

THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD



**FD/28**  
FORCE DESIGN

# FORCE DESIGN 2028

## INITIAL UPDATE

JANUARY 2026

# CONTENTS

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FOREWORD FROM THE SECRETARY .....	2
COMMANDANT'S LETTER TO THE FORCE .....	3
RETURN ON INVESTMENT .....	4
DRIVE IMMEDIATE OPERATIONAL IMPACT .....	6
REMAKING THE SERVICE .....	8
PROVIDE NEW CAPABILITIES & HIGHER READINESS .....	10
DELIVER MARITIME POWER .....	13





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## FOREWORD FROM THE SECRETARY

*The United States Coast Guard serves as a vital instrument of national power, advancing security both at home and abroad, safeguarding the American economy, and providing rapid response to emergent contingencies. When I became the Secretary of Homeland Security, we took steps to change the Coast Guard in support of President Trump's America First Agenda. We refocused the Service to secure our borders, facilitate commerce, and respond to any contingency at any time across the Nation.*

*Under the leadership of President Trump, I took significant steps to elevate the Service. Following a comprehensive review of the Coast Guard, I issued the Force Design 2028 Executive Report in May, which outlined specific directives to transform the Coast Guard into the Nation's premier fighting force. Shortly thereafter, the enactment of the One Big Beautiful Bill allocated nearly \$25 billion toward advancing new capabilities for the Service.*

*Force Design 2028 drives significant advancements in the Coast Guard's capability, agility, and readiness. These improvements are evident in the Service's operational successes worldwide, particularly along the Southwest Border and southern maritime approaches, where efforts have substantially reduced the flow of illegal immigration and resulted in record interdictions of illicit narcotics before they reach U.S. shores.*

*Shortly after launching Force Design 2028, we analyzed the real economic value that the Coast Guard contributes to our Nation. The findings of this analysis are remarkable: by a conservative estimate, the Coast Guard generates over \$74 billion in value annually while operating on a budget of just over \$12 billion. This represents an extraordinary return on investment for the American people and is a testament to the dedication and effectiveness of every member serving in the Coast Guard. This is more than merely an impressive financial outcome; it underscores the smart investment of taxpayer dollars in the Coast Guard, an investment I intend to grow on behalf of the American people.*

*Through the implementation of Force Design 2028, the extraordinary return on investment—the value the Coast Guard provides to our Nation—is poised to grow even further. The men and women of the Coast Guard exemplify the very best of our Nation. We are immensely proud of their achievements through Force Design 2028. Together we will continue to put America First.*

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SEMPER PARATUS

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KRISTI NOEM | SECRETARY OF HOMELAND SECURITY



## COMMANDANT'S LETTER TO THE FORCE

*As we deliver the first update on Force Design 2028, the Coast Guard is already a stronger, more agile, capable, and responsive fighting force. The Service is better positioned than it was in January 2025 to effectively control, secure, and defend the U.S. borders and maritime approaches, facilitate the uninterrupted flow of commerce, and rapidly respond to contingencies.*

*Force Design 2028 is improving operational outcomes while establishing the foundation for even greater achievements in the future. Recent operations along the Southwest Border, including the Rio Grande River, demonstrate the Coast Guard's agility and operational ingenuity. We continue to stop illegal immigration and achieve record-breaking interdictions of illicit narcotics at sea, preventing criminals and dangerous drugs from devastating communities across the Nation. Moving forward, we will expand our capabilities, grow our workforce, and refine our organizational structure to maximize mission results, all while upholding our sacred trust with the American people.*

*One of our most significant challenges a year ago was addressing critical workforce shortages. We have made significant progress in reducing those shortages, and we now have a surplus of junior enlisted personnel available for assignment to units where they can contribute most effectively. We are actively exploring options to further expand our accession and training capacity as we work toward the ambitious goal of growing our workforce by more than 15,000 members. This investment in our people is essential to our future success.*

*We are rapidly executing resources to modernize Coast Guard capabilities and setting a course for sustained operational excellence. Our Program Executive Offices, integrating the expertise of our Acquisition and Lifecycle Sustainment professionals, are accelerating the deployment of Remote and Autonomous Systems, including Counter and Long-Range Unmanned Aerial Systems, to enhance Maritime Domain Awareness and support at-sea interdictions. Additionally, we are actively recapitalizing our surface and aviation assets to deliver new capabilities at speed and scale. Furthermore, we are moving with unprecedented speed to improve infrastructure at Training Center Cape May, the Coast Guard Academy, and major facilities across the Service.*

*Force Design 2028 is the way we will defeat our adversaries, deliver peace through strength, and protect the Homeland both today and for decades to come. We will embrace innovation and cutting-edge technology to control our borders, facilitate vital commerce, and ensure our readiness to respond to any crisis or contingency. Force Design 2028 is our bold roadmap for the Coast Guard's enduring success.*

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SEMPER PARATUS

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A stylized, handwritten signature of Kevin E. Lunday in black ink. The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Kevin E." on top and "Lunday" on the bottom, all written in a single continuous line.

ADM KEVIN E. LUNDAY | COMMANDANT

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

As they have for 235 years, the American people depend on the Coast Guard and the Service provides a remarkable return on investment. The men and women of the Coast Guard operate across the country and around the world daily to serve the American people. As a maritime nation, the United States' economic prosperity and national security are inextricably linked to the sea, our ports, and inland waterways. As a part of the Department of Homeland Security team protecting America, and one of the six military services comprising the joint force defending it, **the Coast Guard is a vital instrument of national power to ensure our Nation's maritime dominance.**

### \$12.1 BILLION INVESTED IN FISCAL YEAR 2025



**554,000** LBS

illegal narcotics seized



**11,173**

illegal aliens interdicted/  
detected/transported



**4,946**

lives saved

### 6X RETURN ON INVESTMENT



**OVER 100,000** MILES

of U.S. border consistently  
patrolled



**OVER \$974M**

property saved/  
assisted



**OVER 1.8B** TONS

of cargo facilitated to move safely  
and securely through U.S. waters

### \$74+ BILLION VALUE PROVIDED

#### ENSURING VALUE FOR THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER

Demonstrating unwavering commitment to the American people and stewardship of resources, the Coast Guard reviewed contracts that were failing to meet delivery agreements across the enterprise. The Service took decisive action to terminate major contracts related to vessel acquisitions, informative technology, and services, saving over \$750 million in taxpayer funds. The Nation's investments in the Coast Guard cannot be lost to inefficiency—they must be redirected to where they are most needed, ensuring the Coast Guard remains the finest, most capable maritime service in the world.

Force Design 2028 is designed to improve mission success across three strategic outcomes: **Border Control, Flow of Commerce, and Responding to Contingencies**. Every deployment, every sortie, every patrol and every inspection in our Coast Guard must be effectively planned and executed to achieve these strategic outcomes. The outcomes encompass all statutory missions, and they form the strategic heart of our Service. To support these critical operations and our strategic outcomes, we are driving efforts across four focus areas: **Organization, People, Technology, and Contracting and Acquisition**.

This report highlights just a sample of Force Design 2028 impacts and accomplishments since January 2025, including:



### DRIVE IMMEDIATE OPERATIONAL IMPACT

Force Design 2028 immediately energized the Coast Guard and empowered personnel to achieve unprecedented operational success in our border control missions—apprehending **more than 1,300 illegal aliens** and seizing more than **466,000 pounds of cocaine (over 176 million lethal doses) worth more than \$3.4 billion** since January 2025.



### REMAKING THE SERVICE

The Coast Guard grew the workforce by over 1,100 people and implemented a new organizational structure, realigning 68% of positions across Coast Guard Headquarters, accelerating Force Design 2028 efforts to increase workforce and operational readiness.



### PROVIDE NEW CAPABILITIES & HIGHER READINESS

From personal interdiction watercraft on the Southwest Border to air boats on the Rio Grande to new commercial long-range aerial systems, the Coast Guard is rapidly acquiring and employing new capabilities to address the most complex operational problems. As a result of Force Design 2028, the Service is rapidly enhancing mission outcomes.



### DELIVER MARITIME POWER

Force Design 2028 changes will fully empower our workforce, ensuring the Coast Guard continues to enhance our tools and processes. In addition to investing in new cutters, boats, aircraft, and drones, the Force Posture and Operational Concepts Campaign will revolutionize how the Service organizes, trains, equips, and employs its forces to deliver results for the American people.

In Fiscal Year 2025, the Coast Guard seized nearly **510,000 pounds of cocaine (over 192 million lethal doses)** — more than in any year in the Service's history, and over three times its annual average. Deployment and integration of advanced capabilities enabled crews to identify, target, and interdict narco-terrorists in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, driving the Coast Guard's record-setting counter-drug efforts.



## DRIVE IMMEDIATE OPERATIONAL IMPACT

In January 2025, the Coast Guard took immediate and decisive action to control, secure, and defend the U.S. border and maritime approaches—those actions drove unprecedented success and energized the Service.

Force Design 2028 empowers highly trained Coast Guard operators to use new surface and airborne use of force authorities to increase mission effectiveness and control our borders and maritime approaches. These authorities enable those at the tactical edge to maximize their operational results. These changes have produced significant enhancements to border control, resulting in increased illegal alien and drug interdictions and a more secure border.

### OPERATION BORDER TRIDENT

In March 2025, the Coast Guard launched and led Operation Border Trident, an interagency effort to combat transnational terrorist and criminal organizations and illegal alien activity in the California Coastal Region. The Service surged assets, including Fast Response Cutters, National Security Cutters, aircraft, and unmanned systems to curb the flow of illegal maritime migration, increasing interdictions in the region by 44% over 2024 levels.

### OPERATION RIVER WALL

In October 2025, the Coast Guard launched Operation River Wall to control, secure, and defend approximately 260 miles of the Rio Grande River. The Service rapidly deployed 44 response boats and shallow watercraft, command and control assets, and tactical teams to the region, establishing an enduring presence along our shared border with Mexico. This force interdicted 15 illegal aliens and deterred 237 illegal aliens in just over two months.

On March 11, 2025, a coxswain from Station San Diego directed disabling fire on a non-compliant vessel off Point Loma, leading to the interdiction of eight illegal aliens onboard. Through Force Design 2028, the Coast Guard delegated authority for non-compliant surface use of force to commanding officers and pursuit coxswains. As the Coast Guard transforms to a more agile, capable, and responsive fighting force, this use of force delegation empowers operators with greater authority.



## OPERATION PACIFIC VIPER

In August 2025, the Coast Guard launched Operation Pacific Viper, surging forces to the Eastern Pacific to stop the cartels and criminal organizations—interdicting drugs and illegal immigrants before reaching American shores. By increasing the presence of the Service’s most capable assets in the region by 100%, in less than three months, Coast Guard crews seized **over 100,000 pounds of illegal narcotics**, averaging approximately **1,600 pounds of cocaine interdicted daily**. During Operation Pacific Viper, USCGC Stone interdicted the most illegal narcotics ever seized by a unit on a single deployment in the Nation’s history, over 60,000 pounds of cocaine (over 22 million lethal doses) valued at \$447 million.

## TRIDENT FORCE

Force Design 2028 accelerated Coast Guard readiness through Trident Forge, the Service-wide initiative to prepare for contingencies across all domains and ensure the Coast Guard is ready and able to operate effectively as a key component of the Joint Force and the Department of Homeland Security. Trident Forge developed a multi-prong plan to significantly advance this operation, including: installing state-of-the-art classified communication capabilities at select Sectors and Districts; integrating Trident Forge-specific content (e.g., cyber-attacks, decentralized command environments, and intelligence collection) into the hundreds of training curricula used to prepare our workforce to deliver mission success; and aligning Joint Force professional military education requirements with those of the other military services to improve the Coast Guard’s warfighter readiness.

In August 2025, the Coast Guard’s Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) conducted its **1,000<sup>th</sup> counter-narcotics interdiction**, successfully using airborne use of force to disable a narco-smuggling vessel in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. In Fiscal Year 2025, HITRON interdicted over **\$3.3 billion in illicit drugs** during operations in the Eastern Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea.



# REMAKING THE SERVICE

A year ago, the Coast Guard was staring down potential failure: significant enlisted workforce shortages; failing cutters, boats, and aircraft; antiquated and ineffective information technology systems; shore stations on the verge of structural collapse; and dilapidated housing installations.

Decades of under-investment resulted in an accelerating spiral toward irrelevancy. Strategic, long-term planning had atrophied as a brave and dedicated workforce continued to execute dangerous, complex missions—assuming more risk for the sake of duty. Simply put, the Service was at a breaking point. Over the past year, things have changed.

## GROWTH

Fiscal Year 2025 was the Coast Guard's most successful recruiting year in over 30 years, enabling the Service to grow by over 1,100 military members. This is a downpayment on our path to grow the Service by 15,000 military members by the end of 2028.

## STREAMLINING

At the direction of the President and Secretary Noem, and aligned with the other military services, the Coast Guard eliminated 14 Admiral positions (a 32% reduction) to de-layer and optimize decision-making across the Service.

## NEW ROLES

The Service created several new roles to maximize effectiveness and efficiency in support of Coast Guard operations. These new roles provide a foundation for enduring change and ultimate success.

- **Chief of Staff** to facilitate alignment across Headquarters elements, expedite strategic decision-making, and enhance operational and tactical execution.
- **Deputy Commandant for Systems** to oversee Program Executive Offices responsible for the entire acquisitions and sustainment lifecycle to ensure optimal asset availability and readiness.
- **Deputy Commandant for Personnel** responsible for providing the men and women of the Coast Guard the support they need to maximize their effectiveness.

## NEW CAPABILITIES

The combination of growth, streamlining, and new roles enables the Coast Guard to rapidly acquire and operationalize new capabilities to meet operational demands and threats. Examples of those new capabilities include Arctic Security Cutters, personal interdiction watercraft, shallow water riverine boats, unmanned aerial systems, unmanned underwater vehicles.

## UNPRECEDENTED OUTCOMES

Since January 2025, the Coast Guard has provided unprecedented value to the Nation. Seizures of illegal narcotics are up 200 percent. Interdictions, deterrence events, and transportation of illegal aliens are up 120 percent. The flow of cargo through U.S. maritime ports is up 13 percent. Force Design 2028 is already showing real value to the American public.



## FORCE DESIGN 2028 IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

The Coast Guard established a Force Design 2028 I-Team, selected from across the enterprise, to focus on innovation, execution, accountability, metrics development, and coordination. The Force Design 2028 I-Team is mobilizing historic realignments across the Coast Guard. The Force Design 2028 I-Team facilitated an unprecedented strategic planning phase compiling core functions and requirements from across the organization: legacy and future needs, current operational demands, and unprecedented innovation opportunities. These tasks were compiled, assessed, and prioritized by sprint teams consisting of subject matter experts to create a road map for future organizational alignment.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING & CAPABILITIES DEVELOPMENT

Action without direction is wasted energy. The Coast Guard stood up the Futures Development and Integration (FD&I) team to provide the informed, reasoned, strategic direction for the development of future capabilities. FD&I represents a new era of Coast Guard strategic planning and a bold new vision of operating capability by combining strategy, capabilities, program analysis and evaluation, wargaming, innovation, and Research and Development (R&D) functions to drive the Service forward into the future.

On July 4, 2025, the Coast Guard immediately launched air assets in response to catastrophic flooding in Central Texas. Exemplifying the Service's legacy as America's maritime first responder, the crew aboard helicopter 6553 flew over seven hours conducting rescue operations near Kerrville, Texas. Despite extreme precipitation, poor visibility, and hazardous terrain, their relentless efforts led to the rescue of over 200 survivors trapped by flood waters at Camp Mystic.



## PROVIDE NEW CAPABILITIES & HIGHER READINESS

In the Force Design 2028 Executive Report, Secretary Noem challenged the Coast Guard to become the nation's finest fighting force. Through Force Design 2028, the Coast Guard has taken significant steps to meet that challenge. While there is more work to do, Force Design 2028 is accelerating enduring change across the Service.

### RAPIDLY TURNING RECONCILIATION FUNDING INTO OPERATIONAL CAPABILITIES

In just six months, Force Design 2028 has enabled the rapid execution of \$7.7 billion received through the One Big Beautiful Bill (OB3) to significantly improve Coast Guard operational readiness, including:



#### CUTTERS

Significant investment in new cutters, including a new fleet of Arctic Security Cutters, ten additional Fast Response Cutters, additional Offshore Patrol Cutters, the nation's first new heavy icebreakers in nearly 50 years (Polar Security Cutters), and funding toward construction of three ships to maintain commerce along America's rivers (Waterways Commerce Cutters).



#### AIRCRAFT

Rapid acquisition of critical aviation capabilities, including major enhancements to existing surveillance capabilities across the rotary and fixed-wing fleets; new hangars at Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii; six new HC-130J long range surveillance aircraft; and the Service's fastest ever acquisition—from need identification to contract award in just 17 days—for two long-range command and control aircraft.



#### ROBOTICS AND AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS

Unparalleled investments in robotics and autonomous systems, including \$150 million for new Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems to enable the Service and the Department of Homeland Security to provide critical protection at America250, 2026 FIFA World Cup, and Sail250 events across the country.

The Coast Guard recognizes the massive opportunity OB3 funding provides to renew our Service, and we are moving with unprecedented speed to deliver new capabilities. We will obligate 75% of OB3 funding by the end of Fiscal Year 2026 to bring those new capabilities to the Service.

## INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT AND ADOPTION

Through Force Design 2028, the Coast Guard is embracing and leveraging cutting edge technology in ways it has never done in the past. We recognize the significant operational advantages that come with technology. We took major steps to rapidly identify, integrate, and use technology to improve operations and deliver mission results.

### Rapid Response Prototype (RAPTOR) Team

The creation of RAPTOR enables the delivery of rapid technology solutions, enhancing the Coast Guard's ability to quickly leverage emerging technologies to solve critical problems. In just three weeks, RAPTOR allowed us to transition a capability from concept to reality, supporting Operation Border Trident with a contractor-owned, contractor-operated Long-Range Unmanned Aerial System that incorporates Artificial Intelligence to detect anomalies.

### Robotics and Autonomous Systems (RAS) Program Executive Office (PEO)

In July 2025, the Coast Guard became the **first military service** to stand up a RAS PEO, creating an avenue to better leverage robotics and autonomous systems capabilities to enhance the Coast Guard's ability to monitor and control the maritime domain.

Continuing our modernization through Force Design 2028, the Coast Guard is advancing RAS and counter-unmanned aerial systems capabilities to detect, assess, and mitigate threats in the maritime domain. Through Operation Pacific Viper, the Vertical Takeoff and Landing Unmanned Aerial System has transformed surveillance, tracking, and targeting from National Security Cutters to detect narco-terrorists and stop drug smuggling at sea. With funding from the OB3, the Coast Guard ordered over \$150 million in counter-unmanned aerial systems technology, providing our maritime fighting force with critical defensive capability for major upcoming events including America250, 2026 FIFA World Cup, and Sail250.





Demonstrating early momentum in workforce growth, the Coast Guard **met 121% of the active-duty mission** in Fiscal Year 2025, accessing **5,204 members**—the highest since 1991. The accession of **104% of the Reserve Enlisted mission (777 members)** and **100% of the active-duty Officer mission (371 members)** and the opening of seven new recruiting offices displays early progress toward the addition of 15,000 by the end of 2028.

## BUILDING, SUPPORTING, AND ENHANCING THE COAST GUARD WORKFORCE

The Coast Guard took significant action to make the Service a stronger fighting force, including:

### Physical Fitness Assessment

Recognizing that overall readiness starts with individual readiness, the Coast Guard required all military members to complete a physical fitness assessment in 2025 to inform the implementation of a Service-wide physical fitness requirement in 2026.

### Commander Discretion

The Coast Guard empowered commanders, commanding officers, and officers in charge to maintain good order and discipline and readiness by revising mandatory adverse administrative consequences that, by policy, accompanied the awarding of non-judicial punishment.

### Operation Restore Habitability

Under Force Design 2028, the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard and Senior Enlisted Leaders established Operation Restore Habitability to rapidly address habitability and quality of life issues that directly impact our frontline personnel. In just 39 days, the Shore Program Executive Office and Senior Enlisted Leaders spent over \$26 million on over 600 discrete projects across nine districts to immediately improve the habitability, functionality, and operational readiness of frontline units. This is an initial step of an enduring effort to restore the shore infrastructure from which all Coast Guard missions start and end.

# DELIVER MARITIME POWER

We will continue to think big and move fast as we seek to transform our Coast Guard to defeat our adversaries and protect the Homeland.

Force Design 2028 is focused on maximizing our operational effectiveness. We will continue to drive action across our three strategic outcomes—Border Control, Flow of Commerce, and Responding to Contingencies—and we will not be satisfied until our ability to meet the demands of the American people proves enduring.

## FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE

The Service remains committed to achieving rapid and meaningful progress in the most critical areas of Force Design 2028, with a concentrated focus on enhancing operational outcomes. To ensure we deliver measurable value to the American people, we will establish metrics to demonstrate the impact of Force Design 2028 actions on operational effectiveness. While change can be challenging, it is only meaningful if we can clearly articulate and demonstrate its benefits to our personnel, our mission, and our future readiness. Guided by our Outcome and Enabling Tables, we will continue to fulfill the objectives outlined in the Force Design 2028 Execution Plan.

In the coming months, the Service will implement several significant structural changes and investments, including:

**Establishing a Deployable Specialized Forces Command** to enhance integration with the Department of War and optimize the unique capabilities our forces provide to the Nation.

**Expanding training capacity** to address the needs of today's workforce while preparing and training tomorrow's Coast Guard personnel as the Service grows by over 15,000 military members.

**Enhancing Maritime Domain Dominance** through Coastal Sentinel to improve integration of sensor data and enable operational commanders to rapidly deploy capabilities in response to maritime threats.

**Rapidly identifying, testing, and acquiring new operational assets**, including commercially available boats, cutters, and aircraft, to empower Coast Guard personnel to apply their skills and expertise wherever the Nation demands.



## SERVICE CONCEPT

For over 235 years, the American people have placed their trust in the Coast Guard to ensure economic prosperity, public safety, and defend our Nation's maritime borders. Our Service continually evolved to meet changing demands, and we will continue to do so. We initiated a comprehensive Force Posture and Operational Concepts Campaign to revolutionize how the Coast Guard organizes, trains, equips, and employs its forces to deliver results for the American people. We will streamline strategic decision-making and operational direction, decentralize execution, and leverage next generation technologies to own the seas and ensure U.S. maritime dominance.

## WE WILL WIN

Since January 2025, targeted and intentional change through Force Design 2028 has propelled the Coast Guard forward with renewed energy and purpose. As we push boundaries to achieve our operational outcomes, the momentum we generate becomes unstoppable, transforming our vision into reality. Together, we are creating a powerful wave that will continue to accelerate innovation and ensure we can win.

From July to September 2025, five Chinese research vessels operated over the U.S. extended continental shelf in the Arctic, the largest number to date. Coast Guard Cutters Healy, Waesche, and Storis—the first Coast Guard icebreaker acquired in over 25 years—intercepted and challenged these vessels. Air Station Kodiak conducted overflights and captured imagery. Together we will win.





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