

AUSTAL USA Lays Keel of Its First Offshore Patrol Cutter



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MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA hosted a keel laying ceremony today for the first U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Heritage-class Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) to be built at the company's Mobile, Ala. ship manufacturing facility. Pickering (WMSM 919) is being built under a contract that includes up to 11 cutters and has a potential value of \$3.3 billion. The Coast Guard has executed contract options for six of the 11 cutters to date.

Ship sponsor Dr. Meghan Pickering Seymour authenticated Pickering's keel by welding her initials onto a keel plate in front of over a hundred distinguished guests including The Honorable Mike Ezell, House of Representatives Mississippi's 4th District *and Chair of House Transportation & Infrastructure Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime*

Transportation, Admiral Kevin Lunday, Commandant (acting) U.S. Coast Guard, as well as Mobile community leaders and members of the Austal USA and USCG shipbuilding team.

Dr. Seymour is the great-great-great-great-great-granddaughter of Colonel Timothy Pickering, the namesake of the first USCGC Cutter Pickering launched in 1798. She was assisted in welding her initials by one of Austal USA's advanced welders, Mr. Ravi Khamsourin.

The OPC program will recapitalize the Coast Guard's aging medium endurance cutters and provide a capability bridge between the service's national security cutters, which operate in the open ocean, and the fast response cutters which operate closer to shore.

"Meeting this important milestone for the Coast Guard's Offshore Patrol Cutter program is a significant achievement that underscores our commitment to the on-time delivery of the cutters the USCG needs," stated Austal USA President Michelle Kruger. "Today's ceremony is representative of the hard work and dedication of our skilled workforce and the strength of the shipbuilding team of Austal USA, the Coast Guard and our suppliers. We are proud to be building these critically important cutters that will help ensure the security of our Nation."

The 360-foot OPC will provide the majority of the Coast Guard's offshore presence conducting a variety of missions including law enforcement, drug and migrant interdiction, and search and rescue. With a range of 10,200 nautical miles at 14 knots and a 60-day endurance period, each OPC will be capable of deploying independently or as part of task groups, serving as a mobile command and control platform for surge operations such as hurricane response, mass migration incidents and other events. The cutters will also support Arctic objectives by helping regulate and protect emerging commerce and energy exploration in Alaska.

Pickering is one of two Coast Guard OPCs, and one of ten total surface vessels, under construction at Austal USA's Mobile, Ala. ship manufacturing facility. Austal USA started construction on its second Heritage-class Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC), Icarus (WMSM 920), in August 2025.