

Bollinger Shipyards Delivers 45th Fast Response Cutter to Coast Guard



USCGC Emlen Tunnell in Key West, Florida. *BOLLINGER SHIPYARDS LOCKPORT, La.* – Bollinger Shipyards LLC has delivered the USCGC Emlen Tunnell to the U.S. Coast Guard in Key West, Florida, the company said in a July 1 release. This is the 168th vessel Bollinger has delivered to the U.S. Coast Guard over a 35-year period and the 45th Fast Response Cutter (FRC) delivered under the current program.

Named in honor of Coast Guard hero and National Football League great Emlen Tunnell, the cutter is the fourth of six FRCs to be home-ported in Manama, Bahrain. They will replace the aging 110-foot Island Class Patrol Boats, built by Bollinger Shipyards 30 years ago, supporting the Patrol Forces Southwest Asia (PATFORSWA), the U.S. Coast Guard's largest overseas presence outside the United States.

“With recent incursions in the Arabian Gulf, it is a top priority to ensure that the brave men and women of the Coast Guard have the most state-of-the-art, advanced vessels as they work to ensure maritime security in the region,” said Bollinger President and CEO Ben Bordelon. “Bollinger is proud to continue enhancing and supporting the U.S. Coast Guard's operational presence in the Middle East and ensuring it remains the preferred partner around the world.”

Earlier this year at the commissioning ceremony of the USCGC Charles Moulthropé, U.S. Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl Schultz lauded the “enhanced seakeeping” capabilities of the PATFORSWA-bound FRCs, saying “these ships are truly going to be game changing in their new theater of operations” and

“offer increased opportunities for integrated joint operations with our Navy and Marine Corps colleagues” as the Coast Guard seeks to be part of the whole-of-government solution set in the region.

PATFORSWA is composed of six cutters, shoreside support personnel, and the Maritime Engagement Team. The unit’s mission is to train, organize, equip, support and deploy combat-ready Coast Guard Forces in support of U.S. Central Command and national security objectives. PATFORSWA works with Naval Forces Central Command in furthering their goals to conduct persistent maritime operations to forward U.S. interests, deter and counter disruptive countries, defeat violent extremism and strengthen partner nations’ maritime capabilities in order to promote a secure maritime environment.

Each FRC is named for an enlisted Coast Guard hero who distinguished themselves in the line of duty. Emlen Tunnell was instrumental in saving the lives of two shipmates in two different heroic actions. His exploits as a Coast Guardsman and then as a ground-breaking African American in the world of professional sports, Tunnell, through his incredible achievements both on and off the field, demonstrated the Coast Guard’s core values of honor, respect and devotion to duty.

Tunnell played college football at Toledo before and after World War II – he enlisted from 1943 to 1946 – and continued his collegiate career at the University of Iowa. After leaving college in 1948, he hitchhiked from his home in Pennsylvania to New York for a tryout with the New York Giants. Tunnell was the first Black player signed by the Giants and later played for the Green Bay Packers. He ended up playing 14 seasons in the NFL and when he retired as a player, he held league records with 1,282 interception return yards, 258 punt returns, 2,209 punt return yards, and 79 interceptions, the second most interceptions in NFL history today. He then became a scout and one of the league’s first Black assistant coaches,

helping fully integrate both the Giants and the Packers. In 1967, Tunnell was the first Black man and the first defensive specialist to be enshrined in Canton.

The FRC is an operational “game changer,” according to senior Coast Guard officials. FRCs are consistently being deployed in support of the full range of missions within the United States Coast Guard and other branches of our armed services. This is due to its exceptional performance, expanded operational reach and capabilities, and ability to transform and adapt to the mission. FRCs have conducted operations as far as the Marshall Islands – a 4,400 nautical mile trip from their homeport. Measuring in at 154-feet, FRCs have a flank speed of 28 knots, state of the art C4ISR suite and stern launch and recovery ramp for a 26-foot, over-the-horizon interceptor cutter boat.