

## SENIOR LEADERS OF THE FUTURE U.S. COAST GUARD

BY

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# USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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## **ABSTRACT**

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Following the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the passing of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the Coast Guard finds itself as one of the largest agencies within this new department and executing a greater role in the development of national maritime policy as it relates to port security, international maritime trade, and protection of natural resources. The increased role has highlighted the necessity for Coast Guard senior leaders to be well equipped to meet these challenges and capable of navigating the waters ahead at the strategic level. With the desired end states of the Coast Guard Maritime Strategy as the foundation for analysis, this paper recommends that Coast Guard Flag Officers will need to be politically savvy, expert in governmental partnering, capable of maintaining a high degree of mental agility, and astutely aware of stewardship concepts necessary to protect the national investment of Coast Guard resources. Recommended future areas of study are provided to improve the Coast Guard's senior leader development.





## SENIOR LEADERS OF THE FUTURE U.S. COAST GUARD

Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character.  
But if you must be without one, be without the strategy.

—GEN Norman Schwarzkopf<sup>1</sup>

Bright and full of promise, another day begins for the Commandant of the United States Coast Guard when his driver arrives at Quarters One. Greeted by the Flag Aide and handed a sheaf of briefing papers to scan on the ride to Headquarters, the Commandant focuses on the day's agenda to prepare for upcoming discussions and challenges. Quietly, the Commandant muses that another typical day is ahead. First on the agenda will be the morning operations meeting where it looks like the hazardous chemical spill emanating from a Liberian flagged super tanker in the Port of Houston, Texas has closed down oil refinery operations in the area. That will necessitate a few phone calls to concerned Congressional members and international business leaders, the Commandant notes. The current influx of Haitian migrants seems to be at a lull, but the additional burdens placed upon the cutter fleet have been enormous, and the previous night's interdiction of Saudi Arabian nationals alongside the Haitians has the National Security Staff asking questions. The available deck space on the ships is already at overcapacity with the illegal migrants, the need for a decision on where to place these individuals is dire, yet the State Department does not seem to be acting fast enough to find a solution. The majority of the afternoon will be consumed by the preparation for an upcoming Appropriations Committee hearing. The Commandant knows that the necessary acquisition program for new cutters is a priority with significant future consequences. Taking a deep breath, the Commandant steels himself

and enjoys a final sip of coffee before arrival at the building. “Just another day”, he whispers, “just another day.”

While the above scenario is purely fictitious, the events are entirely and presently possible, and illustrate the strategic challenges faced by Coast Guard senior leaders on a routine basis. The outcome of the appropriations scenario regarding the funding of new cutters carries with it national security implications while dictating future mission capability for the Coast Guard. Geopolitical issues ranging the spectrum from immigration to environmental events are illustrative of the complexities that must be routinely addressed by Coast Guard leaders. The Commandant is faced daily with challenges on how to communicate the long term implications for present day decisions. Effective utilization of personal relationships and the development of strategic partnerships to accomplish a myriad of tasks are absolutely essential.

President Jimmy Carter once said, “Only the most complex and difficult tasks come before me in the Oval Office. No easy answers are to be found there – because no easy questions come there.”<sup>2</sup> The environment surrounding the responsibilities of senior military leaders are very similar, as there are no easy answers to the issues that come before an Admiral or General. In today’s fast paced world of intersecting economies, open borders, and global communications, the competencies required for leading at the strategic military level are dynamic and generally difficult to master. Unlike corporations, who can recruit talented individuals to assume senior executive positions from outside their own organizations, the Coast Guard must develop leaders from within their own personnel, while balancing numerous and sometimes competing external factors along an individual’s 30 year development path. Challenging,

expensive, and necessary are all descriptive terms associated with the task of developing necessary competencies to lead facets of this dynamic organization.

Much has been written on the topic of senior level leadership adherent to the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps, yet little academic discourse has been associated with the Coast Guard. Due perhaps to the Coast Guard's size or the fundamental differences existent between it and the Department of Defense services, the Coast Guard's role is unique, and correspondingly, the skill sets demanded from senior Coast Guard leaders are uniquely demanding. This paper will examine key roles the Coast Guard performs, now and will likely perform in the future, and four key senior leader competencies needed in the future to enable success for Coast Guard leaders. To accomplish this task, a short background on the service provides strategic context and is followed by an analysis of current leadership development programs. The service culture, originating from its founding, is critical to contextual appreciation of key senior leader competencies and how they fit into the overall development program. From this examination, areas of future study are recommended to address the development of these competencies.

### Background

As the smallest of the five armed services, the Coast Guard is distinct in its military, regulatory, and law enforcement authorities. The service was formed by the merger of the Revenue Cutter Service and the U.S. Lifesaving Service in 1915, and later expanded by the integration of the U.S. Maritime Service in 1938 and the U.S. Lighthouse Service in 1939.<sup>3</sup> The cultural, legal, and mission differences that were brought together by mostly dissimilar regulatory, law enforcement and emergency response agencies created challenges for the early Coast Guard leaders. The merger

of differing skill sets, well earned traditions, and accepted standards created an atmosphere where it was difficult to accommodate everyone. These challenges still exist today, as the service is an amalgamation of many different functions.

The modern day Coast Guard, at the forefront of national maritime interests, is comprised of approximately 44,000 active duty members and augmented by over 7,500 reserve personnel. By rough comparison, the service is approximately the same size as the New York City Police Department. However, instead of just one city, the Coast Guard protects 361 maritime ports and 95,000 miles of coastline. The service has a vast array of duties organized along eleven mission areas: search and rescue, maritime safety, drug interdiction, migrant interdiction, defense readiness, port and waterway security, living marine resources, marine environmental protection, federal law enforcement, aids to navigation, and ice breaking. *Coast Guard Publication 1* provides broad, overarching roles to further refine and group the mission areas, into maritime safety, maritime security, and maritime stewardship.<sup>4</sup>

Generally organized along geographic boundaries, the operational Coast Guard is divided into two area commands - Pacific and Atlantic - commanded by Vice Admirals. Within each of these areas are districts which further sub-divide the coastal areas of responsibility, as well as the interior Great Lakes and inland river systems. The Atlantic Area has five districts and the Pacific Area has four districts, each of which is generally commanded by a Rear Admiral. Districts are further divided into sectors commanded by Captains. A sector is the operational hub of the Coast Guard, where in all eleven mission areas are exercised within a given geographic responsibility. While each sector may have specific areas of emphasis resourced through a risk mitigation

strategy, all are comprised with organic capabilities to carry out assigned missions. For example, Sector Detroit has ice breaking capabilities and the responsibility to maintain strategic waterway operations in the winter months, while Sector Key West is primarily resourced to combat illegal drug and migrant interdiction. Major cutters cross between sector and district operations and are considered to be assets of the Area Commander. Separate also from the geographic command structure is the Deployable Operations Group, comprised of Maritime Security and Safety Teams (MSST), prepositioned at strategic ports, and the Maritime Security and Response Team (MSRT) located in Chesapeake, VA. The purpose of illustrating the operational command and control structure of the Coast Guard is to highlight that while a majority of the service is engaged in day-to-day operations supporting national strategy, the service does not exist as a means of national power executed on a grand scale.<sup>5</sup>

### Leadership Culture

The concept of strategic leadership, as viewed by the Coast Guard, differs by comparison to the Department of Defense military services. Much like a police force or fire department, the majority of the Coast Guard responds to a call for assistance from the American public after driving to the assigned Coast Guard station from home. For these reasons, strategic goals that influence lines of effort in the operational environment are difficult to establish and accomplish when the activity of the current day commands the utmost attention. Herein lies one of the more difficult challenges for Coast Guard senior leaders: the ability to develop and communicate a vision and which provides linkage to the broader national strategy for homeland security. Successful accomplishment of this task requires the understanding of the larger international, political and military environment; however, strategic leadership in the Coast Guard is

primarily focused within the institution and not focused on the different phases of war and conflict.<sup>6</sup> This concept will be more fully explained later during an examination of the Coast Guard's Leader Development Program.

With such divergent missions and limited resources, Coast Guard senior leaders are required to understand, develop, and implement local, national, and international policies on a routine basis. Due to the service's size, all commissioned officers are not only specialists within a given area, such as afloat cutter operations, aviation, or many others, yet once having achieved senior officer ranks, officers are generally considered as leaders within the service and qualified to command operational Districts. With this in mind, it is not uncommon to have Rear Admirals that have spent considerable time as an attorney or naval engineer commanding districts. As a result of the broad ranging mission areas, Coast Guard senior leaders must be adept at not only understanding the organization and the strategic vision, but also able to apply critical thinking skills and building partnerships to ensure service success. Understanding future strategic areas of emphasis and possessing the capability to lead and prepare the service for the future challenges are of the utmost priority. To understand the future challenges, an analysis of the *Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship* and the *Evergreen II Project Report* is necessary.<sup>7</sup>

### Strategic Guidance

Primarily focused on future trends and associated challenges, *The Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship* portrays a national environment that continues to rely heavily upon the capabilities the Coast Guard provides.<sup>8</sup> Citing a future that will become increasingly dependent upon maritime transportation for the primary means of trade as the global economy and population continues to increase,

the strategy also portends the vastness of the oceans as vulnerable to resource exploitation and environmental destruction.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the Coast Guard's *Evergreen II Project Report* released in 2009 largely confirms the *Coast Guard Strategy* of 2007.<sup>10</sup> Utilizing five different fictitious planning scenarios, the project report is the culmination of two off-site conferences that discussed hypothetical world environments in the year 2030.

Both reports are consistent in that the uncontrolled commons of the world's oceans are a haven for criminal activities such as piracy and the trafficking of illegal narcotics. For the very reasons that oceans are attractive to organized crime, the same methods used to transport illegal narcotics are also favored by those engaged in terrorism and weapons smuggling. A greater need for maritime awareness and governance to combat this growing threat will become increasingly difficult as a majority of the world's population lives within 100 miles of the oceans and will increasingly utilize this as a mode of transportation, for both legal and illegal means. Along with terrorist and narcotic activity, human trafficking to the United States via the maritime environment is forecasted to increase in frequency. As the Coast Guard responds to nearly 7,000 incidents per year, ensuring the sovereignty of the nation's coast line will demand an increase in both the capacity and capability of organic Coast Guard assets and personnel.<sup>11</sup> As a senior leader in this future environment, it will become increasingly more important for the leader to not only understand cultural differences within the international environment and how the Coast Guard can be utilized as a unique instrument of national security, but also have the capability to communicate this importance.

Although the oceans are extremely large, the critical nodes of maritime transportation are relatively few. Almost 75% of all maritime trade and 50% of the world's oil is shipped through a relative handful of key ports.<sup>12</sup> Increased international partnerships will be necessary to ensure the security of the goods that are being shipped, and the methods being utilized for transportation. The *Evergreen Project* specifically details the necessity of 21<sup>st</sup> century partnerships with new global trade consortiums. These new international unions are expected to be created to stabilize trade and reduce state competition on reduced natural resources.<sup>13</sup> Knowledge of the economic importance of the maritime transportation system and how this system fits into the larger national economic strategies will be necessary if the Coast Guard senior leader is to be effective at influencing national economic and security policies. While operational knowledge of the environment is respected, only a senior leader with the ability to blend the current operating picture with the understanding of what means and methods are necessary to achieve a desired end state will be most effective in leading the service.

Taking into account the trend analysis and future state, the *Evergreen II Project Report* puts forward thirteen core action strategies that address these future challenges, and these strategies very closely mirror the previously published strategy document. With the exception of a specifically stated need for increased Polar Mission Capacity as a core element, and not just considered as inclusive of the broader U.S. Maritime Domain, the Coast Guard Strategy broadly puts forward six desired end states for strategic direction as listed below in Figure One.<sup>14</sup>



|                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strengthening Regimes for the U.S. Maritime Domain                       |
| Achieving Awareness in the Maritime Domain                               |
| Enhancing Unity of Effort in Maritime Planning and Operations            |
| Integrating Coast Guard capabilities for National Defense                |
| Developing National capacity for Maritime Transportation System Recovery |
| Focusing International Engagement on Maritime Governance                 |

Figure 1.

Primarily operational in nature and dependent on increased resources to have some modicum of future success, the desired end states for strategic emphasis highlight the necessity of interagency and international cooperation in the maritime domain. As the Coast Guard is expected to play a larger role in the national security landscape, the necessary resources for these mission areas will also be contingent upon senior leadership and their relationships with current Administration officials and Congressional leaders to ensure widespread understanding of the budgetary requirements.

Development of senior leaders to understand and further these strategic goals is of critical importance. While utilizing a contractor such as the Future Strategies Group allows for a knowledgeable facilitator to help guide the service in the development of priorities, it is inherent upon the senior leaders to embrace these strategies, communicate their importance, and fully comprehend how they were developed.<sup>15</sup> Building core knowledge of strategy development, critical thinking skills, and intersecting governmental systems within a senior officer corps who operates in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment will now be examined.<sup>16</sup>

## Coast Guard Leadership Principles

Organizational leadership doctrine and training programs within the Coast Guard identify twenty-seven leadership competencies that are grouped into four distinct categories.<sup>17</sup> The first, Leading Self, focuses on junior personnel and the concepts of followership, health and well-being, personal conduct, and technical proficiency. The second, Leading Others, highlights the concepts of mentoring, team building, respect for others, taking care of others, and influencing others. The third, Leading Performance and Change, introduces the theory of conflict management, customer focus, decision making, vision development, and innovation. The last group, Leading the Coast Guard, focuses on the competencies associated with attainment of Flag Officer rank and are highlighted in Figure Two below.<sup>18</sup>

| Leading the Coast Guard   |
|---------------------------|
|                           |
| Financial Management      |
| Technology Management     |
| Human Resource Management |
| External Awareness        |
| Political Savvy           |
| Partnering                |
| Entrepreneurship          |
| Stewardship               |
| Strategic Thinking        |

Figure 2.

While the instruction highlights the need for senior officers to possess these competencies, and even provides operational definitions of each subject area, the document does not address a formal education process to provide the opportunity for future Coast Guard leaders to develop these nine competencies. The Coast Guard operates outside the legislative requirements contained in the Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and does not have either joint staff experience or Professional Military Education

(PME) requirements for the attainment of Flag officer rank.<sup>19</sup> A review of 47 current, active duty Flag Officer biographies posted on the Coast Guard website indicated that while all current Flag Officers possess a graduate degree from an accredited university, 31% of the active duty Flag Officers did not attend a senior service school, such as a War College, or complete an executive fellowship.

While the lack of PME requirements is perhaps problematic in the building of a professional officer corps, the Coast Guard relies heavily on the very nature and diversity of officer assignments and personal study to foster an understanding of broad service related topics. Technical expertise is expected to be obtained through personal qualifications and constant operational exposure in the maritime safety, security, and stewardship roles. For example, a cutter commanding officer will not only be versed in U.S. Navy tactical maneuvering doctrine, naval gunfire support, and logistics, but will also be able to operate independently in an international legal environment, while enforcing environmental standards and conducting search and rescue operations. The vast expanse of duties and responsibilities afforded to a Coast Guard officer at an early career stage provides the opportunity to develop the necessary skills of judgment, decisiveness, and foresight at the tactical and perhaps operational levels, but falls short of developing the necessary competencies of a strategic leader.

#### Senior Leader Competencies

With the desired end states of the *Coast Guard Strategy* as the foundation for analysis, this paper recommends that Coast Guard Flag Officers will need to be politically savvy, expert in governmental partnering, capable of maintaining a high degree of mental agility, and astutely aware of stewardship concepts necessary to protect the national investment of Coast Guard resources. These four senior leader

competencies are in keeping with generally recognized strategic leader literature, but are focused upon the necessity that Coast Guard senior leaders will need to be able to balance a diverse operational environment and its associated demands on people, equipment, and training.<sup>20</sup> Equally important will be for the senior leader to understand and communicate how this environment supports broad national strategy, and what resources will be needed to accomplish a desired future end state, instead of just operating in the present. The graphic below depicts how these four competencies serve as the foundation for strategic leadership, and thus enable the accomplishment of a broader maritime strategy. An analysis of these four competencies follows, highlighting how each compliments the maritime strategy and future Coast Guard requirements.

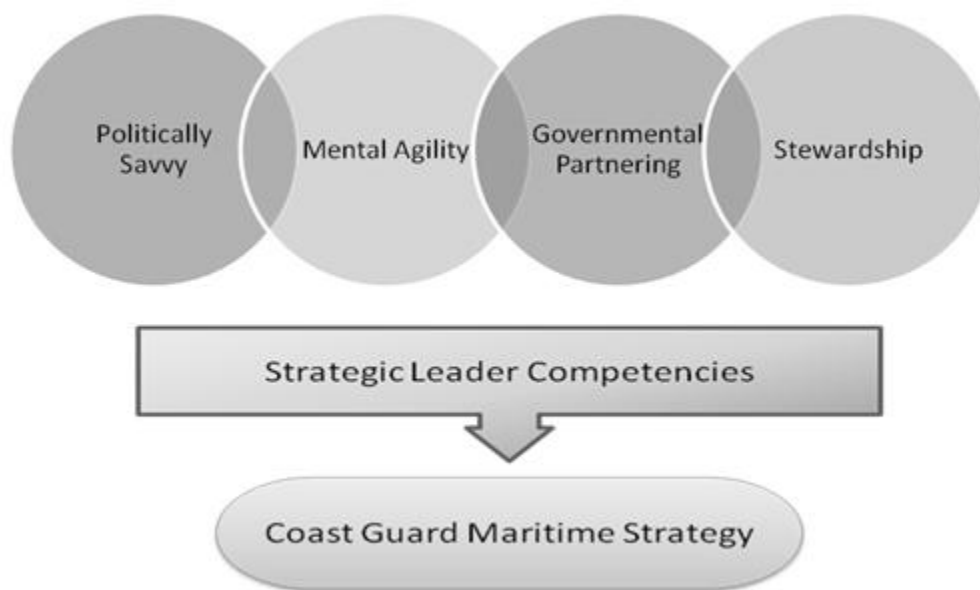


Figure 3:<sup>21</sup>

*Politically Savvy.* As the service continues to grow in stature, size, and responsibility, an understanding of the landscape in which the senior leader operates is important to both current and future service credibility and success. While still required

to maintain an internal focus to ensure success of current operations and personnel accountability, the senior leader must also scan the political environment to understand the social and economic factors affecting the mission.<sup>22</sup> Accepting situational realities and the potential impacts of their decisions, senior leaders are required to develop multiple courses of action to stay ahead of this dynamic environment.

As an agency under the Department of Transportation until 2002, the Coast Guard was often relegated to a secondary role in the budgetary process in favor of the much larger Federal Aviation and Highway Administrations. After the service's performance during the events immediately following 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the service received increased national public attention. Consequently, service leaders were called upon to develop national strategies to ensure the safety and security of the maritime transportation infrastructure. Communicating the need for growth in the Coast Guard and investment of new resources was increasingly more difficult as the nation found itself in two wars, a downwardly spiraling economic situation, and a mounting national debt. To this end, senior leaders, who understand legislative requirements, non-governmental influencers, and popular sentiment, are imperative to ensure the service is positioned for the future.<sup>23</sup>

Unlike the other armed services where the majority of their operational requirements are conducted abroad in support of a national security directive, the abundance of Coast Guard mission sets is done in full view of the American public every day. While this proximity creates an opportunity to form a lasting bond with their customer base, it also showcases any flaw in performance. Politically savvy senior leaders will not only understand this reality, but embrace this as an opportunity for the

service to prove their value to the American taxpayer. With an eye to future budgetary considerations, an astute senior Coast Guard leader will understand that it is necessary for the service to remain relevant to the American public in order to acquire the resources necessary for mission success.

Communicating strategic vision in a constrained budgetary environment is especially challenging, as appropriators are not prone to invest in programs meant only to deter, protect, or enhance a capability based upon a future projection, when weighed against the challenges of mounting national debt. While this is difficult and important, the communication of a vision is perhaps subordinate to the actual development of a strategic vision.<sup>24</sup> Arguably the most important role of a strategic leader, developing a vision, is defined by Senge as, "...a shared picture of the future we seek to create" and "...pictures... that foster genuine commitment and enrollment rather than compliance."<sup>25</sup> While the Coast Guard presently remains focused on a primarily institutional vision, the ability to develop and adapt personal vision into a larger governmental, societal scale requires a politically savvy leader. This will become increasingly important as the roles of the future Coast Guard continue to expand and take on a much larger importance in the national security framework.

*Mental Agility.* The intersection of mental agility with political savviness on the earlier provided graphic demonstrates the cooperating relationship between these two competencies, and how the concept of developing strategic vision, while politically critical, would be impossible without an inherent capability of agile thinking skills. Defined by the Army Training and Leader Development Panel-Officer (ATLD) as a meta-competency for strategic leadership, mental agility is "...the predisposition and

readiness to scan and recognize changes in the environment; to determine what is new and what must be learned to be effective”, and “...brings aspects of cognitive complexity, and improvisation,” to an VUCA environment.<sup>26</sup> Mental agility is more than just opening your mind to new ideas with the ability to envision future challenges, as it is not about “what” a leader thinks, but rather “how” the leader thinks.

The Coast Guard Maritime Strategy calls for achieving greater awareness of the maritime domain, enhancing the unity of effort in maritime planning, and integrating Coast Guard capabilities into larger National defense strategies. Operationalizing any of these end states individually is difficult but not impossible. However, the ability to integrate these concepts into a much larger framework requires the ability to balance opposing ideas and competing demands to create a better solution. For example, a greater awareness of the maritime domain could be accomplished by increased capability and capacity of sensor technology, but what does a leader do with this greater knowledge? Envisioning the second and third order effects of accomplishing a singular end state, without understanding the strategy on a grander scale will not be enough in the Coast Guard of the future.

The ability for the strategic leader to synthesize and consider multiple ideas and courses of action, with a coherent understanding of the interplay and corresponding effects, and without quickly agreeing to a single alternative, is known as integrative thinking.<sup>27</sup> This concept is perhaps the antithesis of generally accepted Coast Guard operational success, as the service prides itself on performing the mission daily, and not just planning for a future event. However, the ability to hone this ability through the educational process and introduction of concepts such as systems thinking, creative

thinking, critical thinking, and thinking in time defines the difference between a fine operational commander and a needed future strategic leader.<sup>28</sup>

*Governmental Partnering.* During Hurricane Katrina, the Coast Guard was called upon to become the lead federal agency in the emergency response effort. Vice Admiral Thad Allen, who was serving as the Coast Guard Chief of Staff at the time, was named as the Principal Federal Official and coordinated with a multitude of civilian federal agencies, the National Guard, and non-governmental relief organizations. The size and scope of the storm and associated recovery efforts involved more than 100,000 people and over \$100 billion in federal funding. The experience gained and leadership demonstrated during this operation not only demonstrated Admiral Allen's mental agility and political astuteness, but also showcased the necessity for a senior leader to build governmental partnerships. Admiral Allen said, "Katrina showed me the potential power that DHS has if only we are unified."<sup>29</sup>

The ability to understand the roles and missions of other organizations and to apply their unique skill sets in the development of a strategic or an operational plan was critical to the success of Admiral Allen during Katrina recovery efforts. The federal government's response was criticized in the early stages, but later reflections cast a majority of blame on state and local preparedness plans. Due to the ability of Coast Guard senior leaders to partner with other agencies, the Coast Guard's actions were widely heralded as a success.

The lessons learned from Allen's success provide a framework for the necessity of governmental partnering before an emergency occurs. Building alliances across government and widening the range of stakeholders critical to successful plan execution



is inherently at the senior levels of leadership.<sup>30</sup> Due to the vast array of differing mission sets assigned to the Coast Guard, senior leaders must be able to engage with Defense Department leadership to assess impacts of a current request for forces, while next answering a call from the Environmental Protection Agency on an oil spill clean-up effort. Understanding and appreciating the cultural differences of the differing agency partners requires a keen understanding of the agencies involved, their leader's focus, and overall potential sensitivity to quickly respond, exercise conflict management, and satisfy political leaders' desire for results.

In the future environment, not only will interagency partnerships become increasingly important, but international engagement and relationships will play a dominant role in the development of policy. Due to the broad range of duties of the U.S. Coast Guard, with both Title 10 and Title 14 authorities under U.S. Code, the Coast Guard blends civil, regulatory, and military competencies into one single agency. This makes the Coast Guard unique to the United States military structure, but very similar to the naval military structures of many emerging and existing nations throughout the world. Whereas historical international engagement has come in the form of joint exercises and training opportunities, senior leaders must be prepared to expand the role of the Coast Guard as a unique instrument of U.S. foreign policy in order to facilitate greater acceptance of United Nations standards of maritime shipping and management of the world's oceans.<sup>31</sup>

*Stewardship.* Defined as “the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care,” stewardship is integral to the competencies necessary for success at the senior levels of leadership.<sup>32</sup> While the concept of responsible

management of resources exists throughout the Coast Guard, stewardship becomes increasingly more critical at the Flag Officer level due to the “amplified impact” accorded to the rank and position of the official.<sup>33</sup> As mentioned earlier, the accomplishment of an end state for future Coast Guard strategy is inherently dependent upon the resources necessary to put a plan into motion. Stewardship at the senior level allows for a constant recognition that the demands of tomorrow are linked to the application, acquisition, and care of the resources held today.

Increased mission demands upon the Coast Guard caused by illegal immigration threats to the Homeland, lingering oil spill recovery efforts in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, and the ever present search and rescue operations continue to place demands on resources. At the forefront of this list are the most critical resources, Coast Guard personnel. Senior leaders are charged with not only developing and caring for the people in their charge, but also constructing a future vision to ensure the service is positioned to respond to challenges of tomorrow.<sup>34</sup> Development of senior leaders who understand this concept, have a recognized career record of making this concept a priority, and improve their understanding of its importance through educational opportunities will be necessary if the Coast Guard is to have the capability of achieving success in the future maritime strategy.

The most recent guidance to officer selection boards and panels for promotion year 2011 attempts to strike a balance between the necessary personal qualities desired of officers in general, and the competencies necessary for attainment of a greater rank and responsibility.<sup>35</sup> A great deal of emphasis is placed upon servant leadership and the guiding principles found in Alexander Hamilton’s Letter of Instruction

to the Commanding Officers of the first Revenue Cutters in 1791. In that letter, Hamilton said,

...all officers be active, vigilant, and firm, they must also be prudent, moderate, and good tempered. These last qualities are as important as the former, and will ensure the success of the Service...Officers will always keep in mind that their fellow citizens are freemen, and, as such, are impatient of anything that bears the least mark of a domineering spirit.<sup>36</sup>

The concept of servant leadership, as highlighted by Hamilton's letter, accurately captures the essence of the qualities expected from a Coast Guard officer. Just as important as how an officer interacts with the public, is how a senior leader exercises judicious and moderate stewardship within the Coast Guard ranks.

While people are the most important asset, a safe working environment with the proper equipment is also a stewardship responsibility of senior leaders. The current Coast Guard Commandant, Admiral Bob Papp, has said that the recapitalization of the fleet is his "highest priority, but building ships takes time."<sup>37</sup> Applying stewardship principles from the senior leader levels is necessary to institute a corporate culture of maintaining the equipment necessary to ensure safe mission execution in the future.<sup>38</sup> While applying this principle, the senior leader must be cognizant of the duality of the roles of stewardship; the maintenance of aging equipment is manpower intensive and thus could over exert the already stressed personnel resources.

#### Areas of Further Study

Astute, mentally agile, politically savvy officers, capable of building governmental partnerships and with a recognized track record of service stewardship are difficult to develop and even more challenging to maintain in the ranks. Just as these personal traits are desirable to the Coast Guard, they are also the envy of many other

governmental agencies and private corporations who require similar competencies at their senior levels of leadership. While the Coast Guard continues to develop officers that possess these skills, perhaps more could be done to effect positive change in the developmental process and encourage a greater pool of officers to remain viable for Flag Officer competition. From this analysis of both present and future Coast Guard requirements and strategy, and the strategic leadership competencies necessary for future senior leaders, there are two main areas that are recommended for further study: one, a senior service school education that unifies DHS leadership; and two, maintaining relationships with Department of Defense services.

*Advanced Education.* The creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, and the associated leadership challenges of such an undertaking, is much larger in scope but not dissimilar to what the Coast Guard leaders faced in 1915. Bringing together agencies with non-linear congressional oversight committees, deeply rooted traditions and customs, and dissimilar operational mission sets, has brought to light the need for an accurate vision, a commonly derived purpose, and a well defined strategy. The same challenges faced by the Coast Guard in developing future strategic leaders are shared by their fellow agencies within DHS, and quite possibly by senior Department officials as well. Further study into how these common challenges can be leveraged into a shared and desirable end state is recommended at the earliest opportunity. As Admiral Allen stated, DHS will only realize its true potential if the department is unified. The unification process needs to begin with interagency workforces knowledgeable in each other's capabilities, cultures, and focus, and perhaps

through a common educational background that prepares leaders for the challenges of tomorrow.

Developing the senior leadership skills necessary to operate within the parent department, the legislative oversight committees, and the greater defense enterprise is shared by all agencies within DHS. Currently, the agencies develop these qualities through varied assignments, advanced education programs at civilian universities and limited attendance at the War Colleges. The ability to communicate at the strategic level, with balanced decision making, and most importantly, humility are suggested as necessary traits for all senior leaders. However, the ability to operate within a joint interagency system will not only benefit the Coast Guard, but also greatly benefit future DHS operations. The formal education specifically targeted at the senior levels of leadership within these agencies will greatly increase the success rate of these individuals in their ability to shape national policy, advance the reputation of their respective agencies, and execute sound stewardship practices.

*Honoring the Coast Guard's Military Responsibilities.* The bridging of Coast Guard and DHS challenges is perhaps an already well developed course of action, but the potential second and third order effects of this strategy are perhaps not as well developed. As the maturity of DHS grows, the Coast Guard could possibly find itself a larger part of a well defined maritime homeland security strategy, which is a very positive step for DHS. During this process, however, the Coast Guard needs to be acutely aware of its own service culture, norms, and history and not lose contact with its sister Defense Department services. Admiral Papp has stated that one of guiding principles is "Honoring our Profession," and that through a greater attention to our

mission areas, and a return to basic tenets of seamanship, boatmanship, and airmanship, this will be accomplished. However, there exists a difference between homeland security and homeland defense, and the Coast Guard is the bridge between these two mission sets.

A profession is defined as an organization “wherein the individual has the discretion to exercise initiative and judgment in decision-making and execution that flows from their specialized knowledge, a knowledge typically not shared by the clients those professionals serve.”<sup>39</sup> While this description is operationally accurate, the Coast Guard must not forget to honor its lineage as a military profession as well. By not affording professional military education to its officer corps in the aspects of strategy, national security, operational best practices, and joint doctrine, the Coast Guard could possibly lose its identity as a military service because the officer corps will not be deemed as military professionals. While a broad study of how the Coast Guard can assure interoperability with Department of Defense services is perhaps not necessary at this time, the concept of military professional officer education is offered as a point of discussion for future Coast Guard resource strategy and strategic direction.

### Conclusion

Although the Coast Guard’s current leadership development programs “are doing the best they can with what they have,” and have made significant strides in the areas of leader development in the last ten years, this will not be enough for the strategic Coast Guard leaders of the future.<sup>40</sup> Accomplishment of the Coast Guard’s Maritime Strategy will require strategic leaders of vision, mental agility, political savviness, with the ability to establish lasting governmental partnerships in a time of rapid strategic change. The purpose of this paper was to highlight the current and future challenges

the Coast Guard faces, and the necessary competencies required of its strategic leaders to ensure the proper track lines are envisioned, charted, and acted upon. While honoring our profession through operational excellence is important, investment in the development of our strategic leaders is perhaps the best way we can honor our service's future.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> General Norman Schwarzkopf, The Brainy Quote Home Page, [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/leadership\\_5.html#ixzz18h3l7GZw](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/leadership_5.html#ixzz18h3l7GZw) (accessed December 15, 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Donald L. Miller, comp., *Braddock's Presidential Quotations* (Washington, DC: Braddock Publications, 1982), 11.

<sup>3</sup> A summation of Coast Guard history found in context within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *U.S. Coast Guard: America's Maritime Guardian*, Coast Guard Publication 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, May 2009).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *U.S. Coast Guard: America's Maritime Guardian*, Coast Guard Publication 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, May 2009), 4.

<sup>5</sup> J. R. McKay, *The Scylla and Charybdis of Strategic Leadership* (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2008), 60.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>7</sup> Admiral Thad W. Allen, *The Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship* (Washington, DC: U.S. Coast Guard, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> *Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship*, 2.

<sup>9</sup> James T. Conway, Gary Roughead, Thad W. Allen, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> *Evergreen II Project Report*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> *Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship*, 22.

<sup>12</sup> *Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship*, 20.

<sup>13</sup> *Evergreen II Project Report*, 18.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Evergreen II Project Report*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen J. Gerras, ed., *Strategic Leadership Primer*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (Carlisle, PA: Department of the Army), 11.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Leadership Development Framework, Commandant Instruction M5351.3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Homeland Security), 2-2.

<sup>18</sup> A summation of leadership core competencies obtained from the Coast Guard's Leadership Development Framework.

<sup>19</sup> Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, Congressional Research Service Bill summary, <http://www.thomas.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d099:HR03622:@@@D&summ2=m&|TOM:/bss/d099query.html> (accessed December 5, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> These four competencies are prevalent in the *Strategic Leadership Primer*, Gerras with ample notations from many other academic publications.

<sup>21</sup> Author's conceptualization of senior leader competencies and how this supports the Coast Guard Maritime Strategy.

<sup>22</sup> Gerras, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Gerras, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Currency. 1990), 9 as quoted in Gerras, *Strategic Leadership Primer*, p. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Gerras, 62.

<sup>27</sup> Roger Martin, "How Successful Leaders Think," *Harvard Business Review*, (June 2007): 62.

<sup>28</sup> Richard M. Meinhart, "Leadership and Strategic Thinking," *Army War College Strategic Thinking Course Directive*, (AY10): p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> Angie C. Marek, "Always ready for the storm," October 26, 2006, linked from *The U.S. News and World Report* magazine website at <http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/061022/30allen.htm> (accessed October 17, 2010).

<sup>30</sup> Gerras, 49.

<sup>31</sup> *Coast Guard Strategy for Maritime Safety, Security, and Stewardship*, 51.

<sup>32</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2001), 1150.



<sup>33</sup> Lee DeRemer, "Stewardship: What's In It For You?," as found in the Strategic Leadership core curriculum selected readings compilation for the U.S. Army War College Academic Year 2011 (Carlisle, PA: Department of the Army), 290.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 295.

<sup>35</sup> Commandant's Guidance to PY11 Officer Selection Boards and Panels, (U.S. Coast Guard: Washington, DC), 2010.

<sup>36</sup> *Coast Guard Publication 1*, 107.

<sup>37</sup> Commander Glynn Smith, "Recapitalization of the Fleet," September 23, 2010, linked from the Coast Guard Compass, official blog of the U.S. Coast Guard at <http://coastguard.dodlive.mil/index.php/2010/09/recapitalization-of-the-fleet> (accessed October 16, 2010).

<sup>38</sup> Gerras, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Don M. Snider, "Keeping the Edge: Revitalizing America's Military Officer Corps," (Center for a New American Security: 2010), p. 22 referencing T.O. Jacobs and Michael G. Sanders, "Principles for Building the Profession: The SOF Experience," chapter 20 in Don M. Snider, ed., *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Learning Solutions, 2005), 441-462.

<sup>40</sup> Admiral Bob Papp, as quoted in the Coast Guard's "The Leadership News," Spring 2010: Issue 41 accessed on November 19, 2010 at <http://www.uscg.mil/leadership/default.asp>.

