfolded, it was revealed that the industry was lacking safety regulations for launching excursions away from a cruise ship generally and specifically in locations without coastal state regulations, like the Antarctic. This created a void in safety requirements, which operators and coastal states were left to fill on their own. Such regulatory gaps often lead to lack of uniformity in standards and practices, which can cost lives in extreme environments like the Antarctic Ocean, where no coastal state has regulatory authority.

Further, it became clear that wave patterns in the world's oceans are changing and becoming more severe and unpredictable, necessitating more concentrated efforts to update weather data and charts for mariners in the remote polar regions.

Lastly, the international cooperation and in-depth analysis by the investigators showed that the engineering rules used by classification societies to build new

cruise ships fail to account for the extreme forces generated by breaking waves. A breaking wave can generate pressures significantly higher than a swell. In the design rules, this extreme pressure is accounted for in the areas of the ship's bow, but much less so the farther aft you go. Thus, a breaking wave hitting the side of the ship could generate pressures above what the builders designed the vessel to withstand and cause severe damage to the structure and passengers on board.

The perseverance of the ACTEUR team will help the U.S. Coast Guard, Norway, and Portugal to advocate to the IMO for the implementation of safety regulations for excursion vessels in the polar regions. Additionally, vessel operators have a better understanding of the shortcomings of their current operational procedures and paths to improvement. Classification societies also have the information needed to update their construction standards to account for the severity of breaking waves. Lastly, the international maritime community can use the data to continue developing plans for addressing the rising severity of sea states, heavy weather, and the increasing occurrence of unpredictable waves.

In this instance, ACTEUR investigating officers had the rare opportunity to initiate multiple investigations during a single deployment to a remote foreign port to identify hazards and spur safety improvements around the globe. Knowing the profound impacts these and future international investigations can have keeps marine safety professionals worldwide always ready. *Semper Paratus!* 

#### **About the authors:**

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# Evaluate, Inform, Warn, and Build

## The role and purpose of the Coast Guard International Port Security Program

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The International Port Security (IPS) Program is the U.S. Coast Guard's preeminent international engagement program and a key tool of U.S. maritime security diplomacy. Legislation enshrines the IPS Program's primary functions with 46 U.S.C. § 70108, § 70109, and § 70110 outlining mandates for foreign port assessments, notification of foreign authorities, sanctions, and capacity-building.

Drastically simplified, the IPS Program's core missions are to evaluate, inform, warn, and build. From its inception in 2004 through the present, it has fulfilled these roles by building enduring relationships with more than 150 countries, bolstering foreign maritime security policies and procedures through assessments and capacity-building, and, ultimately, helping protect the global maritime transportation system.

IPS Program offices in Washington, D.C., Virginia, the Netherlands, and Japan host cohorts of experienced civilians alongside well-rounded, multilingual officers from a variety of Coast Guard specialties. To address each of its functional duties, the program is broken into organizational categories that broadly correlate to location and subfunction. The IPS Program's organizational leadership and desk officers reside in Washington, where they are best situated to communicate with U.S. and international partners while promoting programmatic equities through interagency collaboration and mission linkages with broader U.S. government strategy.

Portsmouth, Virginia, hosts the IPS Program's operational leadership, assessments division, capacity-building division, and a contingent of liaison officers across the Americas and the Caribbean. Forward-based liaison officers in the Netherlands cover coastal nations in Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, and those in Japan cover the Indo-Pacific. Liaison officers, regardless of geographic posting, maintain relatively consistent country portfolios to best foster lasting relationships with host nation officials and U.S. Embassy representatives. They frequently serve as the Coast Guard's primary conduits to host-nation governments. They are sometimes the

only Coast Guard presence in a country. Their consistent visits, provision of technical assistance, and responsiveness help build rapport and maintain the exceptional access for which the IPS Program is known.

It is with this workforce and through legislative mandates that the IPS Program fulfills its four core missions. Each of these is a vital part of a complementary, interdependent chain of programmatic functions.

### Evaluate

The bedrock upon which the IPS Program rests is its evaluation role, which requires its teams to objectively assess port security governance and physical port facility security measures. Congress mandated this role after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, which prompted a renewed focus on transportation security and novel attack vectors. The IPS Program fulfills this mandate through a multitiered system of triennial formal assessments and annual informal assessments to evaluate conformance with the International Maritime Organization-promulgated International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code. Such evaluations also yield reports for the host country appraising port security governance across a spectrum of administrative and operational levels, from a nation's regulatory interpretations, code operationalization, and enforcement mechanisms, to facility-level physical security implementation, access control measures, and remote monitoring capabilities.

In addition to these qualitative reports, IPS Program teams conducting formal assessments produce comprehensive port security assessment packets that use standardized metrics to help quantify observations. These feed into a broader system of global port security information through which the Coast Guard tracks performance trends. As each nation—and each port facility—is unique and faces distinctive security and policy challenges, the IPS Program's use of blended qualitative and quantitative metrics allow it to capture endemic port security conditions and evaluate conformance for each context.

## Inform

Teams conducting formal assessments also produce lists of observations directly tied to ISPS Code references. These observations help partner nations improve security through compliance with the letter and spirit of the ISPS Code. Though written observations are primarily a product of formal assessments, liaison officers regularly convey informal observations, allowing maritime authorities to receive regular iterative evaluations and creating a higher return on investment for host nations and the Coast Guard. Indeed, some nations consider any IPS Program visit to be an external review, which serves to fulfill requirements key to ISPS Code compliance. This tangibly contributory role, alongside the IPS Program's provision of useful post-evaluation observations and actionable recommendations, is the epitome of mutual benefit in action. The IPS Program's reputation for agility, responsiveness, utility, and reciprocity have been credited with consistent engagement invitations, exceptional access, and fruitful and inherently symbiotic relationships with host nation and U.S. partners.

The IPS Program's custom of sharing best practices is another element of its role to inform. Whether during assessments, capacity-building, or technical assistance, IPS Program personnel use collective and personal experiential data to share unattributed best practices with

host-nation counterparts. A port security best practice witnessed in sub-Saharan Africa could, with contextual updates, benefit port authorities in Oceania that may have an analogous challenge with slight component differences, but who may be stuck finding a workable or economically viable solution. This best practice sharing mechanism helps transpose solutions from one national context to another, ultimately allowing the IPS Program to draw down global maritime security risks by offering creative mitigation options for common transnational vulnerabilities.

## Warn

One of the IPS Program's foremost responsibilities is to warn U.S. and international entities, via public notice, of those countries whose security governance structures and security implementation fall short of international standards. The Port Security Advisory (PSA), built upon the IPS Program's formal evaluations, coordinated with the U.S. interagency, and published in the U.S. Federal Register, provides this public notice. A vessel destined for the U.S. after visiting a PSA-listed nation must implement increased security measures while in the country included in the PSA. Additionally, when a vessel arrives in the United States after visiting a nation included on the PSA, the Coast Guard may require it



Coast Guard LT Marie Castillo-Bletso, the chief of the Port Safety and Security Inspections branch at Coast Guard Sector Baltimore, explains the Transportation Worker Identification Credential Program to a group of Argentinian coast guard representatives during an International Port Security Program visit at Sector Baltimore in 2010. The visit included tours of local maritime facilities and opportunities to share information regarding the Coast Guard's role as ports, waterways, and coastal security specialists. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Robert Brazzell

to increase its security posture, enact stricter administrative procedures, and undergo more intensive screenings. The Coast Guard and U.S. government partners take seriously any nation's inclusion on the PSA, and prospective PSA additions incur an extensive and highly collaborative process of demarche, deconfliction, discussion, and remediation, which is closely coordinated with the Department of State, the National Security Council, and other U.S. government partners. Once on the PSA, a nation must show substantive, consistent, and good-faith efforts to improve performance before the Coast Guard can consider its removal from the advisory. The PSA is the IPS Program's primary tool to fulfill its role to warn by providing foreign and domestic entities with a data-driven input for maritime risk assessment matrices. The United States and other nations can use these matrices to impose targeted conditions of entry such as pier-side inspections, at-sea boardings, or outright entry denials.

### Build

Paramount to the IPS Program's mission to improve port security globally—and arguably one of its most externally beneficial outputs—is its capacity-building role. Demand for capacity-building has always been high, but requests for engagement have boomed in recent years as economically dynamic nations in the Global South build world-class ports and seek international partners to help raise security standards, implement reliable governance structures, and build capabilities. Global competition in international standards-setting, governance models, and foreign assistance is fierce, but the IPS Program is well-placed to be a partner of choice to maritime administrations throughout the Global South by providing well-qualified Coast Guard members who can offer pertinent, responsive security assistance.

Reciprocal visits provide another opportunity for the IPS Program to build capacity and strengthen partnerships by inviting foreign delegations to participate in informational and experiential exchanges in the United States. Delegations, accompanied by their IPS Program liaison officers, visit Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington for discussions on U.S. port security administration, national interpretations of the ISPS Code, cargo security,

cybersecurity, and border protection. Delegations then proceed to a Coast Guard sector and several port facilities to see U.S. port security practices in action. These engagements offer excellent firsthand opportunities for information exchange and allow delegations to compare, query, borrow, and critique U.S. practices. IPS Program reciprocity and U.S. port facility openness pay relational dividends and provide significant collective benefits.

Not only does the IPS Program's responsibility to build through capacity-building and reciprocity answer its legislative mandate, but it also contributes directly to meeting U.S. strategic goals at national, regional, organizational, and functional levels by spotlighting the Coast Guard as a willing partner in a shared effort to mitigate strategic risks and enhance global maritime security.

### Additional Roles in Maritime Security Diplomacy

In addition to satisfying the IPS Program's four mandated roles, IPS Program liaison officers are well-situated to work with host-nation representatives and U.S. diplomats to forward priorities that align with U.S. and organizational strategic goals in fields unrelated to port security. Host nations and U.S. Embassies frequently seek to work with the Coast Guard because its organizational structure, wide-ranging roles and responsibilities, and multifaceted character spanning military, law enforcement, regulatory, intelligence, and humanitarian



As part of an International Port Security visit, Coast Guard LT Natalie Moyer observes port operations at Jamaica's Kingston Freeport Terminal in November 2021. The International Port Security Program seeks to reduce risk to U.S. maritime interests, including U.S. ports and ships, while also securing global maritime trade in cooperation with international trading partners. Coast Guard photo by LCDR Kate Woods

functions are fitting for similarly multidimensional local maritime agencies.

As IPS Program members are sometimes the only Coast Guard representatives who visit a given country with any frequency, they serve as de facto conduits to other Coast Guard missions. IPS Program liaison officers have worked on diverse maritime security initiatives and have directly and tangibly aided host nations and U.S. Embassies in addressing critical human, environmental, and economic security issues through information sharing, networks and collaboration, and the employment of authorities and capabilities unique to the Coast Guard. Among other things, liaison officers have supported Defense Threat Reduction Agency training, Department of State initiatives to combat illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and Department of Defense combatant command initiatives including Africa Command regional exercises.

### **Growing Demand for Coast Guard International Engagement**

Foreign demand is high for Coast Guard skills and expertise, and the IPS Program, along with the Coast Guard Mobile Training Branch, helps fill those needs. Demand, however, far outstrips supply, as any IPS Program liaison officer or Coast Guard international traveler can attest. Partner nations regularly request maritime advisors, training, equipment, response assistance, formal education, and informational exchanges from the United States and often specifically from the Coast Guard.

IPS Program liaison officers relay these service-specific requests to IPS Program desk officers and Coast Guard International Affairs, who work with other agencies and stakeholders to evaluate request feasibility. Lacking the requisite authorities to fund foreign assistance that does not overlap with regular Coast Guard operations, however, the service must work with the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense, or Department of State to find external funding to support requests beyond the scope of foreign port security. Given these dependencies, broader requests for assistance are highly dependent on individual liaison officers and their ability to identify potential funding partners.

Enterprise-wide prioritization and coordination are key. The Coast Guard is working to improve and coordinate international efforts by outlining strategic priorities and choreographing lines of effort in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Discussions on Coast Guard strategy and equities in these regions frequently reveal fault lines amongst the Coast Guard's international aspirations, its available authorities, and its ability to execute strategy and implement policy. These complexities aside, the Coast Guard has a significant role to play in international



Members of a U.S. Coast Guard International Port Security team visit the Maldives Transport Authority to observe implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code at three port facilities in the capital of Male and Addu Atoll in 2016. The Coast Guard developed the IPS Program to reinforce the implementation of the ISPS Code. Coast Guard courtesy photo

affairs and is well-suited to lead the U.S. government's efforts to enhance maritime security diplomacy in those underserved regions that have become de facto arenas for great power competition. The Coast Guard writ large needs to continuously evaluate and prioritize its international engagements and broaden its partnerships with nations across the Global South to promote good maritime and security governance, build host nation service professionalism, and counter adversary influence in some of the world's most geopolitically competitive areas.

In the absence of more ideal service authorities and foreign affairs resourcing, the IPS Program continues to field multidisciplinary international demands while conducting its primary missions. The program's agility, unique character, and global footprint put it at the vanguard of the Coast Guard's international efforts to build a more secure global maritime commons and conduct ever more effective maritime security diplomacy.

#### *About the author:*

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# Protecting Global Trade Routes and U.S. Interests

## International Port Security Program bolsters maritime safety around the world

by ED MUNOZ  
*Chief*  
*International Port Security*  
*U.S. Coast Guard*

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the U.S. Coast Guard's International Port Security (IPS) Program, an initiative born from the attacks of 9/11. In the wake of that unprecedented attack, the need to address the growing threat of maritime terrorism and strengthen international port security became abundantly clear. The Coast Guard and IPS Program, established by a congressional mandate, rose to meet this challenge.

The program's core missions are assessing the level of security at foreign ports and assisting foreign nations in closing security gaps through training led by subject matter experts. Achieving these missions requires a system of collaboration with our trade partners and our colleagues at the Department of State. By working with foreign governments, the maritime industry, and port communities worldwide, the IPS Program has fostered a global network dedicated to robust port security. This collaborative approach has seen Coast Guard personnel visit and engage with every nation the United States trades with. The results speak for themselves in the form of improved physical infrastructure at ports, enhanced training for port authorities, and a robust system of information sharing through bilateral and multilateral agreements.

However, the maritime and port security landscape is constantly evolving. While significant progress has been made, new challenges loom on the horizon. Cybersecurity threats and the blurring lines between terrorism and organized crime—exemplified by narcotics and human trafficking, arms smuggling, and piracy—necessitate a comprehensive response. The once-distinct domains of crime and terror now intersect, with sophisticated groups exploiting these vulnerabilities to destabilize governments and further their own agendas.

This necessitates a renewed effort toward international cooperation. National regulations based on

International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, also established 20 years ago, require constant review, adaptation, and updates to keep pace with the rapid advancements in technology and address these emerging threats.

The global pandemic caused a temporary pause in IPS Program visits to foreign nations, but the post-COVID-19 era has seen a surge in the use of cutting-edge



As part of an international port security visit, Coast Guard LCDR Kate Woods discusses the successful overhaul of the cruise terminal at Reynold's Pier in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, with port facility security officer Kenneth Anglin on November 2021. Coast Guard photo by LT Natalie Moyer





Sector Long Island Sound crewmembers host a Nigerian delegation in October 2016, during a three-day reciprocal visit. The visit was part of the Coast Guard's International Port Security Program in New Haven, Connecticut, and focused on the implementation of the International Ship and Port Security Program as part of the Maritime Transportation Security Act. Coast Guard photo

technology at ports. Drones, smart cameras, data analysis systems, autonomous robots, and digital identification systems are just a few examples. This technological revolution presents a double-edged sword. While these advancements offer undeniable efficiency and security benefits, they also introduce new vulnerabilities that require updated protocols and regulations.

Furthermore, many existing port security plans, drafted years ago, fail to account for the risks associated with this new technological landscape. A thorough review and update of these plans is essential to ensure the continued effectiveness of port security measures. The IPS Program continues to identify security gaps in foreign ports and, through observations and recommendations, assist nations in eliminating these deficiencies.

## Conclusion

The Coast Guard's International Port Security Program has bolstered global port security over the past two decades. As we confront new threats and embrace

technological advancements, international collaboration will remain paramount. The IPS Program will continue to engage with our trading partners bilaterally and through international organizations, including the International Maritime Organization, Organization for American States, and the Association of Southeast Nations.

Continued access to foreign ports will allow IPS Program representatives to observe and evaluate security conditions overseas. These findings are critical to informing our local Captains of the Port so they can take action to safeguard our ports and secure the vital arteries of global trade. //

### About the author:

*Mr. Ed Munoz, is the chief of International Port Security (PSA-1). Prior to his current position, he served as advisor and liaison to the Department of State, Office of Global Programs and Initiatives of the Political-Military Affairs Bureau and Coast Guard Director for International Affairs and Foreign Policy on international maritime security.*

# The U.S. Coast Guard's Persistent Presence in the Indo-Pacific

by CAPT ERIN WILLIAMS  
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*U.S. Coast Guard*

The Indo-Pacific region is a critical theater of operations and an important region for the United States and the Coast Guard. It encompasses vital sea lanes, economic hubs, and geopolitical hot spots, and its vast expanse of water serves as a crucial lifeline for global trade and economic prosperity.

The region, stretching from America's Pacific coastline to the Indian Ocean, is home to more than half of the global population, nearly two-thirds of the world's economy, and seven of the world's largest militaries.<sup>1</sup> As a Pacific nation, the United States has invested heavily in advancing its interests in this strategically important region, which has resulted in a significant increase in the Coast Guard's Indo-Pacific footprint.

America's pivot to the Indo-Pacific ensures a free and open maritime domain in a highly contested region that is not only key for economic vitality but also faces growing tensions and environmental challenges.<sup>2</sup> To address these complexities, the U.S. government has invested significantly in new programs and have strengthened alliances and partnerships across the region.

## U.S. Coast Guard's Oceania Presence

Operating primarily through soft power, the Coast Guard plays a crucial role as a trusted U.S. partner in upholding the maritime rules-based international order. This means that the Coast Guard is an agency leveraged to influence other nations through diplomacy, capacity-building, and cultural exchange, rather than as a coercive military service perceived as hard power.

The U.S. National Defense Strategy has identified the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the pacing challenge in the region.<sup>3</sup> The strategy states, "the PRC seeks to undermine U.S. alliances and security partnerships in the Indo-Pacific region, and leverage its growing capabilities ... to coerce its neighbors and threaten their interests."<sup>4</sup> Such activities have led to maritime boundary disputes, transnational crime, and environmental degradation, impacting the stability and security of the region.

To address these challenges, the Coast Guard launched Operation Blue Pacific, a comprehensive effort

aimed at countering threats and enhancing maritime security and presence in the region, in 2019.

Prior to Operation Blue Pacific, Coast Guard units and members conducted engagements and missions in an uncoordinated manner across Oceania, which led to duplication of efforts, overlapping visits, visit fatigue of our foreign partners, and inefficient use of Coast Guard resources. Conceived by CDRs Leah Cole and Mark Brass, the operation rapidly gained traction. It embraces a multifaceted approach that emphasizes partnership- and capacity-building and operational excellence. Maximizing extensive collaboration across all Coast Guard entities operating in the Pacific islands, Operation Blue Pacific has evolved into a key operation of the service that is focused on persistent presence and measured outcomes. By establishing a cross-specialty Coast Guard team and creating an Oceania Regional Engagement Plan, Operation Blue Pacific has become a model for effective maritime security operations in the international domain.

The National Security Council also recognizes the effectiveness of the Coast Guard as a trusted partner in the region. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy, released in February 2022, makes the Coast Guard a central component in its implementation of activities to bolster Indo-Pacific security. The strategy focuses on increasing the Coast Guard's presence, training, and advising to bolster our partners' capabilities throughout Oceania, Southeast Asia, and South Asia.<sup>5</sup> In 2023, the Coast Guard made significant shifts to support missions in the Indo-Pacific, including changing the homeport of the 270-foot U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* from Portsmouth, Virginia, to Honolulu, as the Indo-Pacific support cutter. This move underscores the Coast Guard's commitment to strengthening partnerships and enhancing stability in the region.

During its first patrol, the *Harriet Lane* engaged in bilateral operations and engagements with Samoa, Vanuatu, Fiji, Australia, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, and the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). An example of its work included enacting the shiprider agreement,



Coast Guard Ensign Aaron Motis, left, and Constable Wamwe Alfred Tabigerian, a member of the Vanuatu Marine Police Wing, discuss an upcoming fishery boarding while aboard Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* in the Vanuatu Exclusive Economic Zone on February 24, 2024. Coast Guard photo by Senior Chief Petty Officer Charly Tautfest

during which the crew of the *Harriet Lane* embarked law enforcement officials from partner nations and conducted boardings in the respective country's exclusive economic zone using its legal authorities. The cutter also held several community events and local government engagements to advance security cooperation and relationships between the United States and each country listed above.

The dynamic created by this partnership strengthens the host nation's presence and capabilities in their own waters and improves the Coast Guard's understanding of the challenges experienced by each country. With the high demand for the Coast Guard's partnership, assets, and expertise in region, the footprint is continuing to grow with added fast-response cutters, support billets, and advanced capabilities. There is anticipation of a potential second 270-foot cutter being assigned to the region as another Indo-Pacific support cutter to bolster the efforts that have already been laid as a framework under Operation Blue Pacific and the Pacific Area Campaign Plan.

The fast-response cutters and buoy tenders stationed

in Guam and Honolulu have conducted extensive operational and community engagements. During an early 2024 patrol, the Coast Guard cutter *Oliver Henry* executed shiprider operations with the Republic of Kiribati for the first time since 2015. Following this bilateral operation, the cutter shifted operations to the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), where it engaged with RMI's maritime law enforcement agency, Sea Patrol, in capacity-building at sea.

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Kiribati, officially the Republic of Kiribati, is a group of three island groups—the Gilbert Islands, the Line Islands, and the Phoenix Islands. It is a part of Micronesia.

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A GOOD STUDENT IS A GOOD CITIZEN

Coast Guard Ensign Tyler Bruch, a Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* crewmember, helps a student try on a survival suit in Port Vila, Vanuatu, on February 29, 2024. *Harriet Lane* crewmembers visited two schools in Port Vila to strengthen ties with the local community and share cultural knowledge between the United States and Vanuatu. Coast Guard photo by Senior Chief Petty Officer Charly Tautfest

Finally, the cutter shifted to support FSM, where, in partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development and the International Organization for Migration, they delivered critical supplies such as water and reverse osmosis systems to counter a severe drought. This level of logistical support is typical for the cutters operating in the Pacific islands and, more specifically, the Compacts of Free Association (COFA) states—FSM, Palau, and RMI.

### Beyond Oceania

Coast Guard operations reach far beyond the Pacific islands, expanding to the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. These operations support the U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area Campaign Plan, which prioritizes three lines of effort—prepare a ready force, generate combined effects, and uphold governance.<sup>6</sup>

In 2022, Japan's coast guard and the U.S. Coast Guard signed the Solid Alliance for Peace and Prosperity with Humanity and Integrity on the Rule of Law-based Engagements, or SAPPHIRE, Agreement, committing to extensive bilateral exercises with our national security cutters (NSC). To date, the Coast Guard has conducted a number of exercises with its NSCs operating in the region, including a trilateral capacity-building exercise with the Philippine Coast Guard in 2024.

In May 2024, the Japan Coast Guard, Korea Coast Guard, and U.S. Coast Guard signed a trilateral agreement. Additionally, trilateral cooperation between Japan, the Philippines, and the U.S. Coast Guard was tested with the first joint exercise conducted in 2023. Japan and the U.S. jointly support capacity-building for the



Petty Officer 1st Class Joshua Pablo, an EMT with the crew of Coast Guard cutter *Oliver Henry*, discusses the condition of an injured 9-year-old boy with local medical personnel in Woleai, Federated States of Micronesia, after the ship's crew transferred him and his parents from Satawal to Woleai. The family was later transported to Yap by air so the injured boy could receive a higher level of medical care. Coast Guard photo



The crew of Coast Guard cutter *Oliver Henry* delivers drought relief supplies, reverse osmosis systems, and technicians to Woleai, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), on April 12, 2024. The support provided to the four outer island communities of Satawal, Woleai, Fais, and Ulithi highlights the United States' role in providing essential aid to the residents of FSM and strengthening community resilience against natural disasters. Coast Guard photo



CAPT Billy Mees, commanding officer of Coast Guard cutter *Bertholf*, receives a ceremonial plaque from Indian Coast Guard CDR Neeraj Tiwari during a meeting in Port Blair, India, on March 7, 2024. Alongside Mees are CDR Leah Cole, executive officer of the *Bertholf*, right, and LCDR Tim Cameron, assistant naval attaché to India, left. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Steve Strohmaier

Philippines and anticipate a trilateral at-sea exercise in 2024. Further into the Indo-Pacific, Coast Guard cutter *Bertholf* recently transited the Malacca Straits to Malaysia after an extensive multiagency engagement in Singapore. It then transited to India for bilateral activities with India's coast guard.

### Beyond Cutters

By virtue of Coast Guard personnel permanently stationed throughout the Indo-Pacific, the service's reach in the region extends far beyond our cutters. U.S. Coast Guard Activities Far East (FEACT) in Tokyo and Marine Inspections Unit Singapore, a subcommand of FEACT, focus on vessel compliance and casualty investigations of the U.S.-flagged fleet. FEACT also executes the International Port Security Program across the Indo-Pacific, working with foreign partners in 47 countries to enhance global maritime security by evaluating and aligning foreign ports' security measures with U.S. standards to reduce risks to maritime commerce.

Another unit separate from FEACT, the Mobile Training Branch (MTB) based in Yorktown, Virginia, frequently conducts training in Southeast Asia. The MTB recently expanded to support training in the islands of

Kiribati, Fiji, and other Pacific islands in response to a growing demand for capacity-building in the region.

FEACT and the MTB bring enhanced connectivity, capacity-building, and training to a region that is notoriously hard to reach due to its remoteness, lack of infrastructure, and limited local resources. Their work establishing and maintaining relationships in each country makes them an excellent resource ahead of visiting any maritime Indo-Pacific country.

Assigned to U.S. Embassies across the region, a variety of detached duty Coast Guard members serve as attachés, maritime regional advisors, and liaison officers in places such as Guam, Fiji, Australia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Taiwan, China, Russia, South Korea, and Japan. Each position has unique responsibilities and reports to various offices and agencies, but each is a resource to be leveraged ahead of engaging with the respective country. Some Coast Guard members in these locations are key contacts for multiple countries. For example, Australia's attaché is certified to support Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and the Cook Islands. Other positions may focus on a single country, such as Malaysia, but each person works out of a U.S.

Embassy and is focused on Coast Guard and the U.S. State Department's priorities for each country.

Through the addition of multiple billets in the Indo-Pacific region in 2023, the Coast Guard's regional footprint continued to grow. In Australia, a commander is assigned as the liaison to the Royal Australian Navy at Australian Defence Force's Headquarters Joint Operations Command. Last year, the Coast Guard's Expeditionary Logistics team created a new position to support our regional logistics needs at Naval Fleet Logistics on Sembawang Naval Base in Singapore. Recently, the Coast Guard established the Southeast Asia Training Team to directly support the Philippines' training needs. Finally, the Coast Guard assigned a liaison to the commander of the Navy's 7th Fleet in Yokosuka, Japan, to provide support to cutters operating

in the Indo-Pacific region.

### **Other Key Capacity-Building Efforts**

Capacity-building initiatives have also been a focus of the Coast Guard's efforts in the region. The Pacific Engagement Center (PEC) on Ford Island in Honolulu houses the newly established Marine Environmental Response Regional Activities Center (MER RAC) and the Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported Fishing Center of Expertise (IUUF COE). The PEC, which has already conducted outreach and assistance to Coast Guard partner nations in the Indo-Pacific, has enhanced regional capabilities and promoted sustainable maritime practices.

The MER RAC is focusing its efforts in the COFA states in conjunction with Coast Guard District 14 to ensure legislation, policy, response plans, and capacity-building



LCDR Philipp Kunze, operations officer aboard Coast Guard cutter *Bertholf*, speaks with members of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency during a tour of the *Bertholf* while the cutter was moored at Port Klang, Malaysia, on March 2, 2024. Coast Guard photo by Ensign Tyler Ma





Coast Guard cutter *Bertholf* transits the Andaman Sea as a patrol boat from the Indian Coast Guard moves into formation for an at-sea exercise on March 9, 2024. The Sea Defender 2024 exercise promoted interoperability between the two countries through drills, flight operations, and formation sailings. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Steve Strohmaier

are in place. The IUUF COE is reaching beyond the COFA states, with engagements in Vietnam, Singapore, and Fiji planned for 2024.

Coast Guard operations in the Indo-Pacific are guided by its values of upholding maritime governance, adhering to the rule of law, and modeling professional behavior. These values are reflected in key partnerships and engagements with regional stakeholders.


For example, the Coast Guard's relationship with the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (DKI APCSS) in Honolulu has facilitated dialogue and collaboration on key security issues facing the Indo-Pacific. One of six regional Department of Defense academic centers, its mission is to provide a forum where military and civilian leaders from the Indo-Pacific gather to address regional and global security. The Coast Guard has invested in this dialogue by providing a one-year military fellow and a military faculty member. Through the Coast Guard's partnership with DKI APCSS, the knowledge base and collaboration of U.S. partners and allies has grown exponentially. These positions frequently interact with executive leaders from the Indo-Pacific region, offering a soft-power perspective not commonly discussed. In 2023, the Coast Guard also created a military faculty position at the newly established Ted Stevens Center for Arctic Security in Anchorage, Alaska.

## Conclusion

It is an exciting time to operate in the Indo-Pacific region. The Coast Guard's approach to bilateral and multilateral relationships in the region emphasizes cooperation through diplomatic, defense, and development lenses. Through multiple bilateral and multilateral agreements, the Coast Guard has strengthened its regional leadership and engagements. The United States' strategic pivot to the Indo-Pacific is essential for ensuring security and

stability in a dynamic region, and the U.S. Coast Guard plays a critical role in this effort.

Through Operation Blue Pacific, the Coast Guard plays a crucial role in upholding the maritime rules-based international order. Through collaborative efforts with the U.S. Navy and in-person outreach with partners and allies, we are jointly countering threats to regional security and stability.<sup>7</sup>

As the strategic landscape continues to evolve, the Coast Guard stands ready to meet the challenges of the future and maintain a free and open Indo-Pacific. 

### About the authors:

*CAPT Erin Williams is a career prevention officer with assignments at Coast Guard Activities Europe and Far East, Marine Safety Office San Diego, Marine Safety Units Valdez and Duluth, and the World Maritime University in Sweden. She joined the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in 2023.*

*CDR Yvonne Yang is a career response officer and is currently serving as the Coast Guard Pacific Area strategic engagements section chief, overseeing the Marine Environmental Response Regional Activities Center and the Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported Fishing Center of Expertise located on Ford Island, Hawaii. She recently completed a one-year fellowship as the Coast Guard military fellow at the Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu.*

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# Cultural Connections

## An international port security liaison officer's personal account of diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific

by LCDR GRANT W. JOHNSON  
*International Port Security Coordinator and Liaison Officer  
Activities Far East  
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The Coast Guard boasts a long history in Asia dating back to 1947, when Coast Guard CAPT Frank Meals helped establish the Japan Maritime Safety Agency, now known as the Japan Coast Guard. In 1952, the Coast Guard established the Far East Section on Yokota Air Base outside of Tokyo to assist the U.S. Navy with Pacific Ocean navigation.

The modern-day unit where I now work, U.S. Coast Guard Activities Far East, was established in 1994 at Yokota Air Base. Today, the Japan-based unit, also known as FEACT, plays a crucial role in the Indo-Pacific region.

As an International Port Security Liaison Officer (IPSLO), maintaining the Coast Guard's access to international ports and host governments are my metrics for success in supporting our mission. In 2023, I spent 120 days on temporary duty assignments in the Indo-Pacific and have found that personal connections are the most effective tools in my diplomatic repertoire. Travel with me across the vast Indo-Pacific region for a glimpse of the most powerful and rewarding part of my job as an IPSLO—the cultural connections.

Memorandums of understanding (MOU), statements of intent (SOI), country assessments, and capacity-building programs are not solely achieved through virtual correspondence, lengthy documents, and conferences. Leading up to each success, you will find cultural connections and shared experiences between liaison officers and the host governments. Furthermore, these positive relationships ensure a continued dialogue with Indo-Pacific nations and, in some cases, allow the Coast Guard and U.S. government access to foreign ports they otherwise may not be able to visit while promoting stability and security within the region.

The Coast Guard is not the only port security



**INDO-PACIFIC REGION**

**Based in Japan, FEACT plays a crucial role in the Indo-Pacific region. Its mission is fourfold:**

- **MARITIME SAFETY:** Ensuring the safety of vessels and crews navigating Far East waters.
- **MARITIME SECURITY:** Working to prevent threats and maintain a secure maritime environment.
- **NATIONAL DEFENSE:** Supporting national defense initiatives in the region.
- **INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT:** Building strong partnerships with other countries in the Far East.

stakeholder in the Indo-Pacific. We maintain strong partnerships with the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, who each have teams devoted to assessing and improving port security in the region. Our interests and goals are aligned so closely that senior leaders in each country have signed SOIs agreeing to collaborate in numerous ways including sharing schedules and conducting joint capacity-building operations.

A signed SOI or MOU sets the framework for years of cooperation between the United States and our trade partners in Oceania and Southeast Asia. At the tip of the spear, IPSLOs operationalize and personalize those agreements, which is exactly what I was tasked to do in the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI).

In Majuro, the four-square-mile capital of RMI, our visiting Coast Guard team of four was quickly the talk of the town. Upon arrival, we met with our program contact, a commander in the Royal Australian Navy, and after some handshakes, “mates,” and other colorful language that I had to later Google, we were invited to an event at the ambassador’s compound. The compound was five cinderblock bungalows situated a few feet from the Pacific Ocean. It was stunning.

As if we were old friends, the Australian commander prepared a homemade meal for us. It was the most delicious poke I have ever had anywhere. For five hours our Coast Guard team, the Australian ambassador, and his naval staff bonded over stories of our travels in the region, subsequently revealing themes of common successes and struggles. When we flew out the next day, we not only left with business cards for official correspondence, we also left with friends and colleagues we could call on for support and advice in the crowded and complex Indo-Pacific.

Three weeks later, my plane screeched to a halt on a tiny runway on the island of Kosrae, the smallest and easternmost island state of the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). It is the kind of place where there are only two flights arriving and departing each week, so your host knows which flight you are arriving on because it is only one landing on the island that day. When you depart, you can park your unlocked rental car at the airport and leave the keys in it. Everyone knows and trusts everyone.

Hence, the afternoon we arrived everyone knew our Coast Guard team was landing on the same plane as the country’s vice president. To our surprise, the state’s governor was there to greet both parties. The governor invited us to celebrate the opening of a new fish processing plant on the island and the vice president invited us to breakfast with him and his wife the following morning.

At the celebration, we broke bread with the governor and the community elders, who have significant, albeit unofficial, leadership roles on the island. We danced to



From left to right, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) Vice President Aren B. Palik, Coast Guard LCDR Grant W. Johnson, CDR Brierely Ostrander, FSM Second Lady Adelita Abraham Palik, FSM economic officer Frank Talluto, and LCDR Christine Igisomar pause for a group photo following an informal breakfast meeting on the island of Kosrae. Courtesy photo by LCDR Grant W. Johnson

local songs played by the island’s lone band and listened to our hosts’ stories of changes they have seen on Kosrae over the years. The next morning, we met the vice president for breakfast. He ordered seared tuna with eggs over-easy, which was not on the menu. I complimented his choice and ordered the same. As fate would have it, he was a basketball player and an avid fan. Our conversation flowed comfortably when he learned of my days playing for the Coast Guard Academy. We talked about the upcoming Pacific Island Games and his hopes for the FSM team’s success. Lastly, we agreed to play basketball on my next trip to the island.

This conversation took place while delegates from FSM were in Washington, D.C., renegotiating the Compact of Freely Associated States Treaty—an agreement between FSM, RMI, Palau, and the United States. No contracts were signed that morning over our eggs, but the smiles and mutual love of basketball strengthened relationships and likely contributed to the advancement the Coast Guard’s shiprider agreement. The agreement allows Coast Guard patrol boats to enforce illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing laws on behalf of the FSM government.

Two months later and 4,000 miles to the southwest, I was on a mission in Kuala Lumpur, the bustling capital city of Malaysia. The city is a beautiful balance of



Coast Guard LCDR Grant W. Johnson, left, an international port security coordinator and liaison officer, has lunch with counterparts in Malaysia. What may seem like a casual lunch with colleagues is often an investment of time that helps establish trusted, long-lasting partnerships. Courtesy photo by LCDR Grant W. Johnson

modern amenities and rustic traditionalism. I was scheduled to rendezvous with my counterpart from the United Kingdom to discuss our respective nations' shared objectives. A few months earlier, the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand had signed an SOI declaring each country's commitment to working together in the Indo-Pacific port security arena.

While we met in the hotel lobby with formal handshakes, we quickly hopped in a Grab—think Uber—and headed for the street food district. There, we conversed through an initial exchange of travel experiences and capacity-building in various countries within our region. All the while, I was able to sample fried tofu, prawns, crab, scallops, and every other type of seafood I can name, and many I still cannot. Over this local street food, we discussed how to execute our leaders' newly signed SOI. Pending programmatic approval, we informally agreed on future joint missions in Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, the Maldives, and more.

## Conclusion

The Indo-Pacific is layered with legal documents with varying degrees of binding strength. Formal documents such as compacts, SOIs, and MOUs are necessary, but it is the people and the cultural connections that create the bonds needed to withstand time, distance, and security challenges.

An IPSLO spends over 100 days a year traveling

across the world, visiting maritime ports and transiting airports to develop new or strengthen existing relationships. Their official mission is to protect maritime shipping lanes and U.S. harbors, but their impact goes far beyond that. IPSLOs are also representatives of the United States and the world's best Coast Guard.

Over 20 years of the International Port Security Program's existence, IPSLOs have established contacts in 150 countries, 40 of which are in the Indo-Pacific. These connections grant unique access to people and places. We build relationships. We share experiences. We make cultural connections.

What may seem like a breakfast with a vice president, a lunch with a colleague, or dinner with an ambassador is an investment of time into these relationships to establish a trusted, long-lasting partnership. With strategic competitors knocking at the door, it is imperative that the Coast Guard and the broader U.S. government leverage the strong relationships IPSLOs have built over the years to solidify the United States' status as a trusted partner of choice.

### *About the author:*

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# U.S. Africa Command

## Stronger with the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership

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The continent of Africa is not only vast and diverse in terms of its terrain, people, and cultures, but it also has an expansive coastline of 30,725 kilometers, inland waterways, and navigable rivers. Its countries border the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean. With 39 coastal states and several island countries, Africa has unique challenges in the maritime security environment.

While Africa is distant from the United States, its maritime threats have global impacts and are a national security concern. For America, those impacts include economic, military, political, and national security interests. Economically, Africa is at the center of vital sea and air lines of communication, with six maritime choke-points that account for one-third of the world's shipping.

The U.S. military conducts bilateral and multilateral security cooperation activities across Africa to enhance partner capacity for Africa's defense needs. In 2023, the United States had 17 high-level engagements with 28 African countries in support of the president's commitment to invest \$55 billion in Africa over the next three years.<sup>1</sup> Finally, Africa is a base for

branches of both al-Qaeda and ISIS. If these groups are left unchecked, American lives will be lost.

At U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), there is a small-but-mighty group of Coast Guard servicemembers who provide their expertise in maritime security



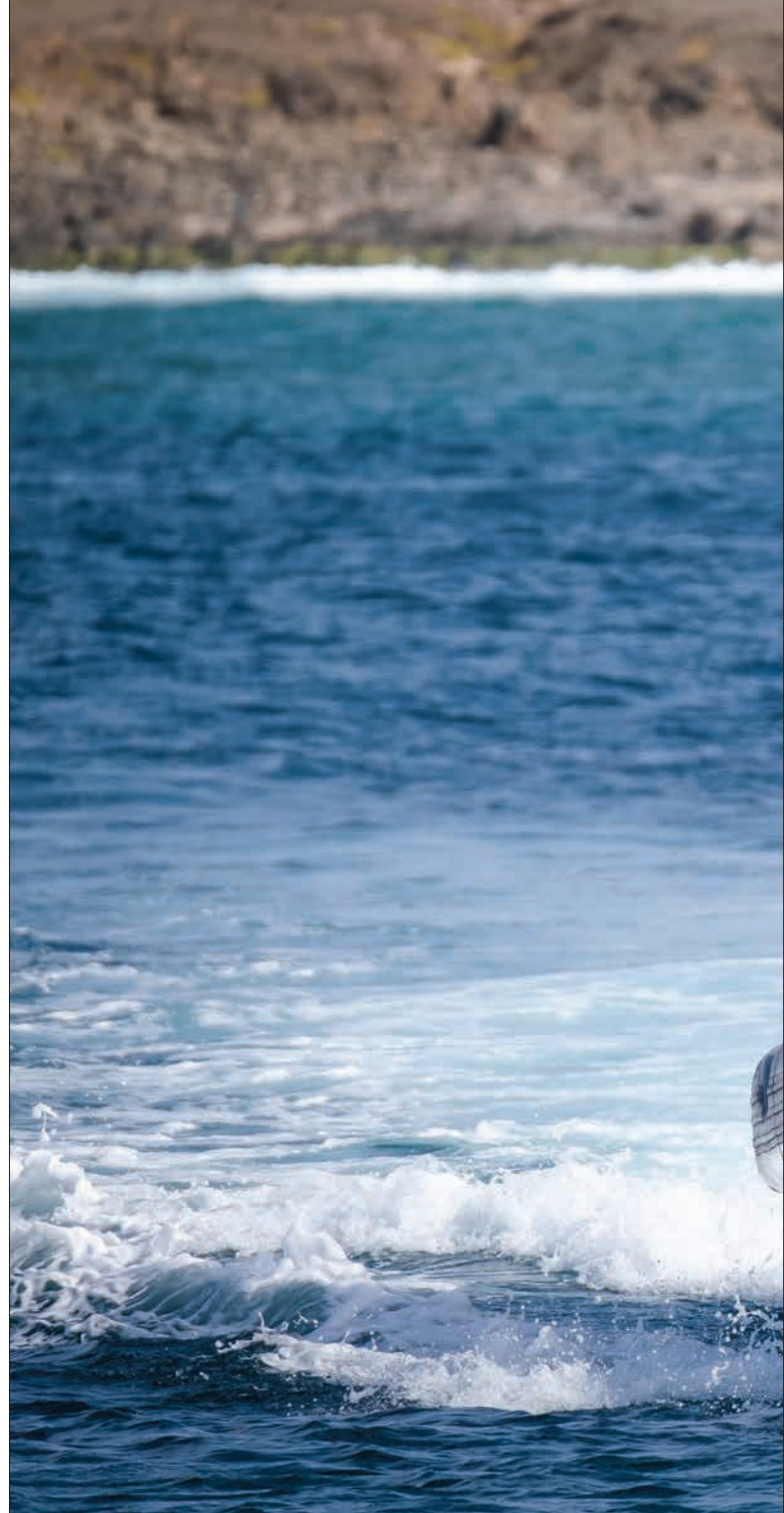
U.S. Coast Guard law enforcement personnel (not pictured) assigned to Coast Guard cutter *Spencer* conduct boarding procedure training with members of the Ivorian Navy and Gendarmerie in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on February 17, 2023. *Spencer* was deployed in the U.S. Naval Forces Africa area of responsibility with the U.S. 6th Fleet to carry out joint training, exercises, and maritime security operations alongside African partners. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Mikaela McGee

to African navies and coast guards to enhance security, peace, and governance. The Coast Guard has missions that are closely mirrored by these African counterparts, which is why the expertise is so critical.

### **Partner Engagement and Security Cooperation in AFRICOM**

AFRICOM's overall mission is to work with partners to improve security and stability in Africa, respond to crises, and counter threats from international crime. AFRICOM completes this complex mission through security sector cooperation, including military-to-military engagements, joint exercises, military education for foreign military members, transfers of military materiel, and tactical combat training. By strengthening the security capabilities of African partner nations (APN) through security cooperation activities, the United States can enable them to counter their own security challenges and promote stability. In turn, strong partnerships with APN advance the United States' national security interests.<sup>2</sup> For instance, the United States' interoperability with African partners to conduct counterterrorism will minimize the threat by terrorist groups that wish to harm Americans in Africa and the United States.

By extension, a more stable nation will enhance the quality of its governance and promote democratic norms. A country's stability depends on strong legal frameworks that can hold individuals accountable for civil and criminal offenses. In the maritime realm, stability also requires military and law enforcement personnel who are both professional and have expertise in executing their agency's mission within the legal frameworks. Further, there is a necessity for strong processes or judiciary to adjudicate civil and criminal offenses and interagency cooperation of key stakeholders of maritime security. AFRICOM is the only combatant command with a legal division dedicated to APN engagements that support the rule of law. The rule of law is a principle of governance in which all actors, including private citizens, institutions, and state actors, are held accountable to publicly promulgated laws equally, consistent with the Law of Armed Conflict, referred to as International Humanitarian Law, and international human rights norms. The AFRICOM Legal Engagements Division is responsible for coordinating security cooperation activities focused on the rule of law across Africa, including maritime assessments of APN capabilities to conduct joint operations with U.S. forces. Here, there is also a Counter-Narcotics and Transnational Threats Programs (CTTP) Division led by a senior Coast Guard officer who oversees a maritime law enforcement branch staffed by two additional Coast Guard officers. The CTTP Division and the legal office work closely together to further the United States' maritime security cooperation strategy in Africa.



### **How the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership Supports AFRICOM's Mission**

Since 2008, the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership (AMLEP) has been one of AFRICOM's most important and successful maritime programs. AMLEP aims to support APN in building their maritime security capacities and improving the management of their maritime environments through combined maritime law enforcement operations.<sup>3</sup>

African coastal nations face challenges arising from



Members of Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team Pacific and Coast Guard Tactical Law Enforcement Team South conduct joint exercises with Cabo Verde's marines and coast guard aboard the USS *Bulkeley* in Cabo Verde, Africa, in 2023. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Brandon Giles

illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, piracy and armed robbery, arms smuggling, human trafficking, and illicit narcotics trafficking. By design, AMLEP assists these nations in bolstering their maritime domain awareness and enforcement capabilities. In turn, AMLEP promotes AFRICOM's missions of security cooperation and operational readiness.

AMLEP consists of five phases to accomplish these goals. The first phase is **Phase Zero**, in which legal teams conduct legal risk assessments. The legal assessment

reviews a partner nation's legal compatibility to conduct maritime law enforcement operations with the United States and other partner nations and evaluates any potential risk. During the assessment, the legal team engages in discussions with the partner nation to determine the nation's legal framework, regulations, and policies in place with respect to the nation's maritime domain. These discussions involve identifying the maritime security challenges faced by the partner nation and analyzing the partner nation's willingness to

engage with the United States and other partner nations. Additionally, they assist in determining any gaps in the partner nation's capabilities that may inform future engagements and bilateral and multilateral agreements.

**Phase One** consists of training. This includes mobile training teams, ship riders and observers from partner nations aboard U.S. military vessels and vice-versa. In addition, this phase includes implementation of International Military Education Training program events, and other activities with the Department of State and Department of Defense (DoD) to provide military members from APN with training on various maritime topics.

**Phase Two** is the exercise phase and involves engaging with the partner nations in AFRICOM's joint and combined maritime security exercises. Examples of these exercises include Obangame Express in the Gulf of Guinea, Cutless Express in East Africa, and Phoenix Express in North Africa. During these exercises, Coast Guard officers from the AFRICOM CTPP Division have opportunities to share their expertise with African partners through the visit, board, search, and seizure portion, which is hands-on training, and maritime operations center (MOC) integration.

**Phase Three**, the operations phase, enables U.S. military forces and the partner nation's forces to conduct real-world maritime law enforcement boardings

together. It also includes professional exchanges between forces with the purpose of promoting capacity-building in the maritime security domain.

**Phase Four**, sustainment, is the final phase. During this phase, U.S. forces withdraw from African activities allowing the partner nation to operate in a self-sustained manner.

In the past year, Coast Guard members assigned to AFRICOM have conducted maritime legal assessments in Angola, Liberia, and Mauritania. They provided the reports to the Coast Guard and the Department of State with a recommendation about whether the country's existing capabilities, from interdiction to adjudication, warrant pursuing a bilateral agreement with the United States to conduct future joint operations. Presently, there are bilateral agreements with six African nations for maritime law enforcement activities:

- Cabo Verde
- Côte d'Ivoire
- The Gambia
- Ghana
- Senegal
- Seychelles

In February 2024, the U.S. Ambassador to Côte d'Ivoire Jessica Davis Ba signed the most recent agreement with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Léon Kacou



Members of the Liberia maritime assessment team from the Liberian Coast Guard tour the Freeport of Monrovia in May 2023. Coast Guard photo by CDR Amy Sung





From left, U.S. Air Force Col. Jim Eves, Mr. Anthony Popiel, Angolan Navy VADM Jorge da Silva, and Angolan Navy VADM Noé Rodrigues João Magalhães participate in a maritime assessment closing ceremony in Angola in April 2023, during which Magalhães was appointed to the position of second commander of the Angolan Navy. Coast Guard photo by CDR Amy Sung

Adom, strengthening the United States' ability to partner with maritime forces in the Gulf of Guinea, an area where piracy and IUU fishing are a significant concern.

### Legal Aspects of AMLEP

AMLEP operates under various statutory authorities. For the exercise phase, the United States uses 10 U.S.C. § 321, granting the authority to train with foreign militaries, to conduct practical applications in certain maritime security scenarios. Additionally, for named operations with maritime security elements, the United States may provide operational support under 10 USC § 331, which grants the authority to support foreign countries in designated operations, including through logistics, supplies, services, equipment, small-scale construction, and specialized training.

U.S. forces do not independently take any enforcement action under AMLEP during the operations phase. The combined operations take place within the African partner nation's waters. Accordingly, any enforcement actions that the partner nation wishes to take will be in accordance with their domestic laws and will be processed through their legal system. U.S. forces may assist in terms of providing best practices for evidence collection and preservation, witness questioning, and other means of perfecting a case for judicial enforcement, but the United States does not prosecute or otherwise enforce the partner nation's laws.

While AFRICOM has conducted maritime law enforcement activities with African partners since 2008, a 2017 statutory change limited the Coast Guard's ability to conduct operations under AMLEP. However, the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act of 2006 is one enduring authority for the Coast Guard. It authorizes the service to cooperate internationally to address IUU fishing and other practices that harm the U.S. fishing industry.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement (SAFE) Act of 2019 directs the Coast Guard to support the Department of State in countering IUU fishing and related maritime security threats.<sup>5</sup>

The Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement Act, or Maritime SAFE Act, has designated the Gulf of Guinea as a Tier One region, designated by the inter-agency working group as a priority region, where the U.S. government will focus its efforts to share information, conduct training, and build APN capacity to enhance maritime security. This act also creates a whole-of-government approach to combatting other maritime crimes, such as trafficking of drugs and arms, forced labor, and transnational organized crime. The Coast Guard is a key agency in supporting the national strategy under the Maritime SAFE Act.

Recently, the DoD received new statutory authority in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2024. This authority allows the secretary of defense to provide

assistance to the Coast Guard for the execution of existing maritime law enforcement agreements with African countries for the purpose of combatting transnational organized maritime crimes, including IUU fishing.<sup>6</sup> This was achieved through hard work by various AFRICOM directorates that championed a proposal to change the law so DoD may assist the Coast Guard in conducting operations under bilateral agreements. While IUU fishing is one of the most significant threats to Africa, other maritime security threats permeate. This new authority signals the importance of the Coast Guard conducting joint operations with APN under these bilateral agreements.

Countering IUU fishing is critical because in Africa, including the countries that are not littoral, the fishing sector supports the livelihoods of approximately 12.3 million people and provides a substantial food source across Africa.<sup>7</sup> Depleting this food stock through IUU fishing has a profound impact on the continent's food security.

### **Operational Perspective of AMLEP**

As discussed above, AMLEP is the framework by which the United States and APN are able to execute missions aimed at denying, disrupting, and interdicting illicit activities at sea. To take full advantage of both countries' authorities and jurisdiction during a combined operation, there must be a bilateral agreement in place. Once in place, the increased enforcement capacity offered to a joint operation is a force multiplier.

U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa (NAVAF), a component of AFRICOM, has the goal of increasing the enforcement capabilities of African partners through joint maritime law enforcement operations, capacity-building, and collaborative exercises. NAVAF facilitates the framework by assuming tactical control of Coast Guard cutters or Law Enforcement Detachments (LEDETs) transiting into the AFRICOM area of responsibility. LEDETs accompany and provide technical assistance to African partners as they conduct real-world maritime law enforcement activities to detect, deter, and interdict criminals in their territorial waters and exclusive economic zones. LEDETs also conduct capability assessments of African maritime partners to validate U.S. security cooperation investments, assess return on investment, and determine areas where additional investment is required.

Training, equipping, and exercising are not sufficient to build a capability. The capability must be tested to determine its success in challenging, real-world conditions. For this reason, hands-on, practical application activities and combined operations are required. During these activities, African partner boarding teams—with the legal authority to search, seize, and arrest maritime criminals operating in their jurisdictional waters—execute real-world maritime law enforcement activities with the help and technical assistance of LEDETs.

LEDETs also use these practical application activities to validate training, equipping, and exercise programs conducted under 10 U.S.C. § 332, § 333, and § 321 and conduct assessments of African partner capabilities to determine future training and equipping requirements. AMLEP practical application activities and combined operations can be executed in one of three forms:

1. Coast Guard LEDETs and African ship riders operate from U.S. Navy or Coast Guard vessels.
2. Coast Guard LEDETs and African maritime law enforcement partners operate from African vessels.
3. Coast Guard LEDETs and African ship riders operate from third-party vessels, such as with European Union or NATO partners, or other international partners.

Executing AMLEP practical application activities with Coast Guard LEDET assistance gives African maritime law enforcement partners the confidence they need to successfully patrol their waters and interdict maritime criminals. This also bolsters their ability and confidence to execute independent maritime patrols once LEDETs depart.

Without these practical application activities, AMLEP is incomplete, and AFRICOM cannot accurately assess whether U.S. training, equipment, and exercise investments are expanding partner capabilities and advancing U.S. regional interests. Without real-time, hands-on active coaching and mentoring during actual law enforcement activities, it is unlikely that partner capabilities will improve. Significant DoD investments in African maritime forces over the past several years, without practical application, is not enough to increase partner capabilities. If African maritime law enforcement capacity and capabilities do not improve, maritime crime will continue in the region.

An important part of the maritime assessment is a tour of the major ports, the coast guard or naval bases, and the MOC. Members of the team, along with the partners, have a chance to board partner vessels, tour the military bases, meet watch standers in the MOC, and gain a deeper understanding of interagency coordination for suspected maritime offenses. The AFRICOM assessment team will include personnel with operational experience to provide the critical perspective of how the assets and facilities will support a future bilateral agreement.

In Angola, our tour of the naval base included the naval training facility and an offshore patrol vessel homeported in Luanda, the capital. We also toured the MOC and observed how the watch standers communicate with MOCs from other countries that are under the same Maritime Multinational Coordination Center (MMCC). In Africa, many of the maritime countries are parties to the Yaoundé Architecture, a regional strategy with the objective to promote regional maritime

cooperation through establishment of operational maritime zones, national MOCs, and MMCCs.

In Liberia, we learned there were some similarities between the Liberian coast guard and the U.S. Coast Guard, including the enlisted rates and training. On the day we toured the base, we observed small-boat training and toured the Freeport of Monrovia on a former Coast Guard defender boat. The expertise of Coast Guard officers with operational experience is particularly important. These officers provide a recommendation on the vessels' condition, whether the security force can maintain its assets, and the readiness of its boarding teams to respond to various maritime incidents. The platforms, training, and procedures that have been modeled after those of the U.S. Coast Guard made visiting Monrovia and learning about the Liberian coast guard feel very familiar.

### The Future of AMLEP

In Africa, there is high demand for Coast Guard expertise. There are serious challenges in the allocation of scarce personnel and resources to support 39 coastal nations on the continent. With fish stocks rapidly



Coast Guard LT Megan Gold, right, speaks with members of the Liberian Coast Guard during a visit to Monrovia, Liberia, in May 2023. Coast Guard photo by CDR Amy Sung

declining and the importance of fish as a food source in Africa, the U.S. government, its allies, and APNs are focused on countering IUU fishing and maritime threats through domestic and international cooperation. Coast Guard personnel assigned to AFRICOM are proud to be part of this whole-of-government, international effort to support African nations in strengthening their abilities to govern their waters.

Without AMLEP, IUU fishing and other criminal activities could continue unabated in Africa, contributing directly to food insecurity and socioeconomic instability. Food insecurity contributes to instability, forces population migration, creates conditions for irregular transitions of power that threaten U.S. diplomatic and economic investments, and creates a permissible environment for malign actors.

AMLEP must continue to adapt to the ever-changing political, strategic, and operational peaks and valleys throughout the African region. Continuing to build bilateral agreements can forge new relationships with countries susceptible to foreign influence, corruption, and under-resourced agencies. Making full use of the Coast Guard's goodwill built over generations enables access and partnerships in what will be critical strategic waters moving forward. ▀

#### About the authors:

*LT Megan Gold currently serves as assistant legal counsel at AFRICOM. Prior to this assignment, she served as a staff attorney in the Office of Maritime & International Law at Coast Guard headquarters. Prior to joining the Coast Guard, she practiced maritime law in Miami.*

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# Sentinels of the Middle East

## U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia

by CAPT JOHN McTAMNEY  
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**W**hy is the U.S. Coast Guard in the Middle East? Friends and family repeatedly asked me this question last summer before I reported to Bahrain for my assignment as commodore of Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA), the largest Coast Guard unit outside the United States. At that time, answering that question was a bit more difficult than it is now, given recent events and activity in this region. Although the Israel-Hamas conflict has brought renewed attention to the Coast Guard's presence here, our patrol forces have provided invaluable, steady-state service to U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) in countering malign Iranian behavior for nearly 21 years.

Despite the constant turnover inherent in one-year tours, PATFORSWA has evolved and matured through the years and seen many changes, including the decommissioning and replacement of legacy patrol boats with the current fast response cutters (FRC). The FRCs are crewed by dedicated Coasties, and have significantly greater operational capabilities than its predecessor, the Island-class patrol boat. PATFORSWA also has a robust support element that works around the clock to ensure the cutters are maintained and mission-ready. Although Coast Guard patrol boats are not in the midst of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden engagements, our forces play a critical part in ensuring regional maritime stability by interdicting illegal narcotics and advanced conventional weapons, protecting commercial shipping, and bolstering regional partner capacity to collectively deny malign activity.

After a year in command and observing the truly outstanding work by the devoted members of PATFORSWA, I wanted to share some facts about a Middle East tour so my fellow Coasties will have a clear understanding of what it may entail.

Fun fact: Every person at PATFORSWA for a one-year unaccompanied tour is here voluntarily. They either put this tour on their "dream sheet," or at least said yes when offered the job. No one is "selected and directed."

To truly understand the value of a PATFORSWA tour, we must discuss the process for getting here, the cultural experiences, the camaraderie, the challenges and means

of maintaining resilience, the mission, and the significant monetary and reassignment benefits.

The first thing that makes this experience unique is simply deploying to a foreign country for a yearlong tour. This may not be a significant factor for the other branches, but for Coasties, it does bear consideration. Because it is a one-year tour, PATFORSWA is a nonstop revolving door. Developing proficiency and maintaining readiness requires a lot of effort at all levels, from our program management office at Atlantic Area—LANT-39, Overseas Contingency Operations Branch—down to shop supervisors in Warehouse 9 or onboard the FRCs.

As with most endeavors, it all begins with training. Selectees report to the Coast Guard Special Missions Training Center in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for the pre-deployment training (PDT) course, designed with input and engagement from the current PATFORSWA staff. The training prepares Coasties to deploy to the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility. PDT includes weapons familiarization and qualification across the range of weapons expected in theater, familiarization with chemical, radiological, biological, and nuclear defensive gear, including time in the gas chamber aka "confidence chamber," ample time in the pool for the Water Survival Training Program, physical fitness testing, Navy tactics training, rules of engagement training, anti-terrorism and force protection training, and so much more.

It is a packed training with a lot of learning and growth. Besides the training, PDT's biggest benefit is getting to know the shipmates you'll be spending the next year of your life with—a truly invaluable bonding experience that sets the tone for your time at PATFORSWA.

After graduating from PDT, the next stop is Bahrain. This usually means a roughly 30-hour journey across the pond with numerous stops before arriving in a unique country packed with cultural experiences. For most Coasties who have not experienced the Middle East, arriving in Bahrain is eye-opening. For those arriving in the late spring or summer, the weather can be challenging, as temperatures reach 120 degrees. Because Bahrain is an island in the Arabian Gulf, humidity is very much



Coast Guard CAPT John McTamney, left, and Coast Guard Investigative Service Special Agent Jon Oakes ride camels in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. A yearlong tour to Bahrain allows Coast Guard personnel to experience new cultures and experience camaraderie that is hard to find anywhere else in the service. Photo courtesy of Jon Oakes

a thing here. For the months of May through October, the weather can be oppressive; but after you acclimate, it's hardly noticeable. As for the other half of the year, the weather is outstanding.

Beyond the weather, Americans quickly understand and appreciate that Bahrain is a melting pot similar to the United States. There's a rich array of inhabitants, from Bahrainis to those from places like India, Thailand, and the Philippines. There are also weekend visitors from Saudi Arabia, which is connected to Bahrain via a 25-mile causeway. Everyone is warm, friendly, and welcoming. There are museums and mosques to explore, and a host of other ways to engage with the locals and to learn about their culture.

Like other Gulf countries, Bahrain is relatively prosperous, thanks to oil revenue and tourism. Specifically, in Manama, the kingdom's capital and location of the U.S. Naval Activity Support base, the scene is that of a small city, with high-rise apartment buildings, eateries, some bars, shopping centers, and plenty of traffic. Navigating by car, or as a pedestrian, can be quite the adventure. As a New Jersey-trained driver, I was able to adapt here, but it is not for the faint of heart.

During the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, non-Muslims are not obliged to worship, but seeing the faithful joyously breaking their daily fast at an Ishtar feast is just one of the many cultural experiences we are privileged to experience while serving in Bahrain. A tour there can expand your worldview.

After 23 years of commissioned service, including eight years underway with tight-knit crews aboard

cutters, I can say the camaraderie at PATFORSWA is unlike anything I've experienced. The cutter crews develop exceptionally tight bonds through shared challenges, but the surprising thing to me has been the camaraderie among shoreside personnel who support the six FRCs with engineering, administrative, logistics, and medical services. I attribute this feeling to being away from family and friends.

PATFORSWA is a challenging assignment. Although Bahrain and the base, Naval Support Activity (NSA) Bahrain, provide a lot of the same creature comforts we value back in the United States, there are obvious sacrifices all PATFORSWA members make to be here. All PATFORSWA one-year assignments are unaccompanied, so while it may seem those with families back home face greater challenges than single Coasties, all of us leave support systems, close

family, friends, clubs, pets, and everything else behind. That is on top of the daily challenges in theater like adapting to a new mission set, up-close interactions with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy, a significant time difference from the States, brutally hot weather half the year, and more. There's also the time lag with getting anything shipped from the United States. Orders from online retailers usually take a week or more to arrive.

I mention these challenges for two reasons. First, to paint the full and honest picture and not let my optimistic, look-on-the-bright-side approach to life cloud my words. Second, and more importantly, these challenges tend to gel the group together. We are conducting a challenging, and strategically important mission, and the difficult parts of the job band us together as we help each other overcome struggles, address issues, build resiliency, and generally grow as people. The camaraderie developed will no doubt lead to lifelong friendships and is, without a doubt, one of the greatest benefits of a PATFORSWA assignment.

More practically, there are financial benefits to the assignment. Pay is free from federal income tax, which is a great benefit to coming out here. Per Executive Order 12744 of January 21, 1991, Bahrain is a designated combat zone and U.S. military members deployed to the Middle East region are exempt from federal income tax up to the amount of pay of the highest-ranking enlisted member. Additionally, those serving in Bahrain receive hazardous duty pay in the amount of \$100 per month, and those with families receive a family separation allowance of \$250 per month. Finally, members receive an overseas



An L3 Harris Arabian Fox MAST-13 unmanned surface vessel, front, the Coast Guard fast response cutter *Charles Moulthrop*, the dry cargo and ammunition ship USNS *Amelia Earhart*, and the guided-missile destroyer USS *Thomas Hudner* (DDG 116) transit the Strait of Hormuz in August 2023. Navy photo

cost of living allowance of roughly \$1,000 per month.

Financial incentives are not the only motivating factors bringing folks out here. Enlisted members serving aboard FRCs earn “Priority One” for follow-on assignments. Shore-based PATFORSWA members earn “Priority Two.” The juniormost members, or non-rates, receive priority placements for A-school, letting them jump long waiting lines for schools and putting them in position for popular A-schools that are typically difficult to get into. For our petty officers and chiefs, though, having Priority One or Two means they are likely to get one of their top picks for a follow-on assignment. From my conversations with folks, the assignment priority appears to be the number one factor that influenced a decision to serve here. For junior officers, I have seen the vast majority elated about their follow-on orders after PATFORSWA. Besides pay benefits and assignment priority, other benefits include 30 days of time off, known as “proceed time,” before reporting to their next job. There is also the likelihood of receiving several ribbons and/or medals, including U.S. Navy awards; staying in a really nice apartment in a high-rise building, courtesy of Uncle Sam; and specialized training. These are just a sampling of the benefits afforded Coasties serving in PATFORSWA that make forward-deployed life comfortable and rewarding.

But material benefits only go so far. Humans crave a reason for being. We all need a worthwhile mission to support to feel like our time, effort, sweat, tears, and sacrifices are worth it. Thankfully, PATFORSWA comes

through in spades. It has been a significant contributor to national priorities in the Middle East while under the tactical control of NAVCENT for nearly 21 years. In that time, the mission has evolved from protecting oil platforms off of Iraq and Kuwait in the early 2000s. The current mission set includes:

- Protecting commercial shipping from illegal seizure in the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman
- Exercising freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz
- Conducting narcotics and advanced conventional weapons interdiction operations in the Arabian Sea
- Bolstering key Middle East partner nations through subject matter exchanges and exercises throughout the region

These mission sets came into focus over the past few years and fully leverage the FRC’s expanded capabilities. As the U.S. Navy no longer has patrol craft and continues building toward placing littoral combat ships in Bahrain, the FRCs represent a large portion of NAVCENT’s forward-deployed fleet operating in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and Arabian Sea.

Furthermore, after tensions in the region heightened in October 2023 after the Hamas-led attack on Israel, U.S. naval assets continue to focus on operations in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. Coast Guard FRCs are achieving mission success in the Arabian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, and Northern Arabian Sea.

For the crews on the FRCs, this translates to a large

amount of operational hours per fiscal year — it is certainly a high op-tempo and challenging for crews. This op-tempo also makes it challenging to ensure requisite maintenance, training, and other requirements are accomplished. Through the dedicated teamwork of FRC and shoreside personnel the PATFORSWA team gets the job done—often after hours—repairing equipment casualties, accomplishing planned maintenance, and conducting training to ensure the squadron’s readiness. Without a doubt, the value of our contributions to operations in theater is significant and worthwhile, and this drives our team to fight on. Moreover, our operations at PATFORSWA truly demonstrates that the U.S. Coast Guard is interoperable with the Joint Force, and capable of providing exceptional and unique value in defense readiness, one of our 11 congressionally mandated missions.

As a junior officer, I never considered coming to PATFORSWA for a tour, but I wish I had now. Although the assignment comes with sacrifices and challenges, it is an extremely valuable year, filled with cultural experiences, an expanded worldview and context that will pay lifelong dividends, outstanding camaraderie, financial and career benefits, and a chance to contribute to a critical mission. Moreover, serving over here truly brings an appreciation for the outstanding capabilities, proficiency, and professionalism of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, our maritime sister services, as they engage across the full spectrum of warfare operations including frequent kinetic engagements with the Houthis.

Without a doubt, I highly recommend all Coasties consider coming out here for a tour. It is not uncommon for folks to extend at PATFORSWA, or to complete multiple tours. It is truly a valuable experience, and one that cannot be replicated at any other Coast Guard unit. It has been the honor of my career to work alongside the hundreds of exceptional Coasties over here for the past year, and I know that what they take away from this tour will pay dividends throughout their careers in the Coast Guard and beyond. //



The Bahrain Bay Wharf is a prominent waterfront development, located in Manama. This area is part of a larger urban development project aimed at creating a modern, mixed-use district. The wharf itself is a key component of this development, featuring a marina that accommodates yachts and boats, retail spaces, dining options, and leisure facilities. Photo courtesy of John McTamney

**About the author:**

*CAPT John McTamney served as commander of U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia and commodore of U.S. Naval Forces Central Command Task Group 55.1 from June 2023 through June 2024. He is a career cutterman, with over eight years of time at sea. He is currently assigned to the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, as the Coast Guard senior service advisor and a military professor in the joint military operations department.*

**For more information**

To learn more about U.S. Coast Guard PATFORSWA’s history and missions, please visit these websites:

- <https://bit.ly/20yearsOIF>
- <https://bit.ly/WikiPATFORSWA>
- [https://bit.ly/PATFORSWA\\_Video](https://bit.ly/PATFORSWA_Video)

# U.S. European Command's Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center

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*Director*  
*Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center*  
*U.S. Coast Guard*

The U.S. Coast Guard's 11 statutory missions, codified in the Homeland Security Act of 2002,<sup>1</sup> create a unique interface for joint operations with its sister services. In this article, we will explore how the Coast Guard supports the missions of drug interdiction, law enforcement, and defense readiness on an international scale within U.S. European Command's (EUCOM) area of responsibility.

## EUCOM's J9 Directorate

The cooperation that occurs to support counternarcotics and countertrafficking activities happens every day in places one would not normally expect to find our sentinels. The work is nonstop and is done within EUCOM's Interagency Partnering Directorate or J9, which is the last standing J9 directorate in the U.S. military's combatant commands. EUCOM's J9 is located on U.S. Army Garrison Stuttgart in Germany. The J9's counternarcotics role within EUCOM is similar to that of the Joint Interagency Task Force South within U.S. Southern Command.

The J9 focuses on interagency coordination with U.S. and foreign allies. The synchronization it galvanizes informs and guides the EUCOM commander—who also serves as the NATO supreme allied commander—in executing EUCOM's national defense and defense readiness missions. As Army Gen. Christopher G. Cavoli, EUCOM commander, testified before Congress in April 2023, the J9 “leverages a range of interagency-driven efforts—criminal investigations, convictions, seizures, sanctions, and designations through these programs.”<sup>2</sup>



U.S. Army Garrison (USAG) Stuttgart CSM Toese Tia, right, runs with the Army colors during a run for the Army's 245th birthday at Panzer Kaserne in Boeblingen, Germany, in June 2020. U.S. European Command's J9 directorate is located on USAG Stuttgart. Army photo by Kenneth G. Takada





Army Gen. Christopher G. Cavoli delivers remarks during the 21st Theater Sustainment Command change of command ceremony on June 8, 2021, in Kaiserslautern, Germany. Cavoli assumed duties as commander of U.S. European Command and Supreme Allied Commander Europe in July 2022. Army photo by Elisabeth Paqué

### **The Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center**

Within EUCOM's J9 is the Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center (JICTC), under the leadership of an active-duty Coast Guard officer. CAPT Jennifer M. Konon, an intelligence officer by specialty, supervises the JICTC as its director, and oversees its three branches. The JICTC is EUCOM's action arm for the Department of Defense (DoD) counterdrug and counter transnational organized crime programs overseen by the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Stabilization Policy (DASD CNSP).<sup>3</sup>

The JICTC's mission statement is to support U.S. Department of Defense, interagency, and law enforcement partners to counter transnational organized crime in the EUCOM area of responsibility. The JICTC focuses on narcotics trafficking, Russian organized crime, Iranian threat networks, and violent extremist organizations to promote global stability, build allied and partner nation counternarcotic capacity, and protect U.S. interests abroad and in the homeland.<sup>4</sup>

Since its inception in 2011, the JICTC has evolved into a EUCOM theater joint task force<sup>5</sup> and fusion center to counter transnational organized crime. This is defined as:

*... self-perpetuating associations of individuals who operate transnationally for the purpose of obtaining power, influence, monetary, or commercial gains, wholly or in part by illegal means, while protecting their activities through a pattern of corruption or violence or through a transnational organization structure and the exploitation of transnational commerce or communication mechanisms.*<sup>6</sup>

The JICTC leverages its unique authorities to assist U.S. federal government departments and agencies and U.S. and foreign law enforcement agencies in countering dangerous criminals worldwide.<sup>7</sup>

### **JICTC Branches**

The JICTC's three branches each focus on different interagency engagements and work together to support EUCOM and DASD CNSP objectives. The operations and plans branch integrates DoD and interagency planning and activities and works closely with interagency U.S. country teams across the European continent, the intelligence community, allied and partner nation forces, and elements across the combatant commands.

The intelligence branch fights transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, and threat networks by providing analytic support to U.S. law enforcement investigations and operations. Its core capabilities include post-seizure analysis, network development, trend analysis, intelligence support to operations, and financial intelligence collection. Its investigative support combines a robust open-source intelligence capability with analytic prowess to deny and disrupt the funding of activities that support threat networks, providing EUCOM's only counter-threat finance expertise.

The capacity branch supports military-civilian security cooperation through law enforcement partnerships and engagements to build capacity and share information. It funds small-scale construction and supports counternarcotics training for international law enforcement partners. In short, the branch leverages targeted investment to improve interagency and international

capabilities to be effective against illicit actors who threaten our national security interests.

JICTC team members represent a wide range of U.S. federal agencies and military branches in active duty and reserve capacity, including the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Drug Enforcement Administration, combat support agencies, and other government agencies. This crew provides support mainly from Stuttgart, with a smaller contingent located in Cambridgeshire, England.

### JICTC Achievements

The combined efforts of the JICTC team have disrupted U.S. adversaries and undermined transnational organized criminals worldwide. In December 2023, the JICTC provided analytical surge support to HSI in Brussels. The JICTC analysts identified numerous businesses, vessels, and individuals suspected of involvement in drug trafficking, particularly containerized cocaine shipments from South America to Europe. The JICTC's leads were passed through HSI to local Belgian customs officials,

resulting in the seizure of 1,245 kilograms of cocaine. By leveraging available information, members of the JICTC identified 68 shipping companies to subpoena, 10 incoming suspected Antwerp-bound drug shipments, six IP addresses for follow-on development, and four shipments linked to known illicit companies.

Another JICTC highlight is its ongoing support to U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA) efforts related to a recent boarding and seizure of a vessel carrying an Iranian weapons shipment intended for the Houthis. In January 2024, CENTCOM reported that PATFORSWA's Coast Guard cutter *Clarence Sutphin Jr.* intercepted a vessel in the Arabian Sea and seized weapons and other lethal aid originating in Iran and bound for Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. A Coast Guard boarding team discovered and seized over 200 packages containing medium-range ballistic missile components, explosives, unmanned underwater/surface vehicle (UUV/USV) components, military-grade communication and network equipment, anti-tank guided missile



Military-grade weapons and other lethal supplies are stacked on the deck of a vessel seized by the Coast Guard fast-response cutter *Clarence Sutphin Jr.* in the Arabian Sea on January 28, 2024. Coast Guard photo

launcher assemblies, and other military components. The JICTC is analyzing and investigating the seized communications, network, and UUV/USV equipment to identify how the smugglers are acquiring this technology and who is sourcing it to them in violation of global sanctions.

### Inside the JICTC

As for what it is like working within the JICTC, the diversely experienced team easily transitions from its incredible mission set to looking out for and investing in each other's lives. Only in the JICTC can you see a U.S. Navy officer coordinating directly with the DoD intelligence officer one desk over, while taking guidance from an FBI agent translating their procedures to align with DoD policy as they share a coffee break. For the incredible things these professionals do, there's a nonchalant air of grace in their space. Quite simply, it is fun to watch this team and the work environment they have created.

So, what does the future of the JICTC look like? The director is looking to expand upon Coast Guard support to the JICTC. CAPT Konon is working to create billeted intelligence specialist Reserve assignments within the JICTC's intelligence branch, as well as a Reserve law enforcement officer or enlisted billets to support the capacity branch's international law enforcement outreach and training programs.

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Also known as Ansar Allah,  
the Houthis are an  
Iran-aligned rebel group  
based in Yemen.

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### Conclusion

The JICTC is an incredibly capable focal point for inter-agency coordination and cooperation and would be a rewarding assignment for supporting and expanding law enforcement, DoD, and intelligence engagement on Coast Guard statutory missions. The assignment immerses the member in a joint international combatant command environment, potentially qualifying them for the defense operations/readiness and international affairs officer specialty management system codes. //



The Coast Guard fast-response cutter *Clarence Sutphin Jr.* stops a vessel in the Arabian Sea carrying weapons to the Houthis in Yemen in January 2024. The boarding team discovered over 200 packages containing medium-range ballistic missile components, explosives, unmanned underwater/surface vehicle components, military-grade communication and network equipment, anti-tank guided missile launcher assemblies, and other military components. U.S. Central Command photo

### About the authors:

*LCDR Anne Jefferson serves as a joint operations and exercise planner for Coast Guard Reserve Unit - Joint Staff South and is the first drilling reservist in more than a decade to be authorized to drill and live overseas. She drills in support of both the Joint Staff and the Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center (JICTC).*

*CAPT Jennifer Konon is currently dual-hatted as the Coast Guard liaison officer at EUCOM and the director of the Joint Interagency Counter Trafficking Center. She has served in a variety of operational intelligence assignments as well as out-of-specialty tours at the Coast Guard Leadership Development Center, Coast Guard Office of Budget and Programs, and as a Coast Guard Academy physics instructor.*

*LTC Michael Pasquale enlisted as an infantryman in the U.S. Army in 2003 and commissioned in 2006 as a military police officer. He has held positions as platoon leader, company commander, battalion executive officer, military advisor, NATO operations officer, and interagency operator. His combat deployments include the Middle East and Central Asia, with contingency operation support in Africa and Eastern Europe. He currently serves as brigade deputy commanding officer at Fort Cavazos, Texas.*

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# Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing

A growing international mission from a personal service perspective

by LT ALEXANDER FELTMAN  
*International Fisheries Policy Analyst & Liaison*  
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My cellphone alarm goes off and I roll over. It is 6:40 a.m. and time to start the day. I get out of bed and pull back the curtains in the hotel room and am blinded by the reflection of the morning African sun. It is Thanksgiving morning 2023 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, and it is time to go to work. How did I get here? More importantly, how did we, the Coast Guard, get here?

I serve as a policy analyst in the Office of Maritime Law Enforcement. Specifically, I work on policies related to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing. In our office, the international fisheries section is divided up based on combatant commands. My regions are U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), U.S. European Command (EUCOM), and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). So that explains Côte d'Ivoire, but why is the Coast Guard there? And why now?

The growth and expansion of fishing, both legal and illegal, in the days after the World War II is well-documented. The technologies that were once used as instruments of war were converted into tools to feed mankind. The ships we sailed were able to get further offshore. The sonar and radar once used to identify friend and foe across miles of sea were converted to fish finders that increased the amount of fish caught and decreased the time spent searching for fish stocks. In short, the fishing industry changed drastically in the post-World War II boom. And as the global population grew, the demand for protein and for seafood grew exponentially.<sup>1</sup>

When combined with technology, the demand placed upon the seas after World War II led to an interesting dilemma. How do we, as a rapidly industrializing and commercializing international society, handle natural resources that are beyond the reach of any one nation? When fish stocks are found beyond the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of any nation, they are a

common-pool resource. These common-pool resources can be used by any nation, which can often lead to them being overharvested or even exploited. This phenomenon of the abuse of common-pool resources is often referred to as the tragedy of the commons and it is not solely a maritime or fisheries phenomena.<sup>2</sup>

## The State of Affairs in the Currents

The state of affairs on the high seas is precarious. The international community stands on a precipice and there



Locals fish against the backdrop of an artisanal fisher factory in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The ability of partners to take ownership over their own waters is critical in combatting IUU fishing. Photo courtesy of LT Alexander Feltman

is a need for action. For action to be taken, there needs to be a legal and diplomatic framework by which actions can be organized, adjudicated, and passed. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) provides us with the general framework by which we can pass regulations. Taking UNCLOS one step further into direct fisheries management, the United Nations passed the United Nations Fish Stocks Agreement (UNFSA) in 1995 and was signed by 59 states and entities, including the United States.

UNFSA brought new authorities to the international community to manage fisheries stocks. These “straddling stocks” or fish stocks which are comprised of highly migratory species that move from area to area across large swaths of ocean, are the focus of these agreements, leading to UNFSA being called the Straddling Stocks Agreement. These straddling stocks that crosscut the globe are some of the most important protein sources for many people. Tuna is the most famous of these stocks, with different species found in management areas across the world.

To manage these huge areas of empty ocean space beyond any nation’s EEZ, the UNFSA set up the background for a system of management called regional fisheries management organizations (RFMO). These organizations bring together the international community members who have a stake in the management of either a particular species in an area, or of all of the fishery’s resources in a particular area. A key component of RFMOs is the principle that the nations who are signatories to the RFMO have the inherent ability to control the rules and regulations in that managed area. These rules are called conservation management measures, or CMMs. They are widely varying and can cover everything from allowable gear, the bycatch that is permitted or must be retained, how to properly register to fish in the RFMO-managed areas, and many other topics. The United States is party to 15 different RFMOs that span the globe. The rules differ from RFMO to RFMO in the same way that the species and the methods in each area do.

One of the biggest tools that an RFMO can enact in its CMMs is the principle of high seas boardings and inspections (HSBI). These international schemes provide the opportunity for signatory nations to perform boardings and inspections in the managed areas. These boardings and inspections are solely to ensure compliance with the CMMs that are agreed upon by the nations whose vessels are permitted to fish in the area. While this may seem like a simple concept, its implications are massive. Millions of miles of ocean space that are essential to the propagation and continuation of a species are now managed under internationally agreed upon rules.

Before the development of an HSBI scheme and RFMOs, the only areas that could be managed were

those that fell within a nation’s 200 nautical mile EEZ, leaving millions of miles of critical habitat unmanaged. Approval of an HSBI scheme is what gives the United States and partner nations the ability to send a navy or coast guard to verify that the fishing vessels, which are required to be registered to a nation and to the RFMO, are following the established rules and guidelines. Current U.S. policy is to encourage the adoption of HSBI schemes in all RFMOs to ensure adherence to conservation management measures for the continued propagation of critical resources and habitats. The United States consistently uses its Coast Guard as a means to verify the adherence to these measures.

### **An American Response**

While RFMOs and HSBI schemes are working in the international system, the United States realized the problem of IUU fishing is far too large to be handled by one federal agency. In fact, numerous federal agencies were trying to address a problem that was larger than any of them. Technical experts in different fields had no cross-cutting avenues for communication. The identification of this problem led to the creation of a working group.

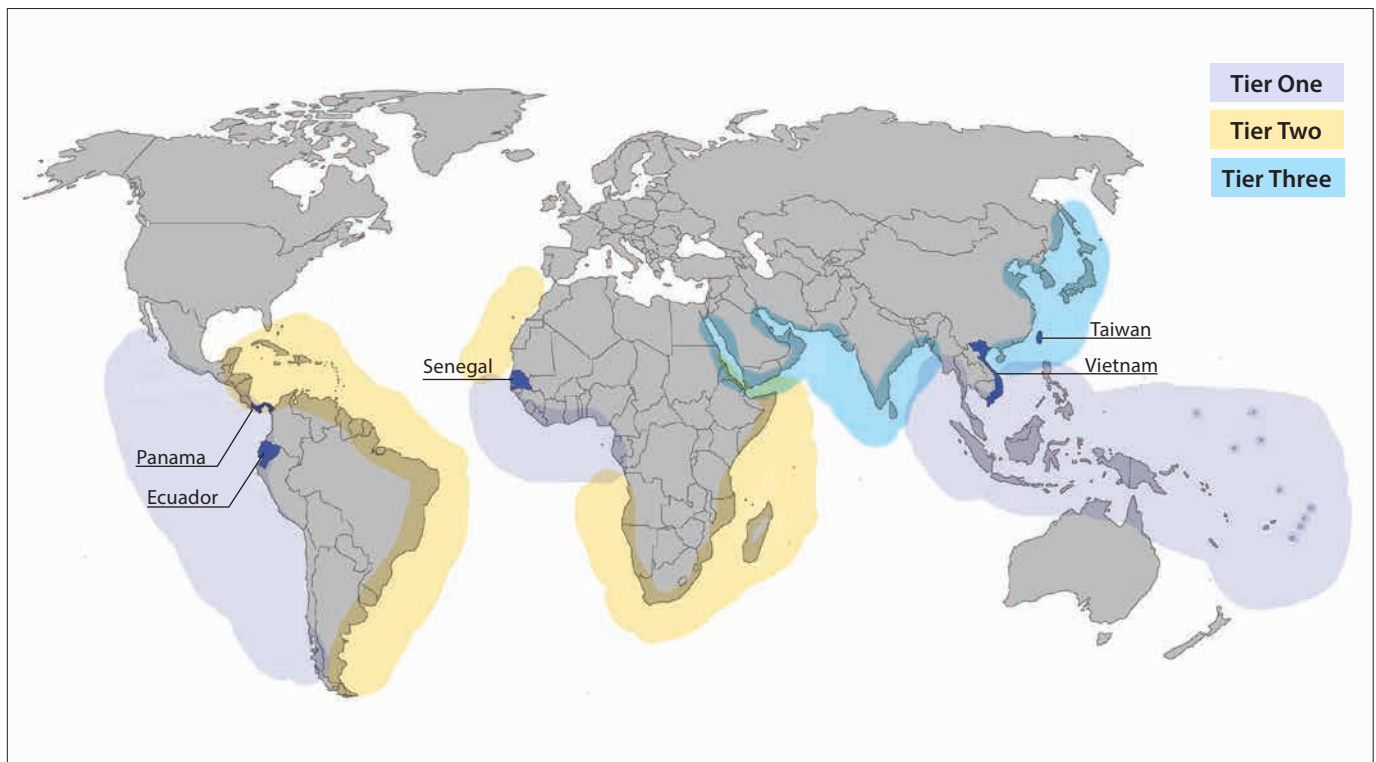
The Maritime Security and Fisheries Enforcement (SAFE) Act was established as part of the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act and brought together 21 different federal agencies to create a whole-of-government effort to tackle IUU fishing. This currently unfunded mandate sets policy for the United States “to take action to curtail the global trade in seafood and seafood products derived from IUU fishing, including its links to forced labor and transnational organized illegal activity.”<sup>3</sup> The subsequent Maritime SAFE Act Working Group brought together the federal agencies for an integrated, federal government-wide response to IUU fishing globally with specific goals to:

- improve data sharing
- support coordination within priority regions
- increase transparency and traceability across global seafood supply chains
- improve global enforcement operations
- prevent IUU fishing profits from financing transnational criminal organizations

The chair of the working group rotates between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of State, and the Coast Guard on a three-year basis. NOAA served as the first chair. The Department of State is the current chair, and the Coast Guard will take the helm in June 2026 and will write the final report to Congress. This leaves the Coast Guard in a critical position to influence the whole-of-government effort, and the national response to an international problem.



Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing contributes to food insecurity and socioeconomic volatility, creating the potential for population migration and political instability that threatens U.S. diplomatic and economic investments. Torstem Bruns | iStock/Getty Images



An interagency working group selected Ecuador, Panama, Senegal, Taiwan, and Vietnam as the five priority flag states with which to pursue new projects and initiatives to support ongoing counter-IUU fishing efforts. These five nations are identified in dark blue on this map. Coast Guard graphic by the Office of Maritime Law Enforcement

The roles of the agencies involved in the M-SAFE Interagency Working Group were clearly defined, as was the U.S. government response to the growing IUU fishing threat in the National 5-Year Strategy for Combatting IUU Fishing. The strategy, released in October 2022, details U.S. priorities and plans to combat IUU fishing and promote global maritime security from 2022 through 2026. It strives to make tangible, targeted processes to combat IUU fishing globally, with priority regions and flag states and administrations. Three strategic objectives were developed to guide the efforts of the interagency working group:

1. Promote sustainable fisheries management and governance
2. Enhance monitoring, control, and surveillance of marine fishing operations
3. Ensure only legal, sustainable, and responsibly harvested seafood enters trade

This synthesized efforts that were already occurring and created the mechanism by which the communications between agencies could occur. These communications are essential, as without them, efforts are often forgotten, duplicated, or die due to lack of governmental authorities. But the M-SAFE Interagency Working Group went further by defining priority nations to align our

efforts around.

The Maritime SAFE Act defines a priority flag state as: *...the flagged vessels of which actively engage in, knowingly profit from, or are complicit in IUU fishing; and that is willing, but lacks the capacity, to monitor or take effective enforcement action against its fleet.*

To determine the priority regions and flag states as outlined in the act, the Department of State led an interagency task with two specific goals:

- Establishing a framework to be used to determine “priority” regions and flag states
- Developing a list of priority regions and flag states that could benefit from future U.S. government capacity-building assistance

Further, the working group considered two primary factors when selecting priority regions. First, is the region at high risk for IUU fishing activity or the entry of illegally caught seafood into their markets? Second, does the region lack the institutional and operational capacity to fully address the situation?

Based on this criterion, 12 regions were selected and then organized into three tiers. One critical point to note, these tiers are not a reflection of the severity of the problem, only a way to help prioritize interagency activities.

From those three newly defined tiers/regions, the working group then selected five priority flag states—Ecuador, Panama, Senegal, Taiwan, and Vietnam—with which to pursue new projects and initiatives to support ongoing counter-IUU fishing efforts. These nations were willing to work with the United States, but also were locations where change and impact could be made in combatting IUU fishing.

The CAMPION continues to grow and evolve. The recent establishment of regional sub-working groups representing Africa, Latin and Central America, Pacific Island nations, and Southeast Asia shows the inter-agency strength that is being developed. It is evident not only around the D.C. Beltway, but with action officer levels across the U.S. government and around the globe. The Coast Guard is a key player in these working groups, whether they are regionally based or in a specific element like maritime domain awareness or intelligence, and the service's influence and abilities are being requested. Through the M-SAFE Interagency Working Group, the Coast Guard can, and is, growing its abilities and influence in combatting global maritime threats with our partner agencies.

### **The Role of the Coast Guard**

From the international framework and problem set, to the U.S. interagency response, working our way down to the Coast Guard, it is easy to see the need for our services. The increasing demand for Coast Guard services is seen in key U.S. strategic documents ranging from the Tri-Service Maritime Strategy,<sup>4</sup> The National Security Memo on Combatting IUU Fishing and Associated Labor Abuses,<sup>5</sup> and to a greater level, The National Security Strategy.<sup>6</sup>

The Coast Guard then developed its own guiding documents which shape the operations and work it completes. The Coast Guard IUU Fishing Strategic Outlook<sup>7</sup> and Implementation Plan Strategic Outlook<sup>8</sup> identify three primary lines of effort that will drive the service's efforts to achieve the future desired end state defined as "Global adherence to international norms and the preservation of critically important marine resources." These lines of efforts are:

- promote intel-driven enforcement
- counter predatory and irresponsible behavior
- expand multilateral enforcement cooperation

Under these efforts, it becomes more and more apparent that the Coast Guard cannot, and frankly should not, be or become the world's ocean police. It is not in the business of global, direct law enforcement. Partnerships with like-minded nations are critical to success. The Coast Guard's bilateral agreements across the globe show how dedicated the service is to this principle.

Shiprider agreements allow the Coast Guard to support other nations' organic living marine resource enforcement capabilities through training and providing operational platforms from which nations with more limited resources may exert their sovereignty.

The Coast Guard currently has 19 bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements that contain a shiprider provision for the IUU fishing mission. These countries are predominately located in Pacific Islands, Africa, and, most recently, Ecuador. Prior to 2016, the text for the bilateral maritime agreements did not include the IUU fishing mission, and were mostly counter-narcotics based, showing the growth of interest in the theatre.

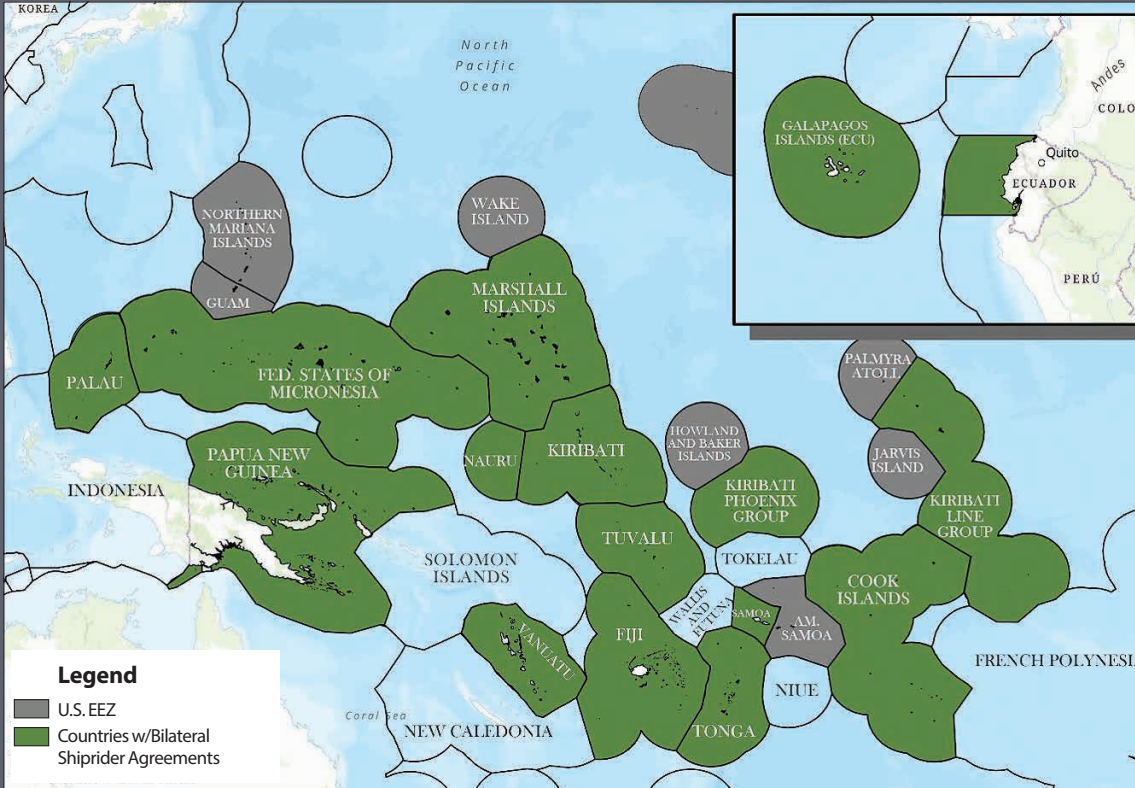
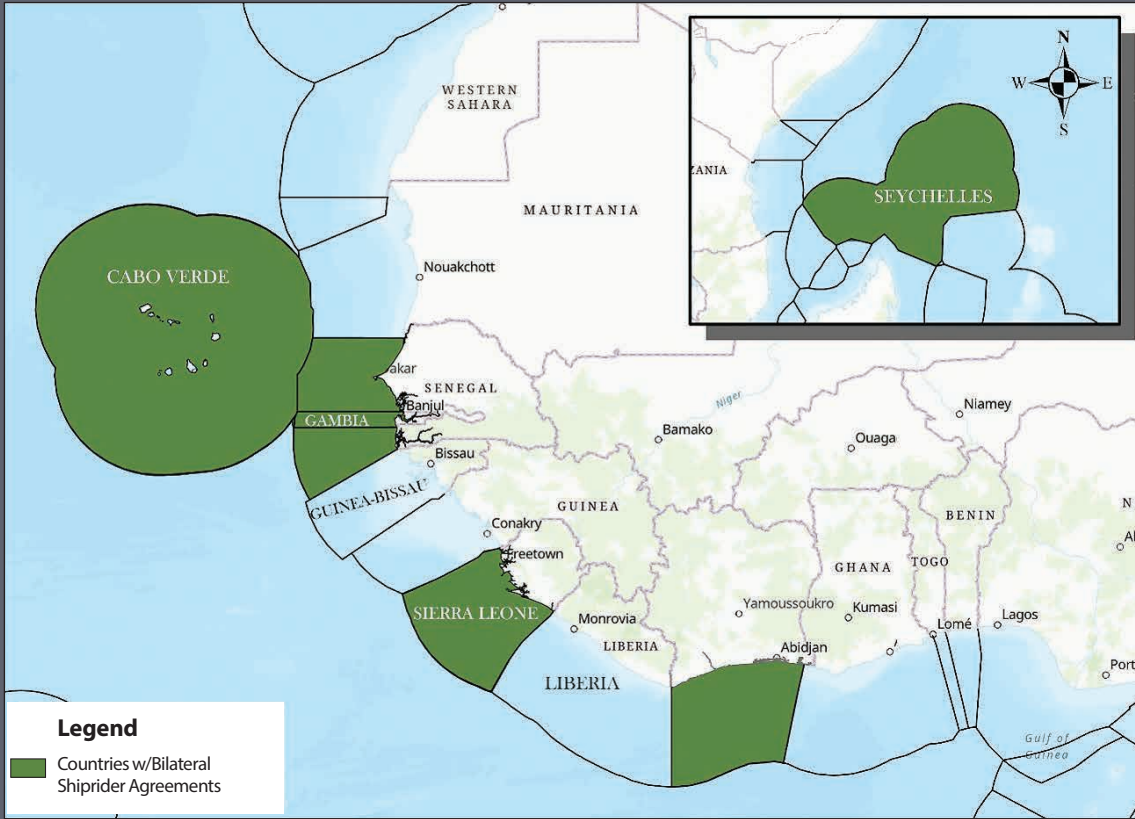
Shiprider operations around the globe have proved effective in helping partner nations exert their authority over their own fleets and EEZs. In the same way that HSBI schemes allow for greater authorities on the high seas, shiprider operations allow our partner nations to better enforce their own laws with the Coast Guard serving as the boarding platform and assisting with training and development of law enforcement personnel.

From the Seychelles to islands scattered across the Pacific, the ability of partners to take ownership over their own waters is critical in combatting IUU fishing. Higher levels of collective ocean governance has fostered greater ownership and pride, leading to better management of these critical resources. The best type of partner the Coast Guard can be in the international community is one that provides the ability for our partners to have the knowledge, desire, legal backing, and platforms by which they can enforce their own fisheries compliance. In turn, that will benefit the entire international community.

Beyond direct operations, the Coast Guard also supports problem-set education, providing training and seminars around the globe and in Washington. The work of the Mobile Training Branch in organizing jointly held seminars with NOAA and Coast Guard subject matter experts, like the one I supported in Abidjan, cannot be overstated. They bring experts together to discuss issues that are bigger than any one nation.

These five-day seminars, like the one I led in Côte d'Ivoire, are held around the world and led and facilitated by Coast Guard Mobile Training Branch members. The goal is to provide opportunities for government officials of the host nation to discuss IUU fishing with the subject matter experts from NOAA and the Coast Guard. During the seminars participants have and will continue to work towards bilateral agreements, discussing the role of RFMOs, how to measure fish holds, and how we can better work together as governments. Just as important, they have discussed how they can effectively break down silos in their governments and communicate more effectively in much the same way the Coast Guard is trying to work through the M-SAFE Interagency Working Group.





The Coast Guard has 19 bilateral maritime law enforcement agreements that contain a shiprider provision for the IUU fishing mission. These countries are mostly located in Africa, top, the Pacific islands, bottom, and Ecuador (not pictured). Shiprider agreements allow the Coast Guard to support other nations' organic living marine resource enforcement capabilities through training and providing operational platforms from which nations with more limited resources may exert their sovereignty. Coast Guard maps


## Where do we go From Here?

The bright Abidjan sun glistens on the water as a small boat carries me to the Ivorian Navy's base, Navale D'Abidjan. I look off the starboard side and a striking image hits me. A sole fisher toiling a few hundred yards off the base, working only a few hundred yards in front of massive factory boats offloading their catch.

Artisanal fishers can be disproportionately affected by the negative repercussions of IUU fishing; entire ways of life can be lost, but the repercussions from IUU fishing don't stop with the individuals. In Africa especially, a huge contingent of jobs for both men and women are tied to artisanal fisheries.<sup>9</sup> When fisheries collapse and jobs are lost, it is not just young men affected, it is entire communities and families. These lost jobs lead to poor economic conditions and difficult decisions for communities. Migration patterns can be driven by poor economic conditions resulting from the collapse of a fishery.

If your life or career is affected by migration patterns and migrant interdiction operations, you should care about IUU fishing. The loss of income and economic instability can lead some former fishers to pursue other means of survival. The skills they have from generations of fishing can lead former fishers to the negative influence

of transnational criminal organizations (TCOs), leading them to piracy or narcotics smuggling. If your life is affected by piracy or counter-narcotics operations, you should care about IUU fishing. If your life is affected by environmental concerns, pollution, food security, forced labor, migration, TCOs, humanitarian concerns, or international affairs, you should care and stay informed about IUU fishing, as it will impact the entire maritime community.

The IUU fishing mission set is not going to disappear, and the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to be a leader in the mission space. The international community is looking for leadership and assistance. The United States government interagency working group is looking to the Coast Guard for leadership. It is time to step into the limelight, support our interagency and international partners, and combat this critical international issue through operations, training, and diplomacy. Only through a cohesive and collaborative approach will we be able to make the strides needed to preserve our critical living marine resources for generations to come. 

### About the author:

*Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, LT Alexander Feltman graduated from the University of South Carolina in 2017 with a degree in marine science and a concentration in coastal zone management. Following graduation, he attended Coast Guard Officer Candidate School. His duty tours include Coast Guard cutter Harriet Lane, and the Maritime Force Protection Unit Kings Bay in Georgia prior to joining the Office of Maritime Law Enforcement. He resides in Alexandria, Virginia, with his wife, Zoie, and Buoy the dog.*

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- <sup>3</sup> The "John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019"
- <sup>4</sup> "Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All Domain Naval Power" <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Dec/16/2002553074/-1/-1/0/Triservicestrategy.pdf>
- <sup>5</sup> "Memorandum on Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and Associated Labor Abuses," National Security Memorandum/NSM-11, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2022/06/27/memorandum-on-combating-illegal-unreported-and-unregulated-fishing-and-associated-labor-abuses>
- <sup>6</sup> "Biden-Harris Administration's National Security Strategy," October 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>
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- <sup>9</sup> "Women Are a Mainstay of Fishing in West Africa. But They Get a Raw Deal." *World Economic Forum*, 10 Mar. 2023, [www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/05/why-women-in-the-west-african-fishing-industry-need-more-financial-safety-nets](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/05/why-women-in-the-west-african-fishing-industry-need-more-financial-safety-nets)



Coast Guard LT Alexander Feltman, shown here at Navale D'Abidjan in Côte d'Ivoire, is a policy analyst in the Office of Maritime Law Enforcement. Photo courtesy of LT Alexander Feltman

# Travel Tips to Pack for Your Next Overseas Trip

by ACTIVITIES EUROPE  
International Port Security Division  
U.S. Coast Guard

The majority of the Coast Guard's international port security liaison officers (IPSLOs) live overseas and regularly travel to engage U.S. maritime trading partners. IPSLOs assess port security, provide capacity-building, and improve the global Marine Transportation System. You can learn more about the IPS mission in the previous section of this issue of Proceedings.

Since IPSLOs live in a constant state of trip planning, we wanted to share our best practices to help those traveling for work or pleasure. We'll skip the BuzzFeed advice—but yes, you should bring a power adapter, toothbrush, and travel pillow—and share some items we believe will help you on your journey.

## Preparation

Hope is not a strategy. Proper research and preparation will make your time on the road much easier.

- 1 Do your research from reputable sources. Bus schedules, taxis sites, Google Maps, and other internet sources can give you an idea of how long a journey will take. Yes, your good friend did the trip once before and it took an hour, but that is only one data point. If you ask a taxi driver for a good restaurant, you will get a restaurant that a taxi driver eats at. Know where your advice comes from—like us, trusted IPSLOs. Today, everyone and anyone can make their own YouTube channel.
- 2 Review every step of your route. Know where to expect security and border control procedures. There are no border controls within the Schengen Area across most of Europe, so expect to clear customs when you first enter the zone. Similarly, expect to clear customs at the first airport when entering the United States. You will rarely need to go through passport control at a foreign layover unless you need to enter that country to switch terminals or if you are spending the night on a layover. Some other airport advice:
  - Know the airport's reputation. For instance, Frankfurt Airport is huge, and customs lines can be long. Expect security screening when arriving

into Istanbul Airport unless you are traveling from the European Union.

- Airports are not the same worldwide. Some are nice, some are not. Many do not make gate announcements like in the United States. Others have additional security checks when entering the property—before passport control—at the boarding gate, or even on the jet bridge.
  - Know which airport you have selected, especially when using a discount carrier. Brussels-Charleroi is practically in France. London Stansted is north of London; Heathrow is to the west. Istanbul has three large airports.
- 3 Check alternate airports, times, and modes of travel. For instance, if you are traveling between the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe, you have the option of ferries, trains, and discount air carriers. Do you really need to rent a car in Europe? Most tourist locations have either mass transit or charter routes available.
  - 4 Know your visa and entry requirements. The best resource when traveling on official government business is [Travel.State.gov](https://www.travel.state.gov). Coasties and civilian employees can use a workstation to see what is



Skathi | iStock/Getty Images

required for official travel by clicking the “Special Issuance Agency” tab. This is normally more accurate than the Foreign Clearance Guide.

- Download offline maps. You are in a strange place. You do not want to seek out cafes to get on a public Wi-Fi connection. Have your maps preloaded with pins of the sights you want to see, safe havens, your hotel, etc. Even with good cellphone reception, sometimes maps will not load when you need them most.
- Enroll in the Department of State’s STEP program. You can also get email alerts from the U.K.’s foreign travel advice website. Follow the news before the trip and monitor it while you are traveling.

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## The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, or STEP, is a free service that allows U.S. citizens and nationals traveling and living abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

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### In Transit

- Use the local tourist industry to your advantage. The American dollar still goes a long way and hospitality services are far more accessible abroad. Hiring a car service, a translator, a tour guide, or other assistance is common and easy. Want to see the Cave Church in Cairo but afraid you will not be able to get an Uber to trek through the trash-sorting “Garbage City” district to pick you up? Pay the driver to stay.
- In U.S. airports, check-in counters are almost always open. Internationally, the check-in counter may not be open (or even assigned). European discount carriers usually open two hours prior to departure and may not have a permanent check-in counter. Regardless, show up three hours in advance for international flights. Waiting in the lounge is better than stressing about the length of the security line.
- Pack with security screening in mind. Leave your liquids and bring bar soap, travel wipes, or bar shampoo/conditioner. Have slip-on shoes. Leave excessive electronics at home.
- When flying, bring compression leg sleeves or socks for long flights to help blood circulation and avoid blood clots building up over time.

### Food, Beverage, & Medicine

- So, you decided to drink the water. What could go wrong? Ice cubes, washed veggies, ill-prepared food, and more can all result in foodborne illness.

Consider using filtered or boiled water for brushing your teeth. While single-use plastics are terrible for the environment, bottled water is common abroad and safer.

- 2 Try local cuisines. Just because it looks different doesn’t mean it doesn’t taste great. Did you come all this way to eat food you can eat at home? Probably not. However, look around to see if the restaurant is clean. If in doubt, fried foods may be the safest bet. Unwashed veggies or “catch of the week” fish can lead to illness.
- 3 Bring anti-diarrheal meds. Maybe that restaurant wasn’t clean after all. It happens. Be prepared with medication for upset stomachs. If you start taking over-the-counter meds, tell your travel companions so they can look out for you and be aware if they also develop symptoms. Fortunately, food poisoning is more fun with friends.
- 4 Restaurant culture may be different. That waiter is not rude. In Europe, they get paid a living wage and work at a modest pace. Simple eye-contact and a wave is enough to get their attention. Yes, it takes longer, but enjoy the atmosphere. The waiter doesn’t have the pressure to increase throughput to maximize their tips.
- 5 Taking malaria pills with food and/or at night may help to avoid a queasy stomach during work hours. However, as many of us have found, they may live up your dreams if taken at night. Regardless, you should always take the medications as prescribed.

### Money

- 1 Haggling is common in many countries. Don’t compare the item to what you’d pay in the United States. If you agree to the first price offered, you are often paying an exorbitant price. Have fun bargaining.
- 2 The United States’ tipping culture is not replicated abroad. In Europe, a euro or two is normal. In other places, 10% is generous. Some places do not tip at all, in fact, overtipping is rude in some cultures. Do your research or you’ll be Googling this question while waiting for the check to arrive.
- 3 Get a credit card with travel rewards. You will not regret having access to airport lounges during those long layovers nor the ability to pay for stuff if your government travel card fails you. Different cards have different perks, such as rideshare credits, airline credits, gold status on hotels, lounge access, and more.
- 4 If you have extra local currency at the end of your trip, instead of exchanging it at the airport at a terrible exchange rate, pay down your hotel bill at check-out with the local currency before using your card.

## Clothing

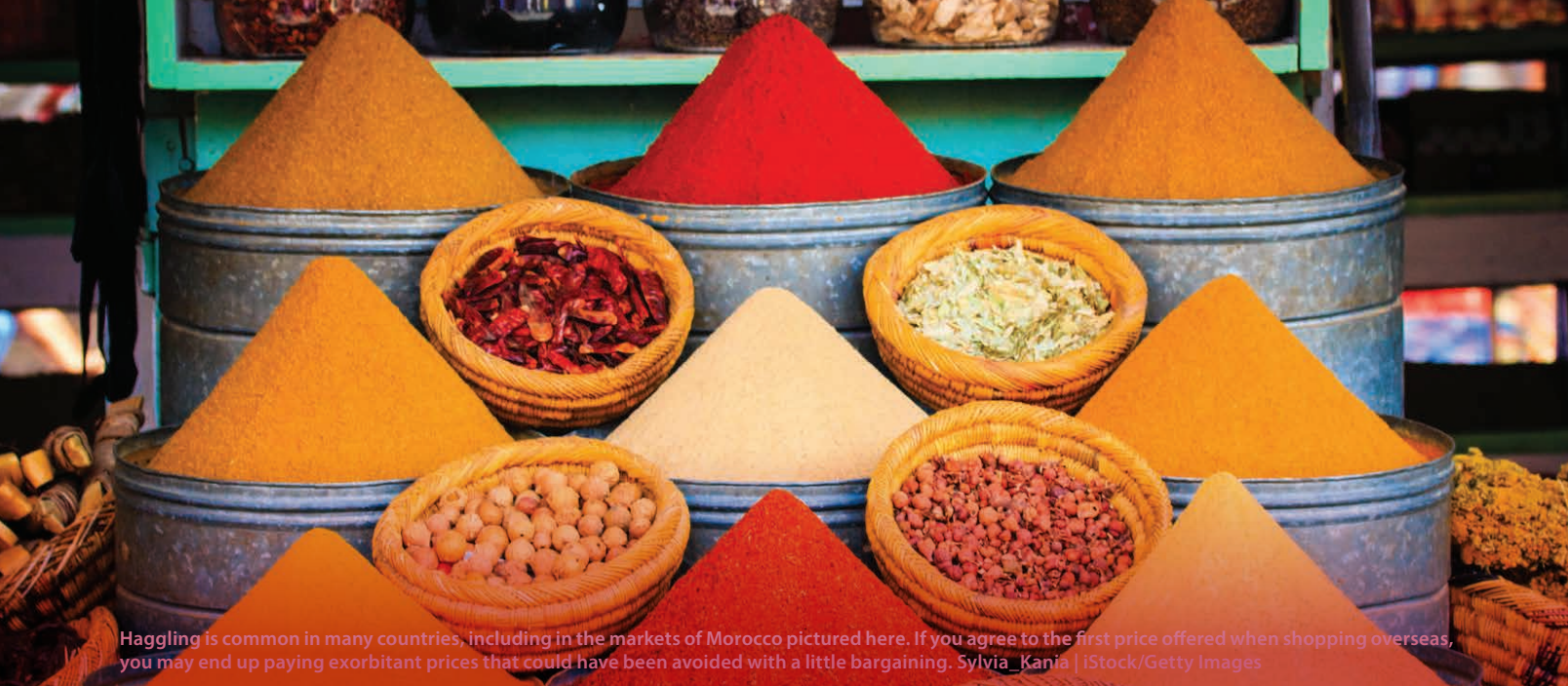
- 1 Tourist resorts are different than the rest of the country. Everyone knows you are a tourist and you have a wide latitude for what is acceptable. If you are leaving the tourist areas, you should observe local norms. This may include covering your legs—even in the summer heat of the Middle East—or wearing long sleeves. Dress codes are even stricter if visiting religious sites, however tourist venues often have coverings available.
- 2 Don't try to dress like a local. Sure, everyone you meet is wearing a thobe or djellaba. You can rock it too, right? You'll find button-down or polo shirts and slacks are universal. You do not need to dress like a park ranger to go on a safari—but hey, go for it if it gets you Instagram followers. A collared shirt and nice jeans are acceptable in most of the world. Tank tops, shorts, flip-flops, may not be acceptable outside your resort. Dressing “tacticool” is out of place everywhere besides the rifle range.
- 3 Pack a change of clothes and toiletries in your carry-on in preparation for the possibility of lost luggage. Otherwise, you may find yourself with what's available at a local market: skinny leg/high water slacks, exotic shirts, and a wedgie.
- 4 On the airplane, wear a shirt with chest pockets or have a small bag for the seatback pocket. You can easily reach your earbuds, phone, or pen without getting up. It's also a place to put your passport without losing it.

## Safety & Security

- 1 Trust your gut. If you feel like something is not right, find a way to remove yourself from the situation.
- 2 Bring a doorstop for your hotel room. The installed lock may be flimsy or perhaps you have an uneasy feeling about someone you saw in the lobby. Some travel doorstops are equipped with an audible alarm.
- 3 Use a virtual private network, or VPN, when using unfamiliar Wi-Fi connections. It is the least you can do to keep your information safe.
- 4 Travel only with items you are willing to lose. Your luggage may be lost, or you may forget something in the hotel. Similarly, back up your digital devices so you do not lose pictures from your past several trips.
- 5 Your rights are different outside the United States. The U.S. Embassy is not going to intervene if you've been arrested abroad. However, they will advocate for your rights under the country's laws. When in a foreign country, the laws and your rights are different. Free speech may not exist. Criticizing a government may land you in prison. Avoid trouble by reading the room and following local norms.
- 6 Avoid work chat outside of the office. If traveling with others, the default conversation seems to be about work. Find something different to talk about since you never know who is listening. While you may not understand the local language, English is widely understood.




Use a VPN to stay secure on public Wi-Fi networks and protect your personal data and browsing activity from prying eyes. Galeanu Mihai | iStock/Getty Images



Haggling is common in many countries, including in the markets of Morocco pictured here. If you agree to the first price offered when shopping overseas, you may end up paying exorbitant prices that could have been avoided with a little bargaining. Sylvia Kania | iStock/Getty Images

## Culture

- 1 Be prepared to learn new and different ways of doing things. In some countries, you cannot go out on a pleasure boat without first consulting the government. In some places they eat pizza with a fork and a knife. Crazy, right? As you travel, you will see different ways of doing things. It is not normal to you, but it is normal for them.
- 2 People live in your destination. Yes, that picture you took for Instagram feels exotic, but there is a local population living their day-to-day lives. They grocery shop, attend school, and go to work. Respect their livelihoods and community.
- 3 Do not take pictures of people. You would not like it if someone drove around your neighborhood and took pictures of you and your living conditions. People are going about their lives, and many do not want their picture taken. Treat others the way you want to be treated. This includes being mindful of where you point your camera.
- 4 Jumping into business may not be the norm. Sometimes it is customary to make small talk before conducting business.
- 5 Learn the difference between high- and low-context cultures. In a low-context culture, you will be told if your child is misbehaving on the subway. In a high-context culture, you will be told a story about how loud the subways have become. The message is the same, but delivery styles are very different. “Perhaps tomorrow” might be a near-promise or a polite way to say “no.”
- 6 Do not compare everything to the United States. Yes, it is what you know, and you are being faced with differences. It may be offensive to repeatedly tell your hosts “In America, we...”
- 7 Learn a few phrases: hello, thank you, please. Attempting the smallest pleasantries goes a long way in building rapport.
- 8 The news media makes every place sound scary. If you take the same news story—person stabbed, ferry capsizes, etc.—and put it in an American city, would you take different precautions on your trip? The entire Middle East is not at war as of this writing. You’ll find good and bad everywhere. For every sky-is-falling news story, there are countless other people living their lives, going to school, playing soccer, and having seemingly enjoyable days.

These tips are a collection of advice from Coast Guard Activities Europe IPSLOs, and we hope they will help others who choose to venture beyond the United States. Collectively, we have been fortunate to live abroad and travel both as private U.S. citizens and official representatives of our government. While our focus has been Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, we hope this advice is useful to others since the world needs more Coast Guard expertise everywhere. Our skills are in high demand and the best way to make friends is to show up to the party. Safe travels! 

### About the authors:

*International Port Division liaison officer assignments are specialty-neutral. The current bullpen is comprised of lieutenant commanders with specialties in aviation, operations afloat, response, prevention, intelligence, and naval engineering. International port security liaison officers are typically on temporary duty—away from their assigned duty station—for 90-120 days per year.*

*CDR James Cepa, International Port Security department head, compiled these tips on behalf of his team.*

# The Olmsted Scholar Program

A global Coast Guard needs global perspectives

by CDR KEITH ROBINSON  
*Chief*  
*Enforcement Division*  
*Sector Los Angeles—Long Beach*  
*U.S. Coast Guard*

LCDR RORY YODER  
*Chief*  
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*Office of Aeronautical Engineering*  
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LCDR MELISSA MARTINELLI  
*Program Reviewer*  
*Office of Budget and Programs*  
*U.S. Coast Guard*

*By strengthening our partners and allies, we strengthen our own Nation's standing in a way that has enduring benefits for the American people ... We are a global Coast Guard. This is our value to the Nation.*

—Commandant of the Coast Guard Admiral Linda L. Fagan, 2023 State of the Coast Guard Address

The words “coast” and “homeland,” found in our service’s name and our department’s title, imply an inward domestic focus. However, it is more evident than ever that Coast Guard missions are not accomplished just from within our territorial sea that stretches 12 nautical miles from our shores. Thus in 2017, the Coast Guard joined its sister services in participating in the Olmsted Scholar Program, which gives junior officers opportunities to study abroad and fully immerse themselves in other cultures.

## The Olmsted Scholar Program

Started in 1959 by Army GEN George Olmsted, the program is a three-year postgraduate program in which junior military officers spend one year learning a foreign language followed by two years of study at a foreign university. Although it is a graduate school program, any Olmsted scholar will tell you that it is really a leadership development program. The real learning comes from surviving in a new country with minimal support and just enough language training to get started.

## Added Value to the Service

There is no single answer to what value this immersion program provides the Coast Guard. Every experience is different. Coast Guard scholars have studied in Argentina, China, Italy, Croatia, Norway, and Chile. And each scholar returns with different lessons and insights



Coast Guard CDR Keith Robinson and his family visited the town of Bellagio in Italy’s Lombardy region in June 2022. As part of the Olmsted Scholar Program’s class of 2022, CDR Robinson studied in Florence, Italy. Photo courtesy of CDR Keith Robinson



Coast Guard CDR Keith Robinson and LCDR Rory Yoder and their families meet in Zagreb, Croatia, in front of St. Mark's Church on April 16, 2022. CDR Robinson was a class of 2020 Olmsted scholar who studied in Florence, Italy. LCDR Yoder was a class of 2021 Olmsted scholar studying in Zagreb, Croatia. Photo courtesy of CDR Keith Robinson

they will carry throughout their careers. Upon completion, many scholars return to operational or high-profile assignments and they also join an incredible network of Olmsted scholars representing the top-caliber of officers from the other services. The lasting camaraderie built among these officers increases opportunities for joint service engagements.

### The Value of Experience

The value, however, extends beyond the education and interservice network. The true value lies in the scholars' experiences. Through cultural immersion and extensive travel funded by the Olmsted Foundation, scholars gain new perspectives on global challenges. Being the outsider in a community that sees the world in a completely different way forces scholars to grapple with their biases and confront their own preconceived notions. In this struggle, tremendous growth occurs, and the scholar develops a patient persistence to adapt, reconsider, question, and think critically. This learning is amplified because the scholar lacks the comfort of foundational things such as language and culture that structure their lives.

The Olmsted Scholar Program takes officers with track records of success and puts them into situations where failure is inevitable and an essential part of the learning process. The opportunity to fail without severe operational consequences allows scholars to reap the benefits of the resulting character development without risks to their career. But that failure also forces them to develop a self-propelled resourcefulness and quickly expand their situational and cultural awareness, which is critical to engaging with others that have a fundamentally different perspective.

Scholars gain the invaluable experience of balancing the positive representation of the United States with the need to remain open to contradicting ideas, ideologies, and opinions. Having studied in places where others



Coast Guard LCDR Rory Yoder center poses with Croatian aviation cadets at the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Aeronautics after presenting on Coast Guard aviation on October 26, 2022. As an Olmsted scholar, he attended the University of Zagreb as part of the class of 2021. Photo courtesy of LCDR Rory Yoder

do not view the United States as the center of the universe, officers return to the Coast Guard with a greater understanding of where our country fits into the global environment, along with an eagerness to apply their newfound perspective.

### The Aggregate

In a world in which the rule of law and respect for international norms is under stress, the Coast Guard stands out as a beacon of maritime governance. As the Coast Guard models professional maritime behavior, counters nefarious activity on the high seas, and helps partner nations strengthen institutions to police their own waters, the demand for the service has never been higher.

Across the globe, nations recognize the inherent value of a coast guard, as evidenced by the increasing frequency with which the Commandant and service leaders meet with foreign leaders and expand our partnerships.





These key leader engagements trickle down to the operational and tactical levels where Coast Guard units train with partner forces and individual officers strengthen bilateral ties through people-to-people engagements.

The United States increasingly relies on the Coast Guard to meet strategic objectives both at home and abroad. The Coast Guard will forever need leaders with a domestic focus. But as the United States becomes increasingly diverse and continues to pivot to the future as a global Coast Guard, the service also needs leaders who understand the value of different cultures and recognize how the Coast Guard fits into the international picture. While the service marches into changing times, the true value of the Olmsted Scholar Program is that it produces officers with a keen understanding of different cultures and the ability to engage partners in new ways. These officers can help navigate a future where the world's premiere Coast Guard operates in a global context. //

#### About the authors

*CDR Keith Robinson was selected to the Olmsted Scholar Class of 2020 and studied at the Università degli Studi di Firenze in Florence, Italy. He is a response officer, and his previous assignments include Coast Guard cutters Fir, Maui, and Narwhal. He has also served with the Coast Guard Office of Congressional Affairs and Sector Los Angeles—Long Beach.*

*LCDR Mike Moysowicz was selected to the Olmsted Scholar Class of 2019 and studied international relations in Chengdu, China. He is a career cutterman who is currently serving as the operations officer aboard Coast Guard Cutter James.*

*LCDR Rory Yoder was selected to the Olmsted Scholar Class of 2021 and studied at the University of Zagreb in Croatia. He is an aeronautical engineering officer and career fixed-wing aviator who is currently serving at Coast Guard headquarters in Washington.*

*LCDR Melissa Martinelli was selected to the Olmsted Scholar Class of 2018 and studied international relations in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her other Coast Guard assignments include cutters Waesche, Monomoy, and Kingfisher. She has also served with the White House Situation Room and Sector San Francisco.*

# The Unique Impact of Overseas Life on Military Families

by LT J.G. BRENNAN J. SUFFERN  
*Intelligence Officer*  
*District 8*  
*U.S. Coast Guard*

Coast Guardsmen work all over the globe, engaging with counterparts from partner nations. These assignments also provide a unique chance for military families to encounter and explore distinct cultures, perspectives, and worldviews, which creates opportunities for them to establish a solid foundation for intellectual and moral growth.

In today's interconnected world, intercultural competence is vital to national growth. The United States needs a citizenry that understands, respects, and cooperates with diverse communities. The best way to learn about the world is to experience it, and many military children who live overseas will begin their development into well-rounded citizens who are often drawn to service.

## A Unique Challenge

Life overseas provides an environment that compels military children to adapt to and grow. Childhood can be stressful without the added burden of military family life. Stress, however, should not be avoided. Children must experience stress to be able to tackle the issues that are inevitable with life.

Michigan State University researchers advise parents to introduce their children to stress in small doses to teach them healthy ways to cope with challenges. Otherwise, “[children] miss out on opportunities to learn how to effectively deal with stressors.”<sup>1</sup>

Military families often deal with frequent moves from one duty station to another, so many military children often leave communities and friends behind time and time again. Life overseas intensifies this, as dependents travel to unfamiliar surroundings

where their new peers may think, act, and speak in different ways than they are used to. However, the stress from this environment will make them stronger people.

Strength comes from resilience to challenges that arise. The Mayo Clinic, an American medical research center, argues that resilience—the ability to cope with tough events—can often be drawn from previous experiences and “troubles in the past” to overcome obstacles in a healthy way.<sup>2</sup> Military children who live overseas may cultivate a unique resilience they would not have developed in the United States.

Abigail Adams advocated this to her son John Quincy, a future president, when he traveled to France with his father during the American Revolution. “The habits of a



Coast Guard members and civilians dip their hands into a blessing bowl at the newly opened Army Hawaii Family Housing Red Hill community on Oahu in November 2008. Though Hawaii is a U.S. state, it offers new cultural experiences for servicemembers and their families stationed there. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Angela Henderson

vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties,”<sup>3</sup> she said. Military families form similar mental calluses when they embark, toil, and persevere in overseas assignments. From this practical education, they learn to deal with the inevitable challenges of adulthood in a more interconnected world.

People who must confront similar stresses—such as those living in overseas military communities—tend to bond and withstand the challenges together. Dr. Tracy Brower, a sociologist specializing in work-life happiness, argues that people can overcome shared issues by “seeking shared experiences, banding together ... and focusing on the learning that can result from challenges.”<sup>4</sup>

Military family members who live overseas will often experience a similar bond with their cohorts. Overseas units host a cadre of Coast Guard men and women whose families form a community within their new home. Children empathize with each other on shared dislocations, engage in activities and programs together, and help incoming military families integrate. With the

expansion of social media, these relationships can last long after a move away from the overseas unit and continue to strengthen dependents as they take on new challenges. Overseas life presents not only novel challenges, but also the vital means to overcome them.

### A Practical Education

A life overseas offers children a more practical and lasting education than would any course or program in a classroom. Living in a foreign country, they encounter unique cultures and different perspectives firsthand. This phenomenon exists at all levels of personal development. A qualitative study from the United Kingdom found that doctors-in-training who spent time overseas returned with “a greater sense of perspective ... [and] improved clinical skills.”<sup>5</sup> Children who live overseas will learn how to function in an unfamiliar location that has subtle—or not-so-subtle—differences compared to the hometowns they are familiar with.

One of the most beneficial skills a child can learn overseas is a second language. Children who learn more than one language hone their cerebral processes, according to Dr. Barbara Lust, professor emeritus of cognitive science at Cornell University. She found that bilingualism bestows “cognitive advantages ... [that] can contribute to a child’s academic success.”<sup>6</sup>

When a child learns a new language, they exercise their minds. From the Cornell study, Dr. Sujin Yang observed that children who learn a language in an immersive setting “show an overall success rate of grammatical knowledge similar to English monolinguals.”<sup>7</sup> Bilingual parents can create an immersive setting at home that encourages bilingualism in their children. Servicemembers who do not speak more than one language, or bilingual ones who want to enhance the immersion for their children, can expose them to overseas life, the ultimate immersive setting.

The Coast Guard’s overseas presence also functions as an anchor for a family’s cultural exposure. For example, U.S. Coast Guard Activities Europe operates from Brunssum, Netherlands. Located within 30 minutes of the Belgian and German borders, family members have numerous opportunities to explore and appreciate the landscapes and cultures of many different countries. When a person lives overseas, their interactions with local communities enhance their perspective and fuel a worldly education.

Dr. Frans Doppen from Ohio University conducted a study on teachers who experienced this cultural exchange. Upon reflection, the participants claimed that their awareness of non-American cultures grew considerably. They popped their “U.S. bubble” and exchanged viewpoints on assorted topics.<sup>8</sup> The study also found that a considerable part of the exchange



Military children garner great benefits from living abroad, including being exposed to different cultures and potentially learning a second language, while enjoying a broader worldview. Additionally, it can also lead them to pursue a life of service. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Richard B. Uranga



Air Force SSgt Ryann Holzapfel, left, and her husband, Air Force SSgt Brendan Miller, stand on the Yokota flight line with their six-month-old son at Yokota Air Base, Japan, on April 26, 2021. Air Force photo by SSgt Kyle Johnson

centered on dissolving stereotypes from both parties.<sup>9</sup> Dependents receive the same clarity. As an American overseas, they interact with people from diverse backgrounds and these experiences often make dependents more open-minded and thoughtful than those who have never lived overseas, key traits for a fruitful and successful life.

### **A Launchpad for Service**

International exposure not only educates military children on foreign cultures and ideas, but also reshapes their American identities. Life abroad tends to nurture a clearer sense of self. A group of researchers from Rice University's Jones Graduate School of Business, University of North Carolina's School of Business, MIT Business School, and Columbia University found that people who lived abroad for at least three months reported greater self-clarity and confidence than those with no experiences overseas.<sup>10</sup> The research group argued that those who lived abroad conducted more "self-discerning reflections," comparing their lives and

values to those of local residents.<sup>11</sup>

Military families who live overseas compare their backgrounds and values to their counterparts, prompting a self-reflection of their American identity. This may prompt a desire to continue their family's legacy and serve the nation.

Air Force SSgt Brian Miller did just that. Growing up around the world, Miller experienced firsthand the dynamic nature of military life.<sup>12</sup> His spouse, SSgt Ryann Holzapfel, wrote a story detailing how their resilience, borne from their military childhoods, helped them serve overseas and raise their son in Japan.<sup>13</sup> Inspired by their parents' military service, the Miller family traveled the same path. The pair now raise their son in an environment where he, too, may be inspired to serve. As seen in this family's story, servicemembers who want to encourage their children to pursue a life of service could start by seeking to be assigned to overseas stations with their families.

### **Addressing the Negatives**

Military families should recognize the strain that occurs

from moving overseas. Dependents may suffer, whether long or short, a period of loneliness from a change in duty station. Their social lives and routines must be rebuilt. A move overseas can exacerbate these problems. In 1981, a child psychiatry group studied the effects of overseas transfers on adolescents, who reported “less positive self-concepts, greater insecurity about the future, [and] less comfort and reliance on the support of interpersonal relationships.”<sup>14</sup> The results, while disheartening, come with little surprise. People, especially children, may tend to develop such traits when experiencing continual moves and transfers. The military recognized this and built support networks to reduce the burden and stress to military families overseas. For example, Military OneSource, which works with the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation libraries to offer language courses to military children, also posted a list of resources and programs that servicemembers can use to integrate into overseas communities.<sup>15</sup> Recent strides in online videoconferencing technology and social media help military families stay connected with their family

and friends. They may still ache from moves, but the support programs available can ease the stress of a move overseas.

### Why it Matters

Servicemembers considering an overseas assignment should recognize the excellent opportunity to expose their dependents to new cultures and mold them into thoughtful citizens with a passion for service. America’s military forces demand such candidates in the midst of a recruiting crisis. For one, the Coast Guard Officer Corps suffers at the mid-grade level, with considerable gaps in lieutenant and lieutenant commander operational tours.<sup>16</sup> The organization also falters with enlisted billets, where a workforce shortage of nearly 4,000 prompted a massive reduction in service function.<sup>17</sup> The other branches of the U.S. Armed Forces share this struggle, a fact that prompted the Army to announce an expansion of recruiting efforts after continual failures to meet recruiting goals.<sup>18</sup>

The nation needs willing candidates to bolster the military services and strengthen America’s foreign



First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, right, and Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona visit with students at Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, on April 13, 2022. The students from Whiteman Elementary were surprised by Biden, who announced they won the Military Child Education Coalition Student 2 Student Elite Team of the Year Competition. Air Force photo by SSgt Sadie Colbert



Coast Guard families and friends wait for their loved ones during a welcome home ceremony for the Coast Guard cutter *Midgett* in Honolulu in 2008. Every military move provides military children opportunities to build resilience. When those opportunities are overseas, curiosity about the world and a greater sense of perspective can grow, as well. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Tara Molle

presence. Exposure to overseas assignments and military life may inspire children to serve. Even if this does not occur, the lessons and experiences from a life overseas often turn them into thoughtful, resilient people. Highlighting the National Month of the Military Child, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, noted that military children possess an “unparalleled resilience and grit.”<sup>19</sup> Her words further illustrate the benefits of overseas life. Dependents deal with the discomfort of a strange, new world and cultivate wonderful experiences. It is a fitting education for an increasingly interdependent world.

### From the Author

As a child, I spent six years in Rotterdam, Netherlands, with my mother and younger brother. My father, a Coast Guardsman, worked at U.S. Coast Guard Activities Europe. Without a doubt, my encounters with the intricacy and beauty of foreign nations, cultures, and perspectives drove my interests in history, government, and military service. Life abroad came with its challenges, including a hectic family life. Despite the struggles, my time overseas as a dependent proved quite fruitful. The classes I took abroad, especially foreign languages and world history, made me ponder various issues through a well-rounded lens. My experiences prompted me to venture abroad again for a senior capstone project and an international law competition while studying at the

U.S. Coast Guard Academy.<sup>20</sup> My younger brother pursues a similar career in the military. He currently studies at Louisiana State University and participates in the college’s Air Force Reserve Officer’s Training Corps and will earn his commission in 2025. I heartily recommend fellow servicemembers pursue an international assignment when possible, and I believe the experience would benefit their families who join them abroad. ▀

### About the Author:

*LT j.g. Brennan J. Suffern is an intelligence officer stationed in New Orleans, at District 8 DRI. He previously served on Coast Guard cutter James as a watch officer and the combat information center officer. He conducted counter-narcotics, migrant interdiction, and fisheries enforcement operations while on board. Through his experiences as a dependent and an active-duty servicemember, Suffern has visited countries in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Europe, interacting with people and navies from around the world.*

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# Historical Snapshot

## Eddie Hernandez and smallboat operations in Vietnam

by WILLIAM H. THIESEN, PH.D.

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**F**ast-response cutter namesake Heriberto Segovia Hernandez volunteered for duty in Vietnam in 1968. Known as “Eddie” by his friends and shipmates, he was assigned to the 82-foot Coast Guard patrol boat *Point Cypress*, which served along the Cau Mau Peninsula on the southernmost tip of South Vietnam.

*Point Cypress* deployed regularly to interdict arms smuggling, support troop movements, provide fire support against enemy positions, and gather intelligence. To gather intelligence, *Point Cypress* sent its smallboat, a 14-foot, fiberglass Boston Whaler outboard motorboat, on reconnaissance missions up Vietnam’s shallow inland waterways. Eddie served regularly on these hazardous missions and, when in port, he visited other 82-footers to get advice and discuss best practices with more experienced smallboat patrol veterans. During smallboat operations, Eddie rode point in the bow of the whaler, holding the M60 machine gun with bandoliers of extra M60 rounds draped over his chest like Mexican revolutionary General Pancho Villa. A well-worn flak vest and World War II-vintage battle helmet provided his only protection from automatic weapons fire or rocket propelled grenades.



The 82-foot patrol boat *Point Cypress* with its camouflage paint scheme is seen during the Vietnam War. Coast Guard photo

On Saturday, October 5, 1968, Eddie participated in a reconnaissance mission on the Ca Mau Peninsula when his smallboat came under heavy enemy fire, but *Point Cypress* and another island-class patrol boat (WPB) managed to destroy enemy river barriers, fortified structures, bunkers, and armed sampans before withdrawing. On November 9 he deployed in the smallboat on a gunfire damage assessment mission near Hon Da Bac Island, on the west side of the Ca Mau Peninsula, to assess a fire support mission just completed by a U.S. patrol vessel. During this mission, Hernandez’s smallboat located and destroyed four enemy sampans, or traditional Chinese boats.

SEALORDS—Southeast Asia, Ocean, River and Delta Strategy—in late 1968, Hernandez frequently volunteered for reconnaissance missions into rivers and canals in enemy territory—many of them never penetrated by friendly forces. These missions helped to determine whether the waterways could be navigated by U.S. patrol craft, such as Coast Guard WPBs, or the Navy’s newly introduced shallow-draft Swift Boats and PBRs.

In the first days of December 1968, *Point Cypress* conducted daily smallboat operations and gunfire support missions, destroying three enemy bunkers, and damaging three more. On Wednesday, December 4, the cutter rendezvoused with a Royal Thai Navy gunboat to bring aboard CDR Charles Blaha, deputy commander for Coast Guard operations in Vietnam. Blaha visited the WPB to familiarize himself with Division 11 cutter operations and evaluate the effectiveness of smallboat missions. Blaha and cutter commander LT. j.g. Jonathan Collom planned to deploy Blaha and the whaler the next day to determine the depth of the Rach Nang River for Navy Swift Boat operations, and to see whether the Rach Tac Buo River intersected the Rach Nang somewhere upstream. *Point Cypress*’s executive officer, LT. j.g. Gordon Gillies, would serve as coxswain and Hernandez volunteered to ride point in the bow.

According to after-action reports, Hernandez embarked the whaler with the two officers at approximately 2:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 5. Hernandez brought the M60, while the others brought M16s and an M79 grenade launcher with spare rounds. The smallboat proceeded first to the mouth of the Rach Nang River, then over to the mouth of the nearby Rach Tac Buo. The smallboat probed the shores of the Rach Tac Buo for a connecting tributary with the Rach Nang.

The brief survey up the Rach Tac Buo indicated there was no navigable connection with the Rach Nang, so Gillies steered the whaler back to the mouth of the Rach Nang. The smallboat crew then radioed *Point Cypress* for further instructions. They received orders to proceed cautiously up the Rach Nang to find the location

of hooches—American slang for village huts—bunkers, and fortified positions for future fire support missions. In addition, the smallboat received orders to destroy the nearest hooches using the M79 grenade launcher and highly flammable night illumination rounds. The smallboat proceeded with the mission and closed to within 30 yards of the structures on shore.

As the smallboat approached the hooches, the crew noticed an armed Viet Cong guerilla entering a shoreside bunker. Blaha fired a volley at the bunker with his M16 and the Viet Cong fighter returned fire. As soon as he heard the gunfire, Gillies gunned the engine and the unprotected whaler motored away from shore, but it was too late to dodge the hostile fire. With only their flak vests to protect them against the enemy rounds, each



Heriberto "Eddie" Segovia Hernandez, shown here in an undated photo taken in Vietnam, posthumously received the Purple Heart Medal and the Bronze Star with "V" device. Coast Guard photo





The crew of the Coast Guard cutter *Heriberto Hernandez* salute for a photo off the coast of Key West, Florida, on September 10, 2015. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Mark Barney

man suffered severe bullet wounds. Hernandez was hit near the chest and slumped into the bow of the whaler, while the officers received gunshot wounds to the head, back, shoulders, arms, and legs.


Blaha radioed *Point Cypress* that they had been shot up and were motoring toward the mouth of the Rach Nang. As they proceeded toward the river's mouth, the whaler received more incoming fire from shore. Blaha did his best to suppress it with bursts from his M16, but the enemy fire held no tracer rounds, so he failed to pinpoint the enemy positions on shore. As they approached the rendezvous point with *Point Cypress*, Blaha and Gillies grew faint from blood loss and Hernandez remained slumped in the bow, alive but groaning in pain from his wounds.

After *Point Cypress* had received the message from Blaha, Collom had sounded general quarters and sped the WPB toward a rendezvous point at the mouth of the river. Once on scene, the 82-footer brought on board the smallboat and wounded men. Next, Collom radioed a request for a medevac from the Navy's floating support base onboard the anchored landing ship, *USS Washoe County*. During the half-hour transit to the LST (landing ship, tank), *Point Cypress's* crew did their best to stabilize the wounded in preparation for the helicopter medevac from the *Washoe County* to a local field hospital. When Hernandez was brought on board *Point Cypress*, he was still conscious, but the bullet that struck him passed through his upper torso caused heavy internal bleeding. His wounds proved too grave to treat with the limited medical supplies on board *Point Cypress* and he died just as the WPB approached the *Washoe County* to take on

mooring lines.

Eddie's body was flown back to Travis Air Force Base in California and then returned with a Coast Guard escort to his family in San Antonio. On Saturday, December 14, 1968, he was interred at San Fernando Cemetery with full military honors. Hernandez posthumously received the Purple Heart Medal and Bronze Star Medal with "V" device for valor.

His Bronze Star citation read, "Fireman Hernandez's professional skill, courage under enemy fire, and devotion to duty reflected great credit upon himself, and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

In addition, the Coast Guard later named the fast-response cutter *Heriberto Hernandez* in his honor. He was a member of the long blue line and the first Hispanic American cutter namesake recognized for Coast Guard combat service. 

#### **Author the author:**

*William H. Thiesen, Ph.D., is the Atlantic area historian for the Coast Guard. He earned an M.A. from East Carolina University's program in maritime history, and a Ph.D. in the history of technology from the University of Delaware's Hagley Program. His books include Industrializing American Shipbuilding: The Transformation of Ship Design and Construction, 1820–1920, and Cruise of the Dashing Wave: Rounding Cape Horn in 1860. His articles appear frequently in naval, maritime, and Coast Guard publications and the online history series, The Long Blue Line, featured weekly on the My Coast Guard website. The Long Blue Line blog series has published Coast Guard history essays for over 15 years. To access hundreds of these service stories, visit the [www.history.uscg.mil/Research/THE-LONG-BLUE-LINE](http://www.history.uscg.mil/Research/THE-LONG-BLUE-LINE).*

# Chemical of the Quarter

## Carbon dioxide: A tricky triple point

by CDR DAN VALEZ  
*Hazardous Materials Division  
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Chances are if you are reading this article, you are making carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide is an endpoint for traditional combustion engines—true of nearly all maritime shipping today, including LNG engines—and aerobic metabolic processes from cows to humans. Carbon dioxide has been extensively studied for decades due to its ability to block the heat radiation escaping from the Earth. In other words, it is a leading greenhouse gas.

In comparison, methane is a vastly more potent greenhouse gas due to its greater heat trapping potential, but carbon dioxide persists in the atmosphere several orders of magnitude longer than methane. Methane is also used as a fuel source, or a feed stock, to generate other chemical compounds, like hydrogen, while carbon dioxide—at a rate of billions of tons per year—is almost exclusively a waste product from industrial or transportation power sources.

Given the likely continued production of carbon dioxide comparable to today's rates for at least the near to medium term, there has been increasing interest in the possibility of carbon capture technologies to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Broadly speaking, this approach can be divided into techniques that capture carbon directly from emission sources—the stack—or from the atmosphere. Setting aside some of the challenges related to the net energy balance of such systems—not producing more carbon to remove it—there is now a real need for the Coast Guard to evaluate the maritime transportation of captured carbon dioxide. In fact, the Office of Design and Engineering Standards, in

conjunction with the Department of Energy, has recently reviewed several grant proposals for transportation of liquified carbon dioxide from collection sources to injection sites, which can include decommissioned petroleum wells.

While the transportation of liquified carbon dioxide is relatively straightforward, and indeed the International Code of the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Liquefied Gases in Bulk, or IGC Code, provides for its carriage, this transport is not without some nuances that are worth mentioning. The issue lies in the triple point of carbon dioxide, which at a very high level is the temperature and pressure for which all three physical states (liquid, solid, gas) of carbon dioxide are possible. And carbon dioxide has a tricky triple point.

If we think of our experience with cold dry ice, solid carbon dioxide, at normal sea-level pressure, when melting, the carbon dioxide does not turn into a liquid and then a gas. At ambient pressure, the solid carbon dioxide transforms directly into a gas—a process known as sublimation. Again, at a very high level, this example is meant to illustrate that it can be difficult to keep carbon dioxide in liquid form, especially for longer sea voyages. Most likely, designers will need to use a combination of pressure and refrigeration to ensure the cargo remains liquid, while simultaneously controlling the boil-off liquid carbon dioxide to a gas. Another recent nuance to carbon dioxide carriage is a proposal before the International Maritime Organization to consider carbon dioxide a toxic substance at levels below asphyxiation given studies which show toxicity at these levels.

Carbon capture has received a lot of attention lately, and it is likely that the Coast Guard will be called on to safely regulate the transport of potentially millions of tons of liquified carbon dioxide for storage/disposal. ■

#### *About the author:*

*CDR Daniel Velez is the chief of the Hazardous Materials Division, Office of Design and Engineering Standards. He holds degrees in chemical, environmental and mechanical engineering, and a juris doctorate.*

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# Nautical Engineering Queries

Prepared by NMC Engineering  
Examination Team



1. An indicator card or pressure-volume diagram shows graphically the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. Compression ratio of the engine
  - B. Volume of engine
  - C. Relationships between pressure and temperature during one stroke of the engine
  - D. Relationships between pressure and volume during one cycle of the engine

---
2. In a compartment that has been completely flooded with water, the greatest pressure will be exerted
  - A. At the vertical center of the bulkhead
  - B. Along the bottom of any bulkhead
  - C. At a point that is one-third from the bottom of the bulkhead
  - D. Along the top of the bulkhead

---
3. Which of the procedures or conditions listed could result in damaging a transistor beyond repair?
  - A. Providing incorrect polarity to the collector circuit
  - B. Providing insufficient voltage to the input circuit
  - C. Installing a transistor whose current rating exceeds the design circuit current
  - D. Applying silicone grease between the heat sink and the transistor mounting

---
4. Allowance for axial expansion of the steam turbine due to temperature changes is provided for by the use of \_\_\_\_\_.
  - A. A deep flexible I beam support
  - B. Rotor position indicators
  - C. Casing flexible joints
  - D. Pivoted-shoe type thrust bearings

1. A. Compression ratio of the engine      Incorrect answer  
B. Volume of engine      Incorrect answer

C. Relationships between pressure and temperature during one stroke of the engine      Incorrect answer

D. Relationships between pressure and volume during one cycle of the engine      **Correct answer.** "The changes in volume and pressure in an engine cylinder can be illustrated by P-V diagrams. Such diagrams are made by devices that measure and record the pressures at various piston positions during a cycle of engine operation."

Reference: NAVEDTRA 14331, Engineman 3, page 2-9.

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2. A. At the vertical center of the bulkhead      Incorrect answer

B. Along the bottom of any bulkhead      **Correct answer.** "Pascal's Law; the liquid resting on the bottom pushes equally downward and outward. At the edge of the bottom the pressures act against the walls of the container, which must be strong enough to resist them ... "

C. At a point that is one-third from the bottom of the bulkhead      Incorrect answer

D. Along the top of the bulkhead      Incorrect answer

Reference: NAVPERS 16193-B, Fluid Power, p. 18-19

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3. A. Providing incorrect polarity to the collector circuit.      **Correct answer.** Transistors, are susceptible to damage by electrical overloads, heat, humidity, and radiation. Damage of this nature often occurs during transistor servicing by applying the incorrect polarity voltage to the collector circuit or excessive voltage to the input circuit.

B. Providing insufficient voltage to the input circuit      Incorrect answer

C. Installing a transistor whose current rating exceeds the design circuit current      Incorrect answer

D. Applying silicone grease between the heat sink and the transistor mounting      Incorrect answer

Reference: NAVEDTRA 14179, NEETS Module 7, Introduction to Solid-State Devices and Power Supplies, p. 2-31

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4. A. A deep flexible I beam support      **Correct answer.** "Pascal's Law; the liquid resting on the bottom pushes equally downward and outward. At the edge of the bottom the pressures act against the walls of the container, which must be strong enough to resist them ..."

B. Rotor position indicators      Incorrect answer

C. Casing flexible joints      Incorrect answer

D. Pivoted-shoe type thrust bearings      Incorrect answer

Reference: NAVEDTRA 14151, Machinist Mate, 3 & 2 (Surface), p. 2-12

# Nautical Deck Queries

Prepared by NMC Engineering  
Examination Team

# Q

uestions

1. **INLAND ONLY** You sight a vessel displaying an alternating red and yellow light. What does this light indicate?
  - A. A vessel in distress
  - B. A vessel engaged in public safety activities
  - C. A law enforcement vessel
  - D. A vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver

---
2. **The term displacement refers to which of the following?**
  - A. The cubic capacity of a vessel
  - B. The deadweight carrying capacity of a vessel
  - C. The number of long tons of water displaced by a vessel
  - D. The gross tonnage of a vessel

---
3. **Your tow includes a loaded chlorine barge. After inspecting the tow, the mate reports a hissing sound coming from the safety valves. Where will you find the information on emergency procedures concerning the uncontrolled release of cargo?**
  - A. Barge's Certificate of Inspection
  - B. Cargo Manifest or loading paper
  - C. Dangerous Cargo Regulations
  - D. Cargo Information Card on the towboat

---
4. **When determining compass error by an azimuth of Polaris, you enter The Nautical Almanac with which information?**
  - A. GHA of Aries
  - B. LHA of Aries
  - C. LHA of Polaris
  - D. GHA of Polaris

1. A. A vessel in distress
- B. A vessel engaged in public safety activities
- C. A law enforcement vessel
- D. A vessel restricted in its ability to maneuver

Incorrect answer

**Correct Answer.** "Vessels engaged in government sanctioned public safety activities, and commercial vessels performing similar functions, may display an alternately flashing red and yellow signal."

Incorrect

Incorrect

Reference: *Inland Rules Annex V-Pilot Rules*

---

2. A. The cubic capacity of a vessel
- B. The deadweight carrying capacity of a vessel
- C. The number of long tons of water displaced by a vessel
- D. The gross tonnage of a vessel

Incorrect answer

Incorrect answer

**Correct Answer.** "Displacement: The weight of water displaced by a floating object. Displacement is equal to the weight of the floating object."

Incorrect answer

Reference: *Stability and Trim for the Ship's Officer, George, 4th Ed., pages 68 and 492*

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3. A. Barge's Certificate of Inspection
- B. Cargo Manifest or loading paper
- C. Dangerous Cargo Regulations
- D. Cargo Information Card on the towboat

Incorrect answer

Incorrect answer

Incorrect answer

**Correct Answer.** "A cargo information card for each cargo regulated by this subchapter shall be carried on the bridge or in the pilot house of the towing vessel, readily available for use by the person in charge of the watch."

Reference: *The Nautical Almanac (1981), page 274, Polaris (Pole Star) Tables*

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4. A. GHA of Aries
- B. LHA of Aries
- C. LHA of Polaris
- D. GHA of Polaris

Incorrect

**Correct Answer.** "The table is entered with LHA of Aries to determine the column to be used; The final table gives the azimuth of Polaris."

Incorrect

Incorrect

Reference: *The Nautical Almanac (1981), page 274, Polaris (Pole Star) Tables*



The crew of the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Oliver Henry* tows the motor yacht *Black Pearl 1* and its 11 crewmembers to safety on July 22, 2024. The *Black Pearl's* tow was transferred to the 75-foot Palau-flagged tug *SSC Techall* off the shore of the Republic of Palau. The *Oliver Henry* is homeported in Guam. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Noah Mummert

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Coast Guardsmen assigned to Coast Guard cutter *Waesche* assist during small boat operations with the Philippine Coast Guard during a bilateral search and rescue exercise in the South China Sea on July 16, 2024. The exercise was an opportunity to strengthen relations by working together and exchanging operating procedures and practices. Coast Guard cutters routinely deploy to the region to engage with partner nations to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Elijah Murphy