



THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

# FORCE DESIGN

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# 2028

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# INTRODUCTION



The Armed Forces of the United States exist to preserve our freedom and the American way of life. After being weakened by decades of underinvestment, neglect, and strategic drift, the U.S. Coast Guard is facing a readiness crisis. It can no longer reliably protect the American people and our Homeland. This trend must be stopped through decisive and transformational change.



Now, more than ever, the American people need a strong and capable Coast Guard. As a vital component of our Armed Forces, the Coast Guard controls, secures, and defends the U.S. border and maritime approaches from illegal migration, dangerous drugs, foreign invasion, and other threats. The Service also protects our ports and waterways, which are extensions of the border and critical to our economic and national security. It is also central to the President's direction to revitalize the U.S. maritime industry. Every day, America relies on the Coast Guard to succeed across its wide array of missions.

Yet today, the Coast Guard is less ready than at any other time since the end of World War II. The Service is fragile, in crisis, and on a path to failure. It has a significant enlisted workforce shortage, without enough people to operate its assets. Its cutters, boats, aircraft, information technology, and shore stations are on the verge of collapse because of a long-term lack of maintenance. Efforts to replace aging assets are underfunded and behind schedule. Its organizational structure and force design are outdated. The Service is in a downward readiness spiral that is unsustainable. Without change, the Coast Guard will fail.

President Trump has directed that America must secure its borders, bolster maritime dominance, and rebuild the depleted military, emphasizing the need to restore its strength and readiness after years of neglect. With this unprecedented support, the Coast Guard will transform into a stronger, more ready, and capable fighting force.

The Coast Guard must not simply evolve. It must revolutionize how it functions and operates to ensure decisive advantage over adversaries. The Coast Guard will shift from a reactive posture to a proactive strategy that relies on innovation. It will anticipate the Nation's needs and develop and field cutting-edge technologies to meet them. The Service will recruit and retain the best that America has to offer and develop them into the Nation's finest fighting force.

This requires a fundamental change. Force Design 2028 (FD2028) is the bold blueprint needed to drive urgent action and win.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kristi Noem".

Secretary Kristi Noem  
Department of Homeland Security



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# I.

## Establish a Service Secretary

Civilian leadership and control of the military is a fundamental construct within the Constitution. It ensures that the Nation's Armed Forces are subordinate to the elected representatives of the American people.

The other branches of the Armed Forces have Service Secretaries that provide direct civilian political leadership, control, oversight, accountability, and advocacy. The Coast Guard does not, and despite the Service's efforts to succeed, that has contributed to its neglect and drift for decades.

FD2028 is a new path forward that allows the Coast Guard to better serve the American people, align with the other five military services, and swiftly effect needed change through strong civilian oversight and control. I, working with Congress, will pursue the legislation needed to establish a Coast Guard Service Secretary within the Department of Homeland Security to correct this historical institutional disadvantage that has left it less ready to protect the American people.

- The Secretary will be legislatively authorized, nominated by the President, and Senate confirmed. The Secretary will have authorities comparable to the Secretaries of the other military services within the Department of Defense, adapted to the Coast Guard's unique missions and position within DHS.
- The Secretary will be accountable to the President and myself, and subject to congressional oversight, for all aspects of Coast Guard functions and operations.
- The Secretary will establish the strategic direction for the Coast Guard and direct actions to organize, man, train, and equip the Coast Guard to be ready to meet mission demands today and in the future.
- The Secretary will be authorized to exercise my authorities under Titles 14 and 50, including acquisition and procurement, and fulfill duties commensurate with the other Secretaries of military departments under Title 10.
- The Secretary of the Coast Guard will report directly to me. The Secretary will be supported by Senate-confirmed Under Secretary of the Coast Guard, whose position is commensurate to the DHS Under Secretary for Management, and by Senate-confirmed Assistant Secretaries.

A Secretary of the Coast Guard will restore its readiness and strategic direction and fully align the Service to execute the President's priorities.



# II.

## Organization

The Coast Guard must be able to conduct its missions and deliver results without being mired in wasteful bureaucracy. Creating a Secretary of the Coast Guard presents an opportunity to reform the Service's organizational structure to become more efficient, enabling a leaner, more agile, and strategically-focused Headquarters.

FD2028 initiatives will streamline processes, eliminate redundancies, and empower decision-making at all levels. These changes will also restore clear lines of responsibility, authority, and accountability in officials leading operations, support, and other enabling functions.

### KEY INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- **Design the future Coast Guard force to win.** The Coast Guard requires a force structure, force posture, and operational concepts to field mission-capable, world-wide deployable assets to protect the U.S., and defeat or deny terrorists and criminals that seek to flow illicit drugs, weapons, and aliens across our border and kill the American people. To do so it will embrace strategic planning, foster experimentation, develop new operational concepts, and improve decision-making through the stand-up of a Futures Development and Integration function.
- **Create Program Executive Offices that fully integrate capabilities.** Sharpen readiness by transforming from the current stove-piped and disparate acquisition and sustainment across disconnected capability programs into a systems-focused approach that breaks barriers and ensures integration of capabilities into a far more effective force. Implement a comprehensive lifecycle management approach for all assets through the transformation to five Program Executive Offices (PEOs)—Surface, Air, C&SI, and Shore, and a revolutionary Robotics/Autonomous Systems business line that will be the most transformational enhancement of capabilities to the Coast Guard since the inception of aviation.



- **Establish a Deployable Specialized Forces command.** Prior efforts began functional alignment of Deployable Specialized Forces under Area commanders but left the work unfinished. The Coast Guard will functionally align Deployable Specialized Forces under the command of a Flag officer that reports to a single Area commander. This ensures full integration under a single operational commander with oversight and advocacy for this critical national capability. This action will improve readiness, mission effectiveness, and interoperability with joint and interagency forces to meet Coast Guard, DHS, and joint military requirements.
- **Strengthen Coast Guard Cyber Command.** The Coast Guard will restructure and transform Coast Guard Cyber Command to ensure the Coast Guard's ability to address current and future threats in the cyber and space domains. This aligns with other military services and improves interoperability with the Joint Force.
- **Transfer operational and service-delivery functions out of Coast Guard Headquarters.** Removing non-headquarters personnel and functions from the St. Elizabeth's campus to other established locations will enable a more decisive, agile, and effective Coast Guard.
- **Establish a Director of Staff to streamline decision-making.** The Coast Guard will end its practice of peer governance that for too long has been slow, bureaucratic, and indecisive. The Service will establish a Director of Staff who will be responsible for oversight and direction of the executive decision-making process, pushing decisions down and information up and, in coordination with the new Secretariat, ensure integration of key actions and initiatives.



# III.

## People

The Coast Guard workforce is at the core of the Service. However, for decades chronic manning shortages at front-line units have hampered the Service's ability to execute its missions. These gaps also created an unacceptable risk to its personnel and the public. The Coast Guard will restore its most important treasure—our Coast Guard men and women that make up the total workforce of Active Duty and Reserve military personnel, Civilian employees, and Auxiliary volunteers.

The Coast Guard is not right sized for its missions. The Service will grow its military workforce by at least 15,000 members by the end of Fiscal Year 2028 to restore readiness, operate a growing fleet, and deploy new capabilities to meet the increasing and evolving threats.

The Service will also fix the mismatched balance across grade levels and specialties by recognizing that leveraging the right talent means moving the Coast Guard away from the outdated and ineffective 50-year-old pyramid workforce structure.

### KEY INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- **Transform the workforce into a stronger, more ready and capable fighting force.** The Coast Guard will fully align with the President's Executive Order on "Restoring America's Fighting Force" to focus on selection and promotion by merit, prizing leadership and unit cohesion. It will also institute a physical fitness test for all its military members because overall readiness starts with personal readiness.





- **Restoring a skilled and ready enlisted workforce.** The Coast Guard will modernize and expand accessions for the Active Duty and Reserve components. It will attract patriotic young Americans looking to serve their country by investing in recruiting incentives, marketing research, and personnel support.
- **Invest in future officer leaders.** Although much of the growth will be in the enlisted ranks, the Service will also grow its officer corps through investments in the Coast Guard Academy, Officer Candidate School, and direct commissioning programs to attract talent from entry level to lateral entry from competitive fields in the private sector.
- **Revitalize the Coast Guard Reserve.** The Coast Guard will focus the Reserves on preparation for full-scale mobilization in a time of war, national emergency, or major contingency. A renewed focus will enable the Coast Guard to better structure and ensure readiness of the Reserve force to mobilize and respond at speed and scale to enable the Service to win.
- **Remove unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles for the civilian workforce.** The Coast Guard relies heavily on the dedication and expertise of its civilian workforce. The Coast Guard will remove obstacles that hinder their success by restructuring the workforce management system and providing leadership training and opportunities to attract and retain the best patriots our Nation has to offer.





# IV.

## Technology

Today the Service is not equipped to deliver and use today's technology that is needed to effectively execute its missions, and unprepared to harness advanced technology that is already upon it and that it will need for the future.

The Coast Guard will become a leader within the military services and DHS for adoption and use of advanced technology, human-machine teaming, and data to conduct operations, support, and enterprise functions. Coast Guard forces will lead the way in rapid identification, integration, and use of technology to improve operations and deliver mission results.

### KEY INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- **Create a *Coastal Sentinel* next generation maritime surveillance capability.** The Coast Guard's existing sensor and command and control systems are obsolete and not integrated with other capabilities deployed by other Federal and State agencies. Instead of replacing obsolete current capabilities in-kind, the Service will develop a robust and integrated sensor network that effectively collects, processes, and combines real-time data across platforms and systems while leveraging artificial intelligence and other leading technology. This is needed to deliver unprecedented identification and warning of threats along our border and maritime approaches to enable the Coast Guard and others to control, secure, and defend our borders.





- **Support a revitalized U.S. maritime industry.** The Coast Guard will replace the antiquated, burdensome manual processes and systems used to register U.S. vessels, accredit mariner training, and issue U.S. Merchant Mariner credentials. It will ensure those systems are ready to support a growing U.S. fleet.
- **Support workforce growth with Human Resources information technology.** A modern and effective workforce management capability is critical to growing the Coast Guard to meet mission demands. This system will streamline workforce management, onboarding, career tracking, and daily administration for all employees while incorporating AI to enhance decision-making.
- **Deliver a modern, effective logistics system.** The Coast Guard needs a better capability to sustain assets by streamlining maintenance through improved efficiency. It will move to implement an improved, integrated logistics management system to move from the current corrective and planned maintenance model to conditions-based-maintenance of assets. That will require a logistics system to improve maintenance, sustainment, readiness, and performance of over 2,100 surface, aviation, shore, and CSI assets.
- **Establish a Rapid Response Prototype Team.** The Coast Guard must be able to quickly and effectively identify, adopt, and deliver to its workforce advanced technology capabilities. The Service will establish a team empowered to streamline processes to deliver cutting-edge capabilities starting with front-line operators, prior to investment in large, cumbersome acquisition programs. This enables operators to provide immediate feedback on emerging technology and processes to effectively inform requirements development and maturity.





# V.

## Contracting and Acquisitions

The Service will streamline its contracting and acquisitions (C&A) to respond to emerging threats. It will work well with industry, leverage creative commercial solutions, and prioritize speed and flexibility to deliver critical capabilities. The historic opportunity for significant investment from the Administration and Congress to renew the Coast Guard drive the imperative for the Service to be ready to successfully execute those investments.

Consistent with President's Executive Order on "Modernizing Defense Acquisitions and Spurring Innovation in the Defense Industrial Base," the Coast Guard will reform its acquisition processes to successfully deliver ready, critical capabilities while managing risk, including the icebreakers needed to provide assured U.S. access and presence to the polar regions and unmanned systems to enable Coast Guard operations wherever it operates.

The Coast Guard will establish a disciplined, integrated requirements process to eliminate the process that results in bloated and boutique requirements that cannot be delivered on time or at budgeted cost.

The Secretary of the Coast Guard will be responsible for senior acquisition decisions and direction to leverage collaboration with industry and the industrial base and ensure performance.





## KEY INITIATIVES INCLUDE:

- **Streamline contracting approvals.** Establishing the role of Senior Procurement Executive within the Coast Guard Secretariat will bring specialized experience unique to Coast Guard contracting actions, including military ships and aircraft, to move with speed to deliver key capabilities.
- **Outsource procurement activity to increase efficiency.** By leveraging other proven government agencies, the Coast Guard can reduce the need for its specialized contracting personnel to unnecessarily devote time to certain projects. Assisted acquisitions and outsourcing surge work to DoD or other agencies with requisite capacity will streamline execution.
- **Establish single points of accountability.** The Coast Guard will eliminate consensus-based decision making and empower Program Executive Officers and individual program managers to make decisions on their programs. It will incentivize acquiring a capability within scheduled cost and performance and hold personnel appropriately accountable for failing to deliver on-time and on-budget.





# VI.

## What Lies Ahead

FD2028 is a generational opportunity at a critical moment in history that will fulfill the Coast Guard's potential to meet the Nation's needs. It is a commitment to aggressively implement necessary transformation.

The Coast Guard will succeed.

- **Within 30 days**, the Commandant will deliver an execution plan aligned around strategic imperatives and key enablers.
- **Within 150 days**, the Coast Guard will commence a Force Posture and Operational Concepts Campaign, focused on reinventing the ways the Coast Guard employs its forces and delivers results for the American people.
- **Within 180 days**, the Coast Guard will deliver the first of semiannual updates to me on FD2028's implementation.





Throughout this transformation, the Coast Guard must also execute the President's priorities and conduct its missions while ensuring readiness as part of the Joint Force to defend the Nation. This means the Coast Guard must urgently *fix* critical deficiencies, *run* its operations, make lasting transformational *change*, and *grow* its capacity and capability.

The men and women of the United States Coast Guard represent the very best that the Nation has to offer. When they have the assets, capabilities, support, and advocacy they deserve, there is nothing they cannot accomplish. FD2028 will restore the Service to greatness so that it is once again the instrument of national power that ensures our national security and economic prosperity for generations to come.





FORCE DESIGN 2028 EXECUTIVE REPORT