

Coast Guard Increasing Engagement with Pacific Allies, Partners, U.S. Navy



Adm. Karl Schultz, Coast Guard Commandant addressed the Coast Guard 8th District personnel and guests attending a change-of-command ceremony June 25, 2021 at the Port of New Orleans. *U.S. COAST GUARD / Petty Officer 3rd Class John Michelli*

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Coast Guard's top officer said the service has taken steps to increase its integration with allies and partners in the Western Pacific Ocean area to provide more effective cooperation and provide more presence.

In a June 28 webinar discussion with the Brookings Institution's Michael O'Hanlon, Adm. Karl Schultz, commandant of the Coast Guard, detailed some of the ways in which the Coast Guard is reaching out to promote international cooperation.

Schultz said the Coast Guard assigned an attaché to Australia in 2020 who will represent the service in that nation plus New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. Australia has new patrol boats, some of which will operate in Oceania, and the U.S. Coast Guard could provide training on law enforcement on the high seas. New Zealand has a new auxiliary ship that could provide opportunities for cooperation.

Next summer the Coast Guard will assign an attaché to Singapore. It already has an adviser in Vietnam, to which the Coast Guard has or will transfer three Secretary-class high-endurance cutters.

The service also has transferred three Secretary-class cutters to the Philippines, which is growing its own coast guard from 5,000 personnel to 40,000 personnel.

The Coast Guard also is helping Indonesia set up a new training center.

Schultz also has assigned a captain to the operations/plans directorate of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and a captain and a commander to the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Hawaii.

“We’ve got mobile training teams that operate through the region,” the admiral said. “We bring Indo-Pacific partners into our schoolhouses here [to the United States], to the International Maritime Officers Course.”

The Coast Guard also has been backing up the U.S. Pacific Fleet, providing two national security cutters in 2019 and one in 2020 to help fill a void left while the USS John McCain and USS Fitzgerald were being repaired following their collisions. These cutters performed sanction work against the North Koreans. The USCGC Kimball also conducted a patrol of the South Pacific this year, calling in Fiji. In the future, the USCGC Kimball will patrol in the Western Pacific on patrol against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The three fast response cutters [FRCs] assigned or slated for Guam, combined with the ocean-going buoy tender assigned there, will give the Coast Guard an increased reach and presence in the Western Pacific.

“I anticipate our being throughout the Oceania region with those patrol boats [FRCs], [and] a periodic national security cutter,” Schultz said.

The commandant stressed the value of the Coast Guard presence in providing “human-to-human partnership to counter Chinese checkbook diplomacy.

“The Chinese Coast Guard is antagonistic, running down Philippine, Indonesian, Malaysian fishermen in dispute,” he said, also noting the abusive maritime actions of the Chinese

Peoples Armed Militia.

“We don’t use our Coast Guard as an arm of the government to press in coercively over disputed regions,” he said.