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14. ABSTRACT
The current level of U.S. Coast Guard employment is insufficient for successful competition, let alone conflict, in the Western Pacific. The primary barrier to better naval integration is fiscal constraints upon the U.S. Coast Guard. By implementing proven methods of naval integration and leveraging dedicated funding sources for providing U.S. Coast Guard support (<\$400M) to the Department of Defense, the U.S. Coast Guard can successfully achieve national objectives in competition and in conflict.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
U.S. Coast Guard, Advantage At Sea, Naval Integration, Vietnam, Operation Market Time, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, China Coast Guard, PLAN, IUU, Maritime Sovereignty, PATFORSWA, LEDET, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, EABO, Economy Act of 1932.

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Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES


TITLE:
**CREATING AN ADVANTAGE IN THE COMPETITION CONTINUUM:
THE U.S. COAST GUARD, INTEGRATED NAVAL PRESENCE,
AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

AUTHOR:
Christopher M. O'Meara, LCDR, USCG

AY 2020-21

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Date: 30 APR 2021

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Executive Summary

Title: Creating an Advantage in the Competition Continuum: The U.S. Coast Guard, Integrated Naval Presence, and Partnerships in the Western Pacific

Author: Lieutenant Commander Christopher O’Meara, United States Coast Guard

Thesis: The U.S. Coast Guard can uniquely advance U.S. national interests in the Western Pacific, during competition and conflict, through better integration of naval presence, partnerships, and logistics.

Discussion: The U.S. National Defense Strategy identifies China as a national security threat, and the December 2020 *Advantage at Sea* strategy signed by the chiefs of the Naval Services—the Chief of Naval Operations, Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Commandant of the Coast Guard—classifies China as the highest operational priority. China’s use of a stratified means of national power—from economic initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, to deployment of their distant water fishing fleets, and finally through increasing degrees of military power—currently gives it an advantage in competition such that it may achieve its goals without resorting to armed conflict.

Given its unique law enforcement and military roles, the U.S. Coast Guard excels in competition and conflict. Historic examples of integrating the U.S. Coast Guard into naval operations include the 1965 Vietnam War and the 2003 Iraq War and its follow-on operations in the Arabian Gulf. These case studies identify useful models for successfully integrating U.S. Coast Guard forces into naval operations spanning from competition to conflict. However, in these two instances the impetus of naval integration was first conflict, which then devolved into competition. This progression, or rather, digression, of events ensured that the expanded levels of U.S. Coast Guard operations received fiscal priority from wartime funding. In the Western Pacific, as previously mentioned, China has set the tone for competition with the aim of avoiding conflict.

Conclusion: The current level of U.S. Coast Guard employment is insufficient for successful competition, let alone conflict, in the Western Pacific. Fiscal constraints upon the U.S. Coast Guard are the primary barrier to better naval integration. Historic costs for successful models of integration are fewer than \$400 million—a thrifty bargain—with a significant return on investment. By implementing proven methods of naval integration and leveraging dedicated funding sources for providing U.S. Coast Guard support to the Department of Defense, the U.S. Coast Guard can successfully achieve national objectives in competition and in conflict.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

For those unfamiliar with building a new ship, there are several basic steps involved. You begin with choosing a ship design, a blueprint. You need to decide the purpose of the new ship, and that governs what you need to build. The first physical step is laying the keel—a nautical term for the main backbone of the skeleton of the ship. Once the ribs and frames are welded onto the keel, they are covered in steel sheets that form the hull. At this point, the ship will appear in its familiar form and can be outfitted with all her required equipment and launched into the sea. Finally, once she is floating and presumably functional, the final step is to head out of safe harbor and test everything in the open ocean during what is called a sea trial. Similarly, in building a new concept for Coast Guard operations in the Western Pacific, I will outline the blueprint, lay the keel, form the hull, and take her out on sea trials. Afterwards, it is up to her future crew to experiment and learn how to sail her so that they always have the weather gage—that is, the tactical advantage over any enemy man-o-war.

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Thank you for my professional mentors—formal and informal, superiors and peers—who helped me develop my thinking towards solving “wicked problems.” I am especially grateful to CAPT Tim Sommella, U.S. Coast Guard, for challenging me to always look for the bigger picture and the obvious solution, and to LCDR Ben Davne for always asking the critical Socratic question: “So how are we going to pay for it?”

Thanks for the support, shared learning, and camaraderie from Conference Group 12 and LtCol Doug “DDD” Downey, U.S Marine Corps, this academic year. The coronavirus pandemic threw us a curveball, and we made the most of it.

Finally, thank you to my family for their love and support throughout this process. Becky, you always were and always will be my better half. Thanks for understanding the long days, no weekends, and the occasional all-nighters.

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CHAPTER 1: DESIGNING THE SHIP

“We opened fire...The battle was a warm one while it lasted...While the fight was on, there was nothing to see but Spanish ships burning and sinking.”

-- Harry Neithercott, U.S. Revenue Cutter *McCulloch*, Battle of Manila Bay (1898)¹

The United States (U.S.) is a Pacific nation, and as her premier maritime representative, the U.S. Coast Guard has played a key role in shaping and preserving the U.S.’s strategic interests in the region. The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) headquartered in Honolulu, Hawai’i directs all operations under the purview of the Department of Defense, and has gained prominence as U.S. foreign policy has refocused towards the Pacific. Given the massive oceanic expanse and the continental and archipelagic assortment of states, the U.S. Naval Services are a key component of national power for USINDOPACOM. As the larger military service of the two, the U.S. Navy and her regional command—U.S. SEVENTH Fleet—is understandably the primary naval component in the Western Pacific. However, through historical and contemporary operations and missions, the U.S. Coast Guard remains engaged in operations in the Pacific, even if the service is underutilized.

This paper investigates the current challenges faced in the Western Pacific, the historic means by which the U.S. Coast Guard has integrated into naval operations, critiques current methods of employment, and examines options for a better framework for advancing U.S. strategic objectives in the Western Pacific.

Research Problem & Thesis Statement

Research Problem. With the Naval Services’ assessment that China poses the greatest national security threat to the United States, one would expect a corresponding level of integration of U.S. Coast Guard units and teams with U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps operations in the Western Pacific. However, the current level of U.S. Coast Guard integration

into naval concepts is insufficient for effective competition or conflict with China. To wit: How can the U.S. Coast Guard be better integrated into naval operations to advance US national interests in the Western Pacific, both in competition and in armed conflict?

Thesis Statement. The U.S. Coast Guard can uniquely advance U.S. national interests in the Western Pacific, during competition and conflict, through better integration of naval presence, partnerships, and logistics.

Methodology

This paper examines how the U.S. Coast Guard has historically ensured maritime stewardship, sovereignty, and border security, both during peacetime and in war, and identify opportunities to replicate best practices in the Western Pacific. It examines historic integration of the U.S. Coast Guard into naval operations through two case studies. The first case study is the Vietnam War, which provides a modern template of successful integration, primarily occurring during armed conflict. The second case study examines operations in the Middle East, which began with armed conflict (Operations *Iraqi Freedom*, *Enduring Freedom*, and *Inherent Resolve*) and are currently more competition centric (Operation *Freedom's Sentinel*). In Chapter 3, this paper examines existing U.S. Coast Guard manning in the Pacific, models of expeditionary logistics, and fiscal realities. Finally, Chapter 4 reconciles the differences between best practices identified in the two case studies with existing efforts, and proffers options and recommendations for better naval integration of U.S. Coast Guard forces in the Western Pacific.

Hypothetical Conclusions

The U.S. Coast Guard can uniquely advance U.S. national interests in the Western Pacific through better naval integration. It is assumed that history provides best practices for integrating U.S. Coast Guard forces into naval operations. It is also assumed that although the U.S. Coast

Guard is uniquely more skilled in immediate term operations—in conflict—fiscal realities will maintain status quo levels of integration unless increased levels of support are externally demanded and externally funded. Likewise, if future operations are expected to include armed conflict, there are naval integration actions that need implemented now. Finally, this research will both validate existing U.S. Coast Guard naval integration and challenge national decision makers to expand and require enhanced funding for integration in the Western Pacific to accomplish U.S. strategic objectives during both competition and armed conflict.

Creating an Advantage at Sea

This chapter will establish the doctrinal relationships between the Naval Services and the threats that China poses in the Western Pacific. The Naval Services—the U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, and the U.S. Coast Guard—have worked together since their founding more than two centuries ago. This naval integration has ranged from the ad hoc to the contentious to the formal. Starting in 1995, the Naval Services began to implement a series of maturing frameworks to guide and create synergy between the Naval Services’ core capabilities. The *Memorandum of Agreement Between the Department of Defense and the Department of Transportation on the use of U.S. Coast Guard Capabilities and Resources in support of the National Military Strategy* (1995 MOA) was signed in October 1995 between the two Department secretaries and Navy and Coast Guard service chiefs.² The 1995 MOA prioritized missions that the Department of Defense could expect the U.S. Coast Guard to perform if requested: maritime interception operations (MIO), military environmental response operations (MERO), port operations, security, and defense (POSD), peacetime military engagement, and coastal sea control operations.³

The 1995 MOA was expanded in 2007 with the release of *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, which marked the first time all three Naval Services issued a statement of

intent for how to integrate their capabilities in the maritime domain.⁴ The 2015 revision of the strategy focused on global theaters of operations, the value of forward presence, and the concept of creating synergy between each of the Naval Services' efforts to redesign their capital assets and force structures to meet future threats.⁵ Even so, this third iteration primarily kept each of the three services coexisting with minimal interaction with each other and attempted to maintain budgetary and operations status quos.

In December 2020, the Naval Services released a completely new maritime strategy titled *Advantage at Sea*. This new strategy has two foundational goals: focus the three Naval Services' force design efforts on countering China, and integrating all three services in operations, especially in operations below those of armed conflict:

The Naval Service—forward deployed and capable of both rapid response and sustained operations globally—remains America's most persistent and versatile instrument of military influence. Integrated All-Domain Naval Power, leveraging the complementary authorities and capabilities of the U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, advances the prosperity, security, and promise of a free and open, rules-based order.⁶

The strategy's first priority—force design—is concerned with the next decade of capital acquisitions, while the second priority—integrated naval power—has both an immediate and long-term focus. Achieving the second priority is the focus of this paper.

While *Advantage at Sea* attempts to synergize the Naval Services' immediate and long-term efforts, the entire joint force is likewise attempting to do the same as the United States and China increasingly are in competition with each other. As a result, recent military doctrine defines the terms of competition and explains how military activities achieve effects in a state of competition. Joint Doctrine Note 1-19 *Competition Continuum* defines the current operating environment as existing within the realms of cooperation, competition below armed conflict, and armed conflict, rather than traditional models which depict relations as either at peace or war.⁷

Given the long-term nature of competition, military planners need to adopt flexible and adaptive plans through a process called campaigning, during which all elements of national power create a state of relative *winning* or *losing* (but not achieving a *win* or *loss*, in a finite sense).⁸ Service doctrine, such as Marine Corps Doctrinal Pub 1-4 *Competing* likewise narrows the importance of competition to the service level. In *Competing*, the authors likewise reject the binary peace-or-war worldview, describing competition as “more or less [a] constant state of tension that in some cases crosses over the threshold of violence, only to recede again below the threshold.”⁹ This interactive concept of escalation and de-escalation is depicted in Figure [1], with the de-escalation points termed off-ramps.

Unlike the Department of Defense military services which exclusively operate under U.S. Code Title 10 (Defense) authorities, the U.S. Coast Guard always simultaneously conducts operations under both Title 10 (Defense) and Title 14 (Law Enforcement) authorities. Like the competition continuum, U.S. Coast Guard authorities are more a degree of emphasis than a state of being. Through this simultaneous duality of authorities and corresponding reflexive nature of operations, U.S. Coast Guard forces are comfortable and competent with all phases of the competition continuum, especially cooperation and competition. This niche construct of authorities and proficiency ensures that U.S. Coast Guard forces are “uniquely positioned to conduct defense operations in support of combatant commanders on all seven continents. The service routinely provides forces in joint military operations worldwide, including the deployment of cutters, boats, aircraft, and deployable specialized forces.”¹⁰

The U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area commander, Vice Admiral Linda Fagan, describes her forces’ role in the competition continuum as “directly support[ing] the United States’ goal to strengthen maritime governance, safety, and security across the [Indo-Pacific], and we do that by

working with, and learning from, our many partners and partner nations in the region.”¹¹ Most crucially, she emphasizes that the U.S. Coast Guard’s duality of authorities “provide a mix of expertise and capabilities that no other U.S. agency can.”¹² This mixture of authorities, and the ability to seamlessly transition between Title 10 and Title 14 missions, also uniquely creates off-ramps in the competition continuum, making the U.S. Coast Guard invaluable to naval integration efforts.

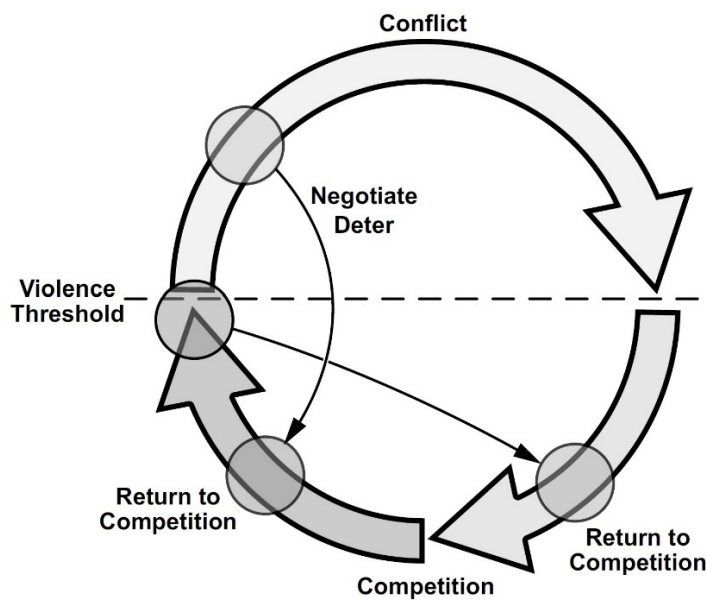


Figure 1 - The Competition Continuum¹³

Despite these advantages outlined by Vice Admiral Fagan, the threats posed by China challenge the ability of the Naval Services to effectively campaign across the competition continuum. The three primary competition threats are interrelated and can be categorized as illegal, unregulated, and unreported (IUU) fishing, infringing on maritime sovereignty, and economic coercion.

Chinese Threat: Illegal, Unregulated, Unreported Fishing

The first threat that China poses in the Western Pacific is IUU fishing. While China is not the only malefactor regarding IUU fishing, it has the most significant impact on regional norms

and economic impact. Maritime biomass, or the assortment of fish and other protein harvested from the sea, is second only to poultry in global consumption.¹⁴ Despite 75% of the earth being covered in water, maritime biomass is not an infinite resource. Both the University of British Columbia and the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization conducted research that independently concluded that 93% of global fish stock is depleted due to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing—including 50% of China's domestic maritime biomass.¹⁵ Chinese regulators previously implemented reforms that decreased domestic permits for fishing, but those reforms unintentionally created the Distant Water Fishing (DWF) fleet to circumvent the jurisdiction of regulators. Unfortunately, now the DWF fleet is overfishing in regional waters as well as those of South America and Africa.¹⁶

Despite past successes of jointly policing IUU fishing, the U.S. Coast Guard and China Coast Guard no longer appear to have as cordial of a working relationship as in the past. Additionally, the Chinese deep water fishing fleet has increasingly created economic and sovereignty challenges for both regional states and South American states.¹⁷ The U.S. Coast Guard's release of its strategy for IUU fishing identifies China as a malefactor but does not indicate which geographic region on which to focus—Eastern or Western Pacific.¹⁸ Such ambiguity generates strategic flexibility but does not necessarily focus budgetary or operational planning.¹⁹

Better cooperation between U.S. and Chinese regulators could help mitigate the IUU fishing caused by the domestic and DWF fleets. The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and China Bureau of Fishing could collaborate on best practices and incorporate regional partners into the decision-making process for quota management. Additionally, U.S., China, and regional coast guards could conduct professional exchanges to share IUU

enforcement procedures and develop agency-to-agency working relationships. According to Isabel Jarrett, who leads the Pew Charitable Trusts' project on reducing harmful fisheries subsidies, "China is pragmatic, not obstructive," and is considered likely to cut its subsidies if everyone else does. Until then, however, China's monster fishing fleet will continue to deplete the oceans, and millions of impoverished North Koreans, Africans, and others will go hungry."²⁰ Despite their differences in other policy areas, by coordinating maritime biomass conservation efforts and IUU enforcement activity in the Asia-Pacific region, China and the United States can simultaneously enhance the diplomatic, economic, and military relationships amongst regional nations.

Chinese Threat: Infringing on Sovereignty

China's fishing fleet also possesses a duality of purpose: fishermen first, and naval militia second. According to Philip Chou, a senior advisor for an environmental non-governmental organization Oceana, "the Chinese aren't only fishing in the EEZs of Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, but they're preventing, sometimes violently, those countries' own fishermen from fishing there."²¹ In terms of competition below armed conflict, China's strategic fishing fleets harness all advantages from each of the three threats posed by IUU fishing, infringing on maritime sovereignty, and economic coercion. Additionally, Figure 2 depicts the existing disputed maritime claims by China, Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Additionally, China's island building ventures in the South China Sea also contradict the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) but are asserted through an undeterred military presence.



Figure 2 - Disputed Maritime Claims in the South China Sea²²

Underpinning all of these contentious relationships is the fact that, according to a prominent U.S. Navy Task Force commander, “[m]ost navies are not in the business of power projection. They’re in the business of enforcing sovereignty ... Most other countries, whether it’s navy or coast guard, are in the business of fisheries enforcement, counter-smuggling, search and rescue — missions that very much dovetail with what the U.S. Coast Guard does.”²³ In a bid to delicately balance upholding the right to defend sovereignty while not overly angering China, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the major regional political and economic organization in the Western Pacific, chooses not to arbitrate disputes but supports the right of individual nations to seek bilateral or other diplomatic solutions. This fear of reprisal is underpinned by the outsized economic interrelatedness of China and the inconsistent presence of alternatives, such as economic or military support from the United States. Through persistent presence of U.S. Coast Guard forces, the U.S. can uphold freedom of navigation and underwrite

regional nations' rights to assert their maritime sovereignty. Achieving this presence is not only fiscally achievable, but also less escalatory than using a U.S. Navy or coalition warship.

Chinese Threat: Economic Coercion

The Western political experience tends to view national power in separate, mostly unrelated disciplines, with military coercion as the pinnacle of diplomacy. China, however, tends to view all aspects of society as affecting its national power, with military coercion being one of many tools to employ. This difference of paradigms is important because the most influential element of U.S. national power in the Western Pacific is currently USINDOPACOM and its assigned military forces. The most influential Chinese element of national power, by contrast, is economic coercion. China has two primary elements of economic coercion employed in the Western Pacific: the Belt and Road infrastructure and trade Initiative (BRI), and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Given the tyranny of distance and isolating nature of existing as a consortium of island nations, the Western Pacific states are highly dependent on trade for subsistence and are susceptible to economic coercion.

With the signing of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in November 2020, China has entered a trade pact with all of ASEAN plus Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea. Such an agreement will help each country, but Professor Ho-fung Hung, a researcher specializing in global capitalism and Chinese development at Johns Hopkins University, raises concerns that China could dominate RCEP and “weaponize its market and use it to bully its trade partners.”²⁴ By giving the RCEP nations an economic alternative to China, the United States would provide an economically competitive trade zone with reduced political malfeasance, permitting nations to engage in what an Indonesian expert has termed “economic pragmatism.”²⁵ The decision for the U.S. to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-

Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), for example, is one manner in which to significantly blunt the scope of Chinese economic coercion in the Western Pacific. Additionally, the intertwined objectives of China's economic and military aspirations will have long-reaching repercussions if their economic coercion is left unchecked. In a U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* analysis, the author cautions that China's economic coercion "...threaten[s] regional sovereignty and freedom. Infrastructure projects, ranging from railways in Africa to ports in the Indo-Pacific, all serve as strategic multiuse investments that China could take command of in a conflict."²⁶ Ultimately, while other segments of U.S. national power have more direct impacts to countering Chinese economic coercion, the U.S. Coast Guard can create conditions to make these impacts more resilient and effective.

CHAPTER 2: LAYING THE KEEL

“The U.S. Navy is confronted with a new and difficult problem... The Navy must [ensure] that logistic support via sea does not reach the Viet Cong in South Vietnam...In investigating possible sources of suitable craft it has occurred to us that the Coast Guard may have some patrol craft available which the Navy Department may be able to use.”

-- Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of Transportation, 16 April 1965²⁷

In Chapter 1, this paper established the current nature of threats that China poses to not only the national security of the United States, but that of other Western Pacific nations as well. China’s methods of employing economic, legal, and military force dominate the competition continuum set the tone and advantage for future armed conflict, if it may occur. This chapter will examine how the United States can foster and maintain an advantage at sea through fully integrating the U.S. Coast Guard into Western Pacific naval operations, using the historical examples of the Vietnam War and operations in the Arabian Gulf as a metric.

Examples of U.S. Coast Guard Integration into Naval Operations

The first focus area is how the U.S. Coast Guard has been a part of naval operations in the past. Since 1790, the U.S. Coast Guard and her predecessor agencies have conducted naval operations during times of peace and war. These operations have occurred along the competition continuum, which usefully makes the U.S. Coast Guard relevant in most national security situations.²⁸ The service’s peacetime operations have consisted of search and rescue, law enforcement, maritime regulation, pollution response, and counter-smuggling operations. These operations continued during wartime but added to them were security escorts (both World Wars), littoral combat (Vietnam War), maritime interdiction (Vietnam War), naval force augmentation (both at the individual (Afghanistan) and unit levels (Spanish-American War)), and port security (Desert Storm/Shield). Of these many examples, this chapter will focus specifically on the Vietnam War and the Middle East due to their relevance for both conflict and competition.

Vietnam War (Armed Conflict)

The modern template for Coast Guard naval integration was developed during the Vietnam War. The concept, known as Operation *Market Time*, leveraged both the Coast Guard's unique capabilities and standardized military functions. The Coast Guard forces were arranged into an overall command staff, two cutter squadrons and staffs, port security units, aviation combat search and rescue, aids-to-navigation units, and a training team for Vietnam maritime police units.²⁹

The initial request for patrol boats quickly increased to include other Coast Guard units as U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (USMACV) component commanders saw the utility that the Coast Guard could provide. Eventually the Navy, Army, and Air Force requested and received support from the Coast Guard.³⁰ Administratively, all Coast Guard units supporting USMACV fell under the purview of Commander, Coast Guard Activities Vietnam (CGAV), an officer of the rank of captain and located in Saigon. Tactically, the Navy controlled the two cutter squadrons supporting Task Force 115, the Army controlled the Port Security and Explosive Loading Detachments, and the Air Force controlled the aviators supporting the 37th Aerospace and Recovery Squadron. In this fashion, nearly 8,000 Coast Guard personnel served in Vietnam between 1965 and 1970.³¹

The three Divisions of Squadron ONE were in Vietnam, roughly disbursed between the northern (Danang), central (Cat Lo), and southern (An Thoi) regions of the country. Each Division was commanded by an officer of the rank of commander, and had a small staff that supported administration, logistics, and engineering maintenance and repair functions for the combined 26 82-foot patrol boats (WPBs) permanently assigned between the three divisions. The WPBs exclusively patrolled in support of Operation *Market Time*.

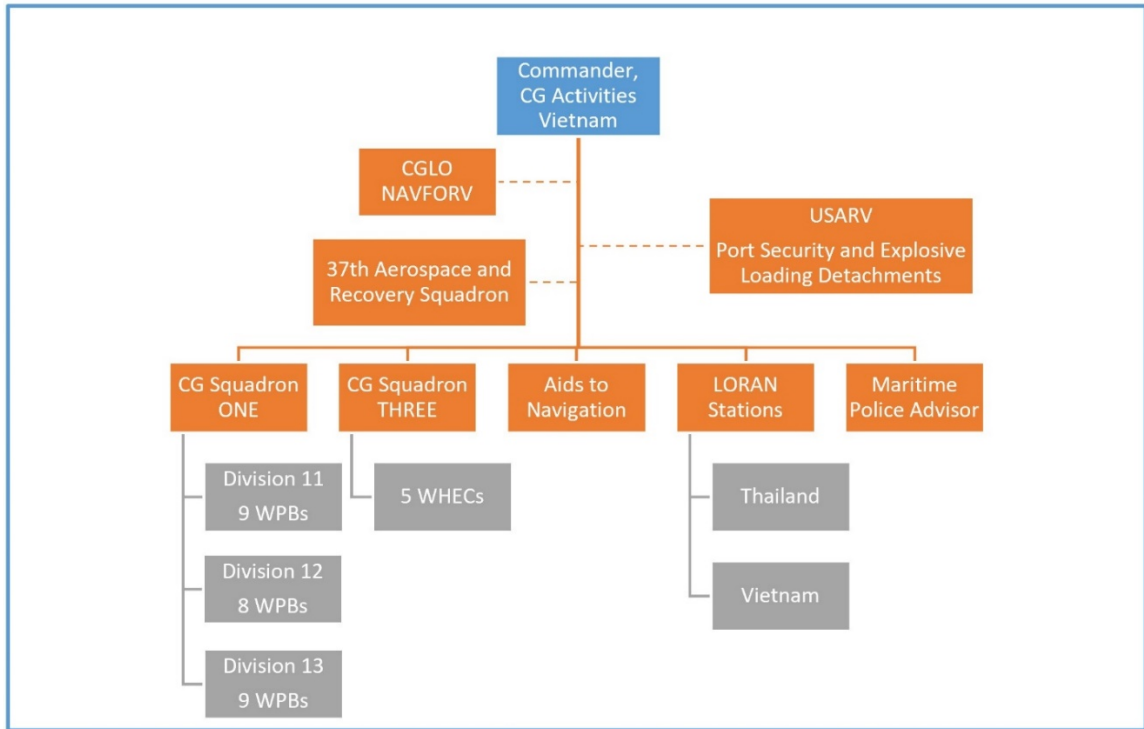


Figure 3 - Administrative Control of U.S. Coast Guard units in Vietnam³²

Squadron THREE was composed of five high endurance cutters (WHECs) that deployed from the United States for ten months at a time. The five WHECs were homeported throughout the United States and consolidated in Hawaii before heading to relieve the previous group of five; in total, eight groups of WHECs cycled through the *Market Time* area of operations during the war. The first four groups consisted of aging 327-foot *Secretary*-class cutters, while the last four groups included an assortment of both *Secretary*-class cutters and of the newly commissioned 378-foot *Hamilton*-class cutters. Squadron THREE was based out of Naval Base Subic Bay, Philippines and whose Commodore was a Coast Guard officer of the rank of captain. Squadron THREE and U.S. Navy Cruiser-Destroyer Group 70.8 soon consolidated into Task Unit 70.8.5, with the ranking Coast Guard captain serving as Commodore and the ranking Navy officer serving as Chief Staff Officer. Their combined staff of eight Coast Guard and Navy officers and 13 enlisted men ensured that all administrative and logistical requirements for their

deployed crews were met.³³ The WHECs primarily supported *Market Time* operations, but also were assigned duty to Taiwan Patrol Station and Hong Kong Duty Station.

Collectively, the Squadron ONE and THREE cutters provided a persistent, layered picket that suppressed Viet Cong smuggling and attacked enemy shore positions with naval gunfire. The WPBs provided a distributed defense of the littoral regions, and by operating out of Vietnam they created a more acute sense of the pattern of life and frequently conducted humanitarian missions to adopted villages. The WHECs provided adaptive lethality and persistent presence, while also conducting critical operations within the larger theater of operations to affect forces interacting with Vietnam. At the conclusion of the war, all 26 patrol boats and two large cutters were transferred to the Vietnamese. All other units were redeployed to the United States.

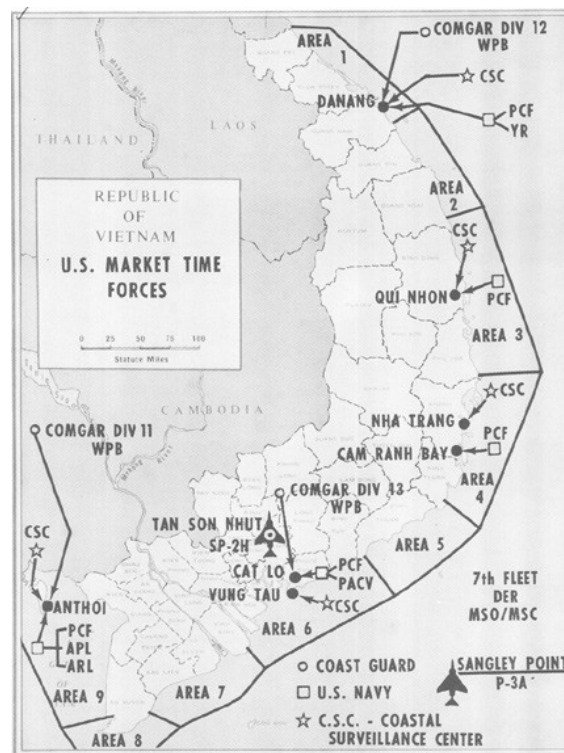


Figure 4 - AOR boundaries of U.S. Market Time forces, June 1966.³⁴

While the cutter Squadrons were the bulk of the combat power for USMACV, they were not the only forms of unique U.S. Coast Guard capabilities deployed to Southeast Asia. The

Espionage Act of 1917 created the U.S. Coast Guard's captain of the port concept, which was responsible, among other tasks, to provide for security of ships and the movement of dangerous military cargo within a U.S. port. Having refined this skillset for the rest of World War I and all of World War II, the U.S. Coast Guard cemented their proficiency and reputation for port security. Recognizing a need to protect supply ships conducting resupply operations in Vietnam, the Chief of Naval Operations requested U.S. Coast Guard assistance. The result was the creation of Port Security & Explosive Loading Detachments to oversee these operations in the five major ports of Vietnam, in coordination with the U.S. Army harbormasters.³⁵

Although lasting only a year, the USMACV Marine Police Advisor program innovatively attempted to leverage the U.S. Coast Guard's law enforcement expertise to create a legal system for maritime governance and assist the Vietnam Marine Police in outfitting their force.³⁶ Despite the traditional nature of fighting the Vietnam War, this small recognition that legal and constabulary governance could play a role in achieving the overall U.S. national objectives is noteworthy. That the U.S. Coast Guard's unique blend of military and law enforcement expertise was chosen for this task is likewise instructive.

Operation Iraqi Freedom and Afterwards (Armed Conflict and Competition)

The three major military operations in the Middle East during the 21st century have relied on the Coast Guard to fulfill specialty roles, just as they previously did in Vietnam. In fact, the maritime blueprint for the invasion of Iraq has been called *Market Time II*. Two patrol boat squadrons (Mediterranean, Arabian Gulf), high endurance cutters, specialized boarding teams, a buoy tender, and port security units all deployed in support of Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central's Task Force 55. During major combat operations, the U.S. Coast Guard cutters and teams prevented Iraqi forces from escaping via maritime routes, protected critical oil

infrastructure from Iraqi sabotage and opportunistic terrorist attacks, restored critical aids to navigation, and protected key ports. USCGC *Adak* not only captured the first Iraqi-prisoners of war, but along with USCGC *Aquidneck* maintained security while USS *Higgins* launched Tomahawk cruise missiles during the “shock and awe” bombardment of Baghdad. Once major combat

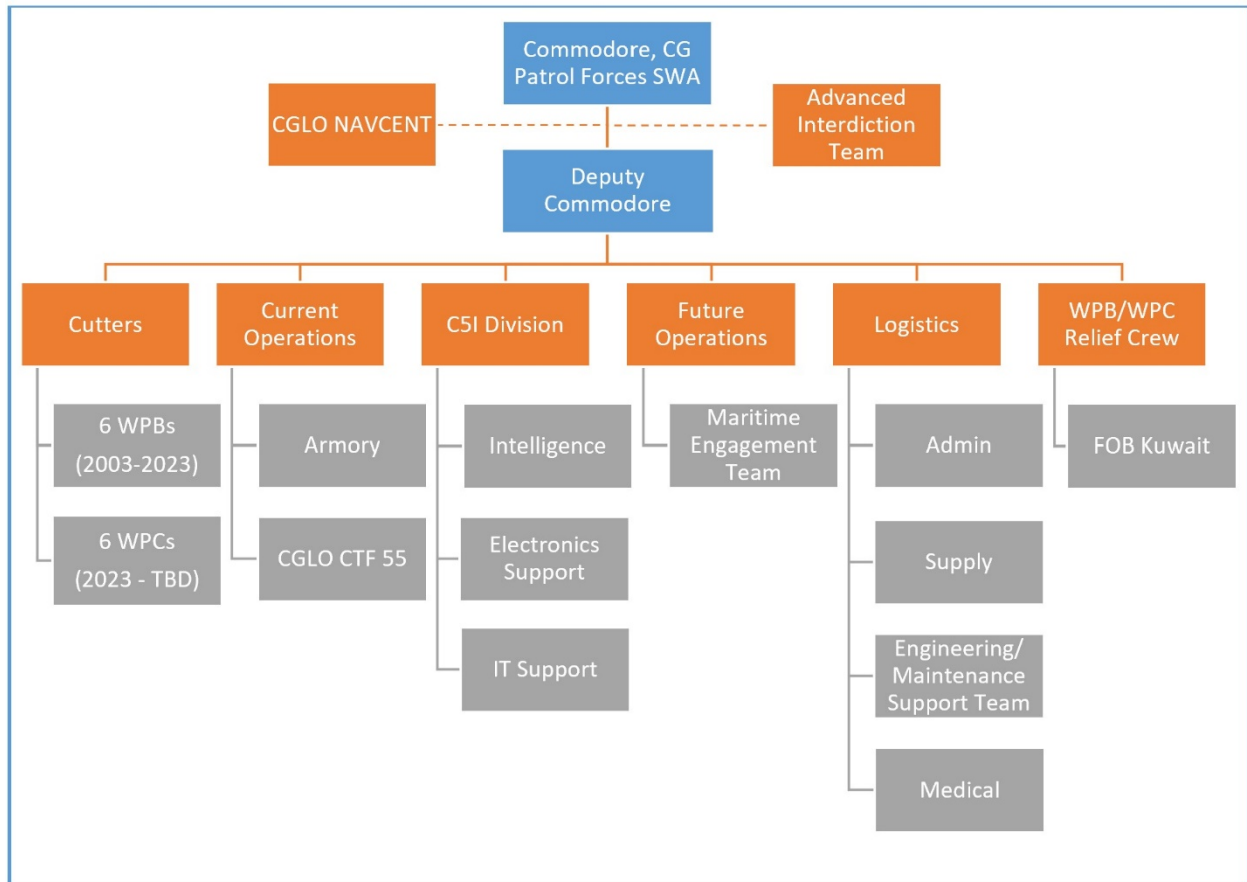


Figure 5 - Administrative Control of U.S. Coast Guard Units in Arabian Gulf³⁷

operations concluded and the Mediterranean patrol boats and the larger cutters redeployed, the remaining units in the Middle East became what is currently U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA).

From 2012, the U.S. Coast Guard forces assigned to PATFORSWA have conducted maritime security operations in a post-conflict environment. Specifically, the initial request for

combat forces for Operation *Iraqi Freedom* was completed. The continuing presence—and operational need—for U.S. Coast Guard forces in the Arabian Gulf is based on an amalgamation of conflict and competition. The operating environment is dynamic and inhospitable towards a purely law-enforcement-trained U.S. Coast Guard force; however, the nature of the operations conducted have focused on creating stability in a nation-state competition environment. U.S. Coast Guard cutter crews quickly pivoted from escorting ships resupplying the Operation *Inherent Resolve* or *Enduring Freedom* efforts against terrorism, to conducting search and rescue or interdicting narcotics smugglers. The conversion of billets formerly assigned to International Security Assistance Force – Afghanistan conducting customs inspections for redeploying containers of equipment into a permanent Maritime Engagement Team (MET) assigned to PATFORSWA also illustrates this shift of primary focus from conflict to competition. The MET trained regional coast guards and navies in maritime law enforcement principles. The MET and cutter crews worked together during regional port calls and at-sea engagements to teach and practice tactics to help each nation enforce their own sovereignty. For example, USCGC *Maui* and USCGC *Adak* recently conducted at-sea exercises with HS *Hydra*, a Greek missile frigate and North Atlantic Treaty Organization partner, while on patrol in the Arabian Gulf.³⁸ The importance of the U.S. Coast Guard permanent presence and engagement with regional partners is underscored by U.S. Navy leadership. The U.S. Navy commodore of Destroyer Squadron 50/Task Force 55 recently stated that “[the U.S. Coast Guard is] great at partnering with regional navies and coast guards...Because of the [U.S.] Coast Guard presence here, it makes it easier to engage with the other regional coast guards who are doing similar operations.”³⁹

Finally, the U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security Response Team-West supplies an Advanced Interdiction Team (AIT) to NAVCENT, rotating teams every six months. Primarily

employed by Task Force 150 in counter-smuggling operations, the AIT helps stem the flow of illegal weapons and cash into and from the region.⁴⁰ During a recent boarding in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Somalia, a joint boarding team embarked on USS *Churchill* consisting of the U.S. Coast Guard AIT, U.S. Navy personnel, and U.S. Army personnel, interdicted thousands of assault rifles and rocket propelled grenade launchers headed for the region.⁴¹

Two small but impactful examples of how U.S. Coast Guard authorities were employed include customs and intelligence authorities. During the redeployment of equipment from bases in Afghanistan, U.S. Coast Guardsmen formed a Redeployment Assistance and Inspection Detachment (RAID) team to complete customs paperwork and certify shipping containers for transport. The U.S. Coast Guard's customs authority is a holdover from the service's beginnings as the Revenue Cutter Service, but, in this case, proved more efficient than deploying a civilian customs officer. By one estimate, it prevented tens of millions of dollars in shipping delays just by inspecting more than 20% of all outbound containers.⁴² The second example is integrating a full time U.S. Coast Guard intelligence officer into the PATFORSWA staff. This officer assists the cutter crews with preparing field intelligence reports and liaising with other U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy intelligence staffs to analyze trends and ensure decision makers have the information they need. Together, these examples indicate how the versatility of even the most seemingly insignificant authorities can enhance the effectiveness of the joint force, just by including one or more U.S. Coast Guardsman.

There are many similarities between how U.S. Coast Guard forces were integrated into naval operations during the Vietnam War and in the Arabian Gulf. In both situations, successful naval integration required persistent presence, partnerships, and expeditionary logistics that were both functional and properly financed. Timeless components include cutter squadrons (both large

cutters and patrol boats), support and engineering staffs, training teams, port security units, and bespoke teams employing unique U.S. Coast Guard authorities. These forces have excelled during armed conflict when conducting naval gunfire and direct action, maritime security, port security, and maritime intercept operations. Additionally, during phases of competition the same U.S. Coast Guard forces have also enhanced partner capacity, conducted law enforcement and counter smuggling operations, and executed search and rescue cases. While the Vietnam War solely consisted of armed conflict, operations in the Arabian Gulf began with armed conflict and then evolved to primarily a competition-centered environment. More importantly, the evolution of primary tasking in the Arabian Gulf is not mission creep, but rather a recognition that an agile force package (e.g., PATFORSWA) was able to responsively adapt to a dynamic environment. Given the depth of authorities and non-redundant capabilities the U.S. Coast Guard provides to the U.S. government and the joint force, the service is an invaluable option for achieving national security goals at any phase on the competition continuum without unnecessarily escalating the situation. In the next chapter, this paper will examine the U.S. Coast Guard's existing presence, partnerships, and logistics in place in the Western Pacific.

CHAPTER 3: WELDING THE HULL

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

-- Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist Paper #12* (1787)

In the first two chapters, this paper established the operational threats in the Western Pacific and identified historical methods for integrating U.S. Coast Guard forces into naval operations throughout the competition continuum. This chapter will document the current level of naval integration of U.S. Coast Guard forces in the Western Pacific, as well as identify logistics and fiscal models for supporting forward-deployed U.S. Coast Guard forces. This chapter provides a baseline against which these threats and historical methods can be applied in Chapter 4 to identify gaps and recommendations for future levels of naval integration in the Western Pacific.

U.S. Coast Guard Presence in the Pacific

The U.S. Coast Guard has a modest presence in the Pacific. By comparison, USINDOPACOM has a total of 375,000 personnel assigned to the Pacific (excluding the U.S. Coast Guard), while the U.S. Coast Guard has fewer than 1,500 personnel.⁴³ As Figure [7] depicts, major shore commands include the Coast Guard Pacific Area Headquarters (Alameda, California) and Coast Guard District 14 Headquarters (Honolulu, Hawaii), led by a three- and two-star admiral, respectively. Regional shore commands include Coast Guard Sector Guam, Coast Guard Activities Far East (FEACT) in Sasebo, Japan, and her satellite office, Marine Inspection Detachment (MIDET) Singapore, all led by a captain. Independent Coast Guard officers are also assigned to embassy staffs at the U.S. Embassies in Vietnam, South Korea, and People’s Republic of China. Tactical units are also located throughout the region. National

Security Cutters are homeported in Alameda (4 total) and Honolulu (2 total), and multi-mission sea-going buoy tenders (one in each homeport) and Fast Response Cutters are homeported in Guam (3) and Honolulu (3).

Current levels of employment within the Seven Dash Line (see Figure [2]) consist of just one National Security Cutter with an embarked Advanced Interdiction Team, rotationally deployed for six months. Their primary employment is conducting UNSCR enforcement near North Korea, and other regional operations as tasked. An additional boarding team specialized in IUU fisheries management techniques have also been embarked. When a NSC suffered an engineering casualty near the beginning of her deployment, the region was gapped in coverage until the next NSC deployed as planned. Additionally, as part of Operation *Pacific Eagle-Philippines*, NSCs conduct operations and training with the Philippines navy twice a year for fewer than 30 days. These operations develop the capability to combat the local Islamic State-affiliated terrorist organization.⁴⁴

In addition to the NSC deployment to the East and South China Seas, in the past year Fast Response Cutters have deployed near Guam and Hawaii (operations near local homeports). Additionally, targeted deployments occurred to American Samoa and to Palau. The American Samoa deployment was conducted by a Honolulu-based Fast Response Cutter and lasted for 40 days. The deployment to Palau was conducted by the sea-going buoy tender homeported in Guam.⁴⁵

In Figure [8], the blue areas indicate areas that one FRC or sea-going buoy tender can influence under existing force laydown and logistic plans. Additionally, while a NSC can affect more than one area over the course of a six-month deployment, their sphere of influence is still limited to approximately *one* of the shaded areas (blue/red/yellow) at one time. Compared to the



Figure 6 - U.S. Coast Guard units and bilateral agreements in the Pacific⁴⁶

level of presence required to affect regional stability identified in the historical case studies, these efforts are insufficient to counterbalance China’s malign activities or enable local navies or coast guards to enforce their sovereignty against Chinese incursions. In summary, current levels of presence of U.S. Coast Guard forces is insufficient to positively impact the Western Pacific, let alone the South China Sea, or integrate into larger naval efforts.

Partnerships

The U.S. Coast Guard has four primary partnership programs to enhance operational effectiveness and theater security cooperation in the Western Pacific: the Western Pacific Fisheries Council, Oceana Maritime Security Initiative, bilateral shiprider agreements, and foreign military sales. Collectively, these four programs give the U.S. Coast Guard access to

every country in the Pacific—including China. However, each program is hampered by the lack of adequate presence of U.S. Coast Guard forces as discussed in the previous section.

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) is a non-governmental organization consisting of 32 member and observing countries dedicated to the sustainable management of highly migratory fish stock, accounting for 20% of global marine biomass.⁴⁷ Although the South China Sea is excluded from WCPFC protocol enforcement, the East China Sea, and the remainder of the Western and Central Pacific, are included. The U.S. Coast Guard, as the United States’ representative to the Commission, has a direct working relationship with China and other strategic Western Pacific member states.⁴⁸ As a result of this working level relationship, the U.S. Coast Guard is familiar with the state of regional fish stocks and the impacts of IUU fishing, even in exempted areas such as the South China Sea.

Oceana Maritime Security Initiative. The Oceana Maritime Security Initiative (OMSI) is a Department of Defense program managed by Joint Interagency Task Force-West. The program has a law enforcement and constabulary focus, and as such, relies heavily on U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments (LEDETs) deploying onboard U.S. Navy and partner nation ships.⁴⁹ This program is modeled after a similar program in which LEDETs have battled narcotics smuggling in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific Ocean. Recent analysis by Andrew Ray, a former LEDET Officer-in-Charge, indicates that support to OMSI has declined by 50% every year since 2017 and is “negatively affecting [the United States’] ability to counter China’s aggressive and irresponsible tactics to protect its fishing fleets operating in disputed or sovereign waters of other nations.”⁵⁰

Bilateral shiprider agreements. The U.S. Coast Guard has bilateral shiprider agreements with 11 Pacific nations (Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Palau, Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) as depicted in Figure [7]. Operational support to this program is limited to sporadic deployments by cutters homeported in Honolulu or Guam, or coincidental U.S. Navy ships with U.S. Coast Guard LEDETs embarked.

Foreign Military Sales. The Foreign Military Sales program is a consistent and potential long-term engagement vehicle for the U.S. Coast Guard and Western Pacific nations. To date, several former high endurance cutters and patrol boats have been transferred to the Philippines (three WHECs), Bangladesh (two WHECs), Sri Lanka (one WHEC), and Vietnam (two WHECs and 12 patrol boats).⁵¹ The brand new patrol boats transferred to Vietnam are worth \$20 million and are being used by the Vietnam Coast Guard to conduct law enforcement, fisheries patrols, and enforce sovereignty.⁵² The Metal Shark, USA 45-foot boat is similar in design to the U.S. Coast Guard's Response Boat-Small II, also constructed by Metal Shark, USA. These similarities make future theater security cooperation and joint patrols with the U.S. Coast Guard, rather than the U.S. Navy, a natural progression.

Forward-deployed Logistics: Functionality

Functional Logistics. Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning* asserts that “[no course of action] is complete without a proper sustainment plan...It concentrates forces and material resources strategically, so the right force is available at the designated times and places to conduct decisive operations.”⁵³ The need for a cogent and vigorously supported logistics plan is needed to keep any ship operational, and U.S. Coast Guard cutters are no exception. Due to minimal manning, ship design, and lack of organic sea basing, cutters require frequent resupply either by port calls or underway replenishment from a larger vessel and/or a fleet oiler.

Integrating immediate needs and future contingency needs is key to maintaining strategic resiliency. Joint Publication 4-04, *Contingency Basing* prioritizes existing military and commercial facilities, “consistent with operational economy and functional requirements.”⁵⁴ Previous research has explored potential logistics hubs such as Singapore or the Philippines for NSCs, in addition to proven locations in Japan.⁵⁵ Figure [8] indicates the operational reach of Fast Response Cutters, notionally using just under half of their operational endurance to indicate feasible areas of influence. The current FRC homeport of Guam is used, as well as notional FOBs in Singapore (existing U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy units), Yokosuka, Japan (existing U.S. Coast Guard and Navy units), Okinawa, Japan (existing U.S. Navy and Marine Corps units), and Manila, Philippines (historic access to port). Of note, Guam is sufficiently far enough away from the South China Sea to prevent persistent operations and would require sea basing or a FOB for a FRC’s initial transit to the operations area.



Figure 7 - U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Homeports and Potential Logistics Hubs⁵⁶

Established U.S. Coast Guard models for expeditionary support warrant closer evaluation. Models such as the Aviation Detachment Guantanamo Bay in Cuba or the Coast Guard FOB at Camp Patriot in Kuwait essentially provide one or two military husbanding agents collocated on an existing military base. Others, such as U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia in Bahrain, provides full-service engineering, administration, medical, logistics, force protection, and command and staff functions crewed by a 100-person team.⁵⁷ Both methods would adequately support NSCs, FRCs, and U.S. Coast Guard boarding and training teams, especially when used as primary and secondary options.

Currently, NSC maintenance hubs exist in Alameda and Honolulu, permitting depot maintenance to occur pre- and post-deployment, with unit-level maintenance occurring during deployment port calls. With this approach, the U.S. Coast Guard can maximize tactical employment of rotational forces without permanently locating forces closer to the Western Pacific. A similar approach may be possible for FRCs. By leveraging the FRC maintenance homeport of Guam, and to a lesser extent, Honolulu, depot-level maintenance can be accomplished pre- and post-deployment. The U.S. Coast Guard's naval engineering type commander (the Surface Forces Logistics Center-Patrol Boat Product Line) has essentially implemented such a concept termed Operationally Driven Maintenance Scheduling (ODMS). The FRC ODMS concept was recognized as an award-winning innovation technique and has been rolled out to every FRC.⁵⁸ FRC ODMS synchronizes depot-level maintenance into quarterly periods so that a FRC can operate longer away from their maintenance homeport.⁵⁹ This creates flexibility to rotationally deploy FRCs throughout the Western Pacific, retaining their expeditionary employment.

Forward-deployed Logistics: Financing

Financed Logistics. The keystone to logistics is funding. Existing literature presciently observes that given a zero-sum U.S. Coast Guard budget, the service might be reluctant to divert assets and funding from established missions, especially those primarily focused on the continental United States.⁶⁰ However, history is replete with instances where the Coast Guard uniquely possessed the authorities or assets necessary to conduct a certain mission—for example, customs inspections for redeployments in Afghanistan, or ballistic missile submarine protection in the United States. In both instances, the Economy Act of 1932 enabled other military services conducted inter-service money transfers to pay the U.S. Coast Guard to complete those missions.⁶¹ In the latter example, the U.S. Navy purchased the cutters and pays for their maintenance and upkeep, while U.S. Coast Guard crews and operates them.⁶² Such options are scalable and might potentially bridge a gap that might otherwise be insurmountable.

For comparison, PATFORSWA staff and cutter operations, as well as previously mentioned limited engagement with the Philippines, are financed through Department of Defense Overseas Contingency Funds (OCO). The annual expenditure for PATFORSWA is \$149 million, which is an insignificant cost when compared to the \$705 billion DoD budget.⁶³ This cost, however, is unsustainable by the base U.S. Coast Guard budget alone, which is currently a relative bargain at \$12 billion.⁶⁴ U.S. Coast Guard commandants have expressed alarm about future readiness without an increase of dedicated funding to counter a growing \$2 billion backlog of infrastructure concerns and overall predictable budget increases to reliably and responsibly reduce shipbuilding costs.⁶⁵ For these reasons, without dedicated supplemental funding to finance Western Pacific operations, the U.S. Coast Guard may be unable to more successfully integrate into naval operations—at the detriment of U.S. national policy objectives.

While Overseas Contingency Operations funding might at present be inappropriate for financing all Western Pacific operations, the Pacific Deterrence Initiative (PDI) may provide a solution. USINDOPACOM Commander, U.S. Navy Admiral Davidson highlights the importance of PDI funding and explains that Congress agrees that “*what needs to be resourced* are the *critical enablers that provide the joint integration* and what might provide for coalition integration as well. *That doesn’t really come out in service budgets* [emphasis added].”⁶⁶ The annual Pacific Deterrence Initiative costs are approximately \$4.68 billion and could easily be adjusted to account for enhancing naval integration with U.S. Coast Guard forces.⁶⁷ In addition to sustaining operations, the U.S. Navy should evaluate purchasing additional FRCs, similar to their purchase of 87-foot Coastal Patrol Boats to support ballistic missile submarine security operations. After the previous National Security Advisor announced his commitment to supporting the Western Pacific with U.S. Coast Guard FRCs (which are nearing the end of initial fleet production in 2025), the shipyard supporting the FRC construction announced that the industrial base was prepared to increase production to support the increased operational need.⁶⁸ An additional four FRCs (with an acquisition cost of \$65 million each) homeported in Guam would provide similar operational sustainability as those in PATFORSWA (with six FRCs, but increased support staff and maintenance funding) or in Puerto Rico (with seven FRCs, but with domestic levels of support).⁶⁹

CHAPTER 4: SEA TRIALS

“The United States is a Pacific nation, and the Coast Guard has been operating in the Pacific for over 150 years. We have developed long-standing partnerships with nations in the region, and we share a strong commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific governed by a rules-based international system that promotes peace, security, prosperity, and the sovereignty of all nations.”

-- Vice Admiral Linda Fagan, Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area (2020)⁷⁰

The previous Chapters have firmly established the challenges created by China in the Western Pacific, especially in the competition and conflict continuums. China’s use of varied elements of national power are negatively influencing the maritime commons through their IUU fishing, infringement upon maritime sovereignty, and their use of economic coercion. Better integration of U.S. Coast Guard forces into naval operations in the Western Pacific can achieve U.S. strategic priorities, both in current competition and in preparation for future conflict. Incorporating best practices identified in Chapter 2’s case studies, this chapter will examine flexible options to better integrate U.S. Coast Guard forces to maximize naval presence, sustain partnerships with allies, and deliver sustainable logistics.

Options for Presence

In balancing these peace and war missions, Thomas Nelson’s research provides a cautionary observation: The Coast Guard should not try to out-NAVY the Navy and remain focused on being the “world’s best coast guard.”⁷¹ In context with other research, the U.S. Coast Guard has proved to be a quick-learner, and when tasked with new wartime missions the service has risen to the occasion. The implication is that during times of peace or competition, the U.S. Coast Guard should remain focused on its traditional roles and zealously guard against losing its reputation as a complementary maritime force (and not just another navy). Instructively, the China Coast Guard has focused exclusively on enforcing China’s excessive claims of sovereignty.⁷²

Having asserted the need to remain focused on the U.S. Coast Guard's unique and non-redundant capabilities and authorities, there is sufficient room to enhance the level of naval integration in the Western Pacific. In fact, the risk is not doing enough. One U.S. Coast Guard author summarizes it as such: "A few patrols per year does not meet the United States' ever-growing need to ensure the security and sovereignty of the nations under threat of Chinese overreach."⁷³ In assessing future force laydowns, three presence tiers are available: limited presence (status quo), enhanced presence, and persistent presence.

Limited presence (status quo). Rotationally deploy a National Security Cutter to South China Sea, deploy Fast Response Cutters near U.S. territories. Embark law enforcement team on National Security Cutter. Deploy capacity building teams per global engagement schedule.

Enhanced presence. Rotationally deploy a National Security Cutter to South China Sea. Deploy Fast Response Cutter or buoy tender to Japan for a limited time during the summer. Embark law enforcement teams on National Security Cutter and another US or partner nation ship. Embark Coast Guard small boat detachments (BOATDET) on US or partner nation surface or amphibious ships or sea base (existing jet-drive small boats would integrate well with U.S. Marine Corps well deck operations, and the bright orange hulls would counteract the presence of a large grey warship). Deploy capacity building teams per global engagement schedule and leverage second law enforcement team for limited capacity building.

Persistent presence. Rotationally deploy a National Security Cutter to South China Sea. Forward deploy Fast Response Cutter and/or Offshore Patrol Cutter to Japan. Embark law enforcement teams on National Security Cutter and another US or partner nation ship. Embark Coast Guard small boat detachments (BOATDET) on US or partner nation surface or amphibious ships or sea base (existing jet-drive small boats would integrate well with U.S.

Marine Corps well deck operations, and the bright orange hulls would counteract the presence of a large grey warship). Deploy capacity building teams per global engagement schedule and forward deploy regional engagement team to Japan. Annually deploy U.S. Coast Guard Port Security Unit to partner nation for full scale exercise (see partnerships).

Beyond recognizing the importance is recognizing the urgency. Daniel Wiltshire, a former PATFORSWA patrol boat commanding officer, exhorts the urgency of enhancing Western Pacific deployments as such:

“Start Now: The pace of war has changed, meaning that unlike in Vietnam and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Coast Guard and Navy will have little time to modify patrol boats and train crews for higher intensity operations...To be fully expeditionary, mobile, and able to act as a stand-in force that wins the littorals and facilitates Marine Corps operations ashore, a Coast Guard Patrol Forces Pacific must be stood up now. These forces would provide a testbed for practice with new weapon systems and tactics and would facilitate the Coast Guard–Marine Corps–Navy integration needed to win the next war.”⁷⁴

Options for Partnerships

Partnerships are critical to sustaining presence and logistics. Existing efforts such as Australia’s Pacific Maritime Security Program, for example, provide Western Pacific island nations with the patrol boats and mentoring needed to sustain their own sovereignty and should be supported and integrated into complementary efforts.⁷⁵

Limited partnerships (status quo). Employ assigned cutter crews and teams for ad hoc capacity building and at-sea engagement. Intermittent field unit engagement.

Enhanced partnerships. Employ assigned cutter crews and teams for planned capacity building and limited joint patrolling. Intermittent field unit engagement. Tabletop remote exercises between U.S. Coast Guard Port Security Unit and U.S. Marine Littoral Regiment.

Persistent partnerships. Employ assigned cutter crews and teams for planning capacity building. Dedicated Pacific Engagement Team maintains relationships with partner. Consistent

field unit engagement. Annual training deployment between U.S. Coast Guard Port Security Unit and U.S. Marine Littoral Regiment.

Options for Logistics

Fiscally constrained (status quo). Cutters limited to National Security Cutters, port calls limited to US-controlled ports, logistics limited to underway replenishment or US-controlled ports. Limited to Coast Guard organic budgetary authority. Operational coordination limited to general staff located in Alameda. Support and logistics coordinated by husbanding agent or joint service personnel.

Fiscally flexible. Coast Guard organic budgetary authority augmented by limited Economy Act funds transfer. Cutters limited to National Security Cutters and others as operations and logistics funding permits. Port calls limited to US-controlled ports, logistics limited to underway replenishment or US-controlled ports. Operational coordination limited to general staff located in Alameda. Support and logistics coordinated by rotating temporary duty liaison in Japan.

Fiscally responsible. Coast Guard organic budgetary authority augmented by Pacific Deterrence Initiative or actual-expense Economy Act funds transfer for dedicated units. Economy Act funds four additional FRCs for Guam. Cutters limited to National Security Cutters and forward-deployed Fast Response Cutters and/or Offshore Patrol Cutters, and others as operations and logistics funding permits. Port calls limited to US-controlled ports, forward operating bases, and working port calls of strategic importance. Logistics limited to underway replenishment and fiscally responsible port vendors. Operational, administrative, and logistics support coordinated by permanent Patrol Forces Pacific staff based in Japan.

Counterarguments

The U.S. Coast Guard should remain near the U.S. and focus on domestic missions. This criticism is frequently employed against the U.S. Coast Guard's counter-narcotics mission in the Caribbean or support to the Middle East. This argument is normally based on the well-intentioned desire to prevent federal government overreach or excessive spending. However, it is unfounded for three reasons. First, it ignores that the United States is a Pacific nation, and that in the Western Pacific, specifically, the U.S. territory of Guam is directly targeted and threaten by China. The defense of U.S. citizens *is* a domestic mission. Secondly, such reasoning assumes that mission-execution is a zero-sum game. In fact, given the amalgamation of missions that Congress has assigned to the U.S. Coast Guard, the service is adept at balancing missions to reduce the maximum amount of risk to the U.S. public. In a recent speech, the U.S. Coast Guard commandant directly challenged such an assumption and maintained that his service would continue to balance all missions, regardless of their proximity to the continental United States.⁷⁶ Finally, given the national priority of the threat posed by China's economic and military incursions, it would be irresponsible to withhold arguably the only federal agency that specializes in both regulatory and defense missions.

The same effects can be achieved with just training teams or LEDETs. While both training teams and LEDETs embarked on U.S. and allied warships provide solutions to *components* of the overall problem, they do not adequately reassure partners or deter Chinese aggression. Sustained cutter deployments, with their visible and distinguishable white hulls, cannot be replaced by U.S. Coast Guard boarding teams on grey warships. Similarly, a training team ashore (or even afloat) at a partner nation does not possess the ability to challenge Chinese incursions into other nation's territorial waters or deter IUU fishing. The experiences of the

Vietnam War and Arabian Gulf underscore that it takes an integrated effort to overcome challenges distributed across vast maritime areas. Said differently, the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* analyzed the scope and urgency for U.S. Coast Guard presence in the Western Pacific as “important, but the service has not yet realized the depth of response required. Creating [a forward-deployed patrol boat squadron and staff] would be an adequately weighted strategic response to ensure the United States manages an appropriate presence in the largest and most diverse geographic area of responsibility.”⁷⁷

The same results can be achieved by increasing existing staffs in Sector Guam or FEACTION. While some physical spaces or administrative functions might be shared between these existing units and a Patrol Forces Pacific, their mission and scope are fundamentally divergent. For starters, an expeditionary patrol craft squadron is not the same as multiple patrol craft homeported in the same location.⁷⁸ Otherwise, the Vietnam War would have been supported from Guam or the Arabian Gulf operations from Virginia (home to the closest U.S. Coast Guard regional shore command). Nor is the integration and coordination of the remaining training teams, LEDETs, or PSUs the same as the search and rescue or marine inspection duties. The tactical execution of regulatory functions and law enforcement by a Sector or FEACTION would distract the administrative coordination required to successfully integrate the U.S. Coast Guard forces into the broader U.S Navy, U.S Marine Corps, and allied effort to counter China. While these existing units will continue to also achieve positive effects on this front, too, their efforts will be more effective if they are unencumbered by a singular focus on China.

Recommended Options

The historical examples and the current assessment of U.S. Coast Guard presence, partnerships, and logistics identified a gap in naval integration in the Western Pacific. This

Chapter has identified the advantages and disadvantages of potential solutions to mitigate these gaps to meet the United States’ most pressing threat: expanding Chinese malfeasance regarding IUU fishing, infringements on maritime sovereignty, and economic coercion. In issuing their guidance to their respective services, the Chiefs of the Naval Services urged that “[t]ogether, we must act with urgency to integrate and modernize our forces as we prepare for the challenges ahead. The boldness of our actions must match the magnitude of our moment.”⁷⁹ To successfully navigate the entirety of the competition continuum, this paper makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1 (Presence): Create a Patrol Force Pacific in Japan under the Administrative Control (ADCON) of Commander, U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area (PAC-3) to integrate increased NSC and FRC deployments, LEDETs and BOATDETs embarked on U.S. Navy surface and amphibious task units, and to manage the Pacific Engagement Team.

Recommendation 2 (Partnerships): Enhance partnerships through renewed engagement with existing programs, creation of the Pacific Engagement Team, and annual training deployments of a Port Security Unit in conjunction with a U.S. Marine Littoral Regiment.

Recommendation 3 (Functional Logistics): Establish U.S. Coast Guard logistics nodes at Yokosuka and Okinawa, Japan, and Singapore.

Recommendation 4 (Financed Logistics): Dedicate funding for Patrol Force Pacific staff and operations through the Pacific Defense Initiative and U.S. Navy purchase of four Fast Response Cutters through the Economy Act of 1932.

Conclusion

The U.S. National Defense Strategy identifies China as a national security threat, and the December 2020 *Advantage at Sea* strategy signed by the chiefs of the Naval Services—the Chief

of Naval Operations, Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Commandant of the Coast Guard—classifies China as the highest operational priority. China’s use of stratified levels of national power—from economic initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, to deployment of their distant water fishing fleets, and on through increasing degrees of military power—currently gives it an advantage in competition that might preclude the use of force resulting in conflict.

Given their unique law enforcement and military roles, the U.S. Coast Guard excels in competition and conflict. Historic examples of integrating the U.S. Coast Guard into naval operations include the Vietnam War and the Iraq War and its follow-on operations in the Arabian Gulf. These case studies identify useful models for successfully integrating U.S. Coast Guard forces into naval operations spanning from competition to conflict. However, the impetus of naval integration was first conflict, and then devolved into competition. The progression, or rather, digression, of events ensured that the expanded level of U.S. Coast Guard operations received fiscal priority from wartime funding. In the Western Pacific, as previously mentioned, China has set the tone for competition with the aim of avoiding conflict.

The current level of U.S. Coast Guard employment is insufficient for successful competition, let alone conflict, in the Western Pacific. The primary barrier to better naval integration is fiscal constraints upon the U.S. Coast Guard. Historic costs for successful models of integration are fewer than \$400 million annually—a thrifty bargain—with a significant return on investment. By implementing proven methods of naval integration and leveraging dedicated funding sources for providing U.S. Coast Guard support to the Department of Defense, the U.S. Coast Guard can successfully achieve national objectives in competition and in conflict.

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Appendix A: Acronyms

ADCON	Administrative Control
AIT	U.S. Coast Guard Advanced Interdiction Team
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BOATDET	U.S. Coast Guard Small Boat Detachment (conceptual)
BRI	PRC Belt and Road Initiative
CGAV	U.S. Coast Guard Activities Vietnam
CTF	Commander, Task Force
CTU	Commander, Task Unit
C5F	Commander, U.S. Navy FIFTH Fleet. <i>See also NAVCENT.</i>
C7F	Commander, U.S. Navy SEVENTH Fleet
CCG	PRC China Coast Guard
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership
DWF	Distant Water Fishing
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FEACT	U.S. Coast Guard Activities Far East
FOB	Forward Operating Base
FRC	U.S. Coast Guard Fast Response Cutter. <i>See also WPC.</i>
HS	Hellenic Ship (Greece)
JIATF-W	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Joint Inter-Agency Task Force West
LEDET	U.S. Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachment.
MET	U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Engagement Team
MIDET	U.S. Coast Guard Marine Inspection Detachment [Singapore]

MFPU	U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Force Protection Unit
MSRT	U.S. Coast Guard Maritime Security Response Team
NAVFORV	U.S. Naval Forces, Vietnam
NAVCENT	U.S. Naval Forces Central [Command]. <i>See also C5F.</i>
NSC	U.S. Coast Guard National Security Cutter. <i>See also WMSL.</i>
OCO	Overseas Contingency Operation
ODMS	U.S. Coast Guard Operationally Driven Maintenance Scheduling
OMSI	Oceana Maritime Security Initiative
OPC	U.S. Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Cutter. <i>See also WMSM.</i>
PATFORSWA	U.S. Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia
PDI	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Pacific Deterrence Initiative
PLA	PRC People's Liberation Army
PLAN	PRC PLA Navy
PLAMM	PRC PLA Maritime Militia
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSU	U.S. Coast Guard Port Security Unit
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SAG	Surface Action Group
SCS	South China Sea
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
U.S.	United States of America
USARV	U.S. Army [Forces], Vietnam
USCG	United States Coast Guard

USCGC	United States Coast Guard Cutter
USINDOPACOM	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command
USMACV	U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam
USMC	United States Marine Corps
USN	United States Navy
USS	United States Ship
WCPFC	Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission
WHEC	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter, High Endurance
WMSL	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter, Maritime Security-Large. <i>See also</i> NSC.
WMSM	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter, Maritime Security-Medium. <i>See also</i> OPC.
WPB 82	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter, Patrol Boat 82-foot <i>Point Class</i>
WPB 87	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter, Patrol Boat 87-foot <i>Marine Protector Class</i>
WPB 110	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter, Patrol Boat 110-foot <i>Island Class</i>
WPC	U.S. Coast Guard Cutter, Patrol Coastal. <i>See also</i> FRC.

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Vita

Lieutenant Commander Christopher O'Meara, U.S. Coast Guard, is 2008 graduate from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy with a B.S. in Political Science and Government. He is a 2015 graduate of the College of Naval Command and Staff, U.S. Naval War College distance education program. He is a seagoing officer with 9 years of sea time and earned his permanent Cutterman insignia in 2016. He has served in five cutters, commanding USCGC *Adak* and USCGC *Margaret Norvell*, with deployments spanning the Atlantic Ocean, Pacific Ocean, Arabian Gulf, and Caribbean Sea. Other afloat assignments include USCGC *Vigorous*, USCGC *Farallon*, and USCGC *Northland*. Lieutenant Commander O'Meara is a native of Niles, Ohio and resides in Alexandria, Virginia with his spouse, Becky.