



# U.S. Coast Guard Historian's Office

Preserving Our History For Future Generations

## December Daily Chronology of Coast Guard History

### 1 December

- 1844-Captain Alexander Fraser, head of the Revenue Marine Bureau, reported to Congress on the failure of the service's first steam cutters *Spencer* and *Legare*.
- 1916-Second Lieutenant Russell R. Waesche was designated as the first Communications Officer for the Coast Guard, an office established at Coast Guard Headquarters. The office was renamed Chief, Communications Division, soon thereafter.
- 1944-The Office of Air-Sea Rescue was set up in the Coast Guard. The Secretary of the Navy, at the request of the Joint Chiefs of Staff early in 1944, established the Air-Sea Rescue Agency, an inter-department and inter-agency body, for study and improvement of rescue work with the Commandant of Coast Guard as its head.

### 2 December

- 1883-The schooner *Champion* with a crew of two men stranded on Dick's Flat, Plymouth Harbor, near Duxbury Pier lighthouse, at about 6 am. The shoal where she struck was about three miles west-southwest of the Gurnet Point Station (Second District), and the crew of the station were not sure she was aground until about 10 o'clock. The life-saving crew therefore arrived on board a little before 2 o'clock in the afternoon. They found one of the men, the captain, at the pumps and the other bailing from the hatch. The vessel was leaking badly. The two men on board were wet, cold, and very glad of the assistance of the life-saving crew. The keeper, at the captain's request, took charge. The pumps were manned while another gang went to work bailing. When she began to right with the incoming tide, they shifted the booms over and canted her the other way, so as to bring the leaky seams out of the water to chine them with oakum and nail canvas over all to stop the leaks. After doing this and getting most of the water out, they carried out an anchor into the channel, set all sail and by heaving hard on the hawser, they brought her on an even keel. She was hauled off the shoal at about 4 o'clock and got safely under way. As the weather looked bad, the captain concluded to remain in port for the night and accordingly anchored.
- 2012-BMCS Terrell Horne, III, CGC *Halibut's* Executive Petty Officer and Boarding Officer, was killed in action while carrying out law enforcement operations near Santa Cruz, CA. The Coast Guard posthumously awarded BMCS Horne the Coast Guard Medal for his heroism that night. His citation read, in part: ". . .Shortly after midnight, Senior Chief Petty Officer Horne deployed in HALIBUT's cutter boat with three other crew members to investigate a vessel loitering in the area without navigation lights. Upon approaching the unlit vessel and identifying themselves as law enforcement officers, the vessel ignored commands to stop and instead rapidly accelerated directly toward them. The boarding team immediately maneuvered to avoid the oncoming vessel and fired side arms in self-defense. When impact with the oncoming vessel became unavoidable, Senior Chief Petty Officer HORNE, disregarding his own safety in order to protect a fellow crewmember, forcibly pushed the coxswain from the helm, directly exposing himself to the oncoming vessel. The violence of the subsequent collision forcibly ejected



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him from the boat, and despite immediate recovery from the water and application of first aid by his shipmates, he succumbed to the severe injuries received during the incident. Senior Chief Petty Officer HORNE demonstrated remarkable initiative, exceptional fortitude and daring in spite of imminent personal danger. His courage and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Coast Guard."

## 3 December

- 1852-The merchant ship *Georgia* grounded in a gale off Bonds, New Jersey with 290 persons on board. The life car was used to effect their rescue and all survived.
- 1883-The schooner *Pallas* with a crew of three men encountered strong head winds and heavy seas off Cape Cod, MA. About half past 5 in the morning, abreast of Nausett lights, she sprung a leak and became unmanageable. Being close to the breakers, the crew was fearful they would be washed overboard as soon as she struck and took to their boat. Fortunately, they were discovered by the Nausett Station keeper, pulling vigorously to keep away from the surf. The surfboat was launched and the three men rescued. They were brought ashore by the life-saving crew, though not without a thorough drenching because the station boat was nearly swamped on the bar. The schooner meanwhile drifted into the surf, three quarters of a mile north of the station and soon broke up.
- 1982-MSO St. Louis took charge of the response when the Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois rivers flooded their banks. In all over 100 Coast Guardsmen took part in the relief efforts that covered an eight-state area.
- 2001- Coast Guard forces, including the cutters *Chandeleur* and *Farallon* as well as aircraft from Air Station Miami and boat crews from Station Miami Beach rescued 185 Haitian migrants from the grossly overloaded 31-foot sailboat *Simapviusetz* off Old Rhodes Key, Florida.
- 2013-CGC *Polar Star* departed Coast Guard Base Seattle for Antarctica in support of Operation Deep Freeze for the first time since 2006 with the task of resupplying the National Science Foundation Scientific Research Station in McMurdo, Antarctica. During the summer of 2013, *Polar Star* conducted sea trials in the Arctic to test all of the ship's equipment and train the crew prior to embarking to Antarctica. During the summer trip, *Polar Star* spent weeks in the Beaufort Sea north of Barrow, Alaska, testing propulsion machinery, conducting emergency drills, and qualifying crewmembers in individual watch-stations. The cutter was recently out of a three-year, \$90 million overhaul, part of the Coast Guard's plan to reactivate the heavy icebreaker.

## 4 December

- 1989: CGC *Mesquite* ran aground near Keweenaw Point in Lake Superior. She was deemed damaged beyond repair and was sunk as an artificial reef. There was no loss of life.

## 5 December

- 1933-Prohibition came to an end on this date when the 21st Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified.
- 1963-CG-40597 completed a record run of 450 miles from Baltimore, Maryland to Boston, Massachusetts in a running time of 20 hours. The first of two prototype twin-



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screw 40-foot plastic utility boats, CG-40597 was powered by 350 HP Cummins VT-6 diesel engines and had a trial speed of 29 knots. Endurance at 25 knots was 200 miles.

- 1968-FN Heriberto S. Hernandez, a CGC *Point Cypress* (WPB 82326) crewman, was killed in action in Vietnam.

## 6 December

- 1917- The French freighter *Mont Blanc*, loaded with 5,000 tons of high explosives, collided with the Norwegian steamer *Imo* in the harbor of Halifax, Nova Scotia. The resulting fire detonated the munitions, killing 1,635 people and leveling much of Halifax and its environs. Coast Guardsmen from CGC *Morrill* landed to provide assistance. This disaster led to the creation of captains of the ports for the major U.S. ports. The Coast Guard was tasked with the new duty.
- 1918-Surfman L. E. Ashton of Station No. 305 in Nome, Alaska, departed his station with a dog sled and team loaded with medical supplies along with one other surfman on an expedition to assist natives who were suffering from influenza at Cape Prince of Wales, 160 miles from Nome and at villages between the two settlements. He arrived at Cape Prince of Wales on 13 December, where he found 122 natives sick and 157 dead of the illness. He converted the schoolhouse into a hospital, and the post office into a dispensary and "otherwise perfected an organization by means of which he was able to care for all the sick." He began burying the dead on 11 January and by 20 February when "the epidemic had spent its force" he returned to his station in Nome, arriving there on 1 March 1919.
- 1944-Coast Guardsmen participated in the landings at Ormoc, Philippine Islands.
- 1946-The number of Coast Guardsmen on active duty had been dropped to 22,156 in order to meet budgetary requirements. Many lifeboat stations had to be placed in a limited caretaker or inactive status and some vessels tied up because they lacked complements .
- 1953- Coast Guard search and rescue facilities at the Naval Base in Bermuda were instrumental in rescuing four survivors and recovering 17 bodies from the Cuban aircraft *Cubana 471*, which crashed on take-off from the airport at Kindley Field, Bermuda.
- 1999- CGC *Munro* intercepted the vessel *Wing Fung Lung* loaded with more than 250 Chinese migrants headed for the Guatemala/El Salvador border. After refusing permission to board, *Munro* tracked the vessel for three days when lookouts spotted flares over the ship. When the *Munro's* small boat approached, panicked migrants began jumping into the water. They were pulled to safety and returned to the *Wing Fun Lung* while boarding parties finally went aboard the crowded vessel. Someone apparently tried to scuttle the vessel and the boarding teams were able to stop the flooding and dewater the engine room. The threat to the *Munro* crewmen on the vessel was made worse because the migrants had not been fed or had water for more than a day. They were at the point of total rebellion, according to the *Munro's* boarding team members. Other boarding teams from CGC *Hamilton* then arrived and helped to control the situation. The vessel was finally taken into Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala, where the migrants were taken into custody by INS agents. The master of the vessel was arrested.



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- 2013-CGC *Mackinaw*, loaded with more than 1,200 Christmas trees as 2013's "Christmas Ship," arrived at Navy Pier for a two-day event re-enacting an annual Chicago tradition dating from the late 1800s and early 1900s.
- 2013-Coast Guard Sector Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, commenced Operation Taconite for the winter season. The annual operation was designed to prevent developing ice from hindering commercial navigation in the ports of Duluth, Minnesota, Superior, Wisconsin and Thunder Bay, Ontario. Operation Fall Retrieve, the annual operation to remove aids to navigation on the Great Lakes in preparation for the winter icing of the lakes, concluded soon after the start of 2013's Operation Taconite. Coast Guard Sector Detroit prepared to launch Operation Coal Shovel, the annual ice-breaking operation in the eastern Great Lakes region.

## 7 December

- 1793-The first Revenue Cutter Service court martial occurred on this date aboard the cutter *Massachusetts*. The offender, Third Mate Sylvanus Coleman of Nantucket, was summarily dismissed from the service for "speaking disrespectfully of his superior officers in public company. . . .insulting Captain John Foster Williams [the commanding officer] on board, and before company. . . .for keeping bad women on board the cutter in Boston and setting a bad example to the men by ordering them to bring the women on board at night and carrying them ashore in the morning. . . ." and for writing an order in the name of the commanding officer.
- 1830-President Andrew Jackson announced an ambitious plan to add a large number of lighthouses to the federal system, with a total of 51 more lighthouse keepers. In explanation, he supported the practice of offsetting the costs of keeping aids to navigation on the coasts, lakes and harbors "to render the navigation thereof safe and easy" since "whatever gives facility and security to navigation cheapens imports; and all who consume them are alike interested in whatever produces this effect. The consumer in the most inland State derives the same advantage . . . that he does who lives in a maritime State."
- 1941-The Imperial Japanese Navy launched a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and surrounding Army Air Force airfields in Hawaii. Stationed in Honolulu were the Coast Guard's 327-foot cutter *Taney*, the 190-foot buoy tender *Kukui*, two 125-foot patrol craft, *Reliance* and *Tiger*, two 78-foot patrol boats and several smaller craft. At the time of the attack, *Taney* lay at Pier Six in Honolulu Harbor, *Reliance* and the unarmed *Kukui* both lay at Pier Four and *Tiger* was on patrol along the western shore of Oahu. All were performing normal duties for a peacetime Sunday. After the attack commenced *Tiger* conducted anti-submarine sweeps outside of Pearl Harbor and *Taney* opened fire on Japanese aircraft that appeared over Honolulu Harbor.
- 1968- CGC *White Alder* sank after colliding with M/V *Helena* near White Castle, Louisiana. Seventeen Coast Guard personnel were killed.
- On 7 December 1973 the first female enlistees were sworn into the regular U.S. Coast Guard: Y1/c Wanda May Parr and Y2c Margaret A. Blackman, at a ceremony held in Yorktown, VA. On that date as well CWO Alice T. Jefferson became the first woman commissioned officer to be sworn into the regular U.S. Coast Guard. Jefferson was sworn in by Admiral Chester Bender, Commandant, at a ceremony held at Coast Guard Headquarters.



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- 1988- The Coast Guard hosted an international summit between Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, President Ronald Reagan, and President-elect and then-Vice President George H. W. Bush on Governors Island on 7 December 1988. The summit occurred after Gorbachev had addressed the United Nations. In planning his trip to the UN, Gorbachev requested a meeting with Reagan and the White House selected the Coast Guard base at Governors Island as a meeting site since it was a secure military installation in the middle of New York harbor and just minutes away from the United Nations. The leaders met for lunch at the LANTAREA commander's [VADM James Irwin] home. The summit was characterized as "just a luncheon" and the meeting was the last time President Reagan and Gorbachev would meet during Reagan's remaining term.
- 2014-CGC *Kukui* returned from a 46-day law enforcement patrol where they exercised bilateral agreements and enforced fisheries regulations across the Pacific. The 50-person crew participated in several significant regional operations to further enhance U.S. and international efforts in the protection of the ecologically and economically valuable fish stocks of the Pacific Ocean and participated in a number of multi-national operations, including Operation Kuru Kuru, which was a multinational operation orchestrated by the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency. *Kukui* exercised the Tongan bilateral agreement by embarking a Tongan ship rider to *patrol* that nation's EEZ. *Kukui* crewmembers spent patrol time searching for potential EEZ incursions by vessels not transmitting their location or status in accordance with applicable fisheries regulations. Another leg of their patrol included domestic fisheries boardings in the American Samoa EEZ and high seas boardings under the authorities established by the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission.

## 8 December

- 1904-An Executive Order extended the jurisdiction of the Lighthouse Service to the noncontiguous territory of the Midway Islands.
- 1941-Coast Guardsmen seized all nine Finnish vessels that were in U.S. ports and placed them in "protective custody" to "prevent the commission of any acts of sabotage" on orders from the Navy Department. Twenty-four hours later the Coast Guard removed the crews from each of the vessels. This action was ordered soon after the break in diplomatic relations between Great Britain and Finland. The following Finish vessels were seized: SS *Olivia*, at Boston, Massachusetts; SS *Kurikka*, SS *Jourtanes*, and SS *Saimaa* at New York, New York; SS *Advance*, at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; SS *Aagot* and SS *Marisa Thorden* at Baltimore; SS *Aurora*, at Newport News, Virginia; and SS *Delaware*, at Galveston, Texas.
- 1983- Four cutters arrived off of the island of Grenada to replace U.S. Navy surface forces conducting surveillance operations after the U.S. invaded the island earlier that year. The cutters involved were *Cape Gull*, *Cape Fox*, *Cape Shoalwater*, and the *Sagebrush*.
- 2004-The 738-foot freighter *Selendang Ayu* grounded and broke in two December 8, 2004, offshore of Spray Cape, Unalaska. Fighting extremely adverse conditions, helicopter crews from Kodiak and the CGC *Alex Haley*, working with the crew of *Haley*, rescued all but six of the sailors. AST3 Aaron Bean earned the Meritorious Service



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Medal and AMT3 Gregory Gibbons the Distinguished Flying Cross. During the rescue high waves caused the crash of a Coast Guard HH-60J.

## 9 December

- 1899-A Treasury Order entrusted the Bureau of Navigation "with the duty of examining and disposing of petitions for the remission of fines, penalties, and forfeitures under the laws relating to navigation, vessels, steamboat-inspection, and passengers."
- 1959- At the request of the Russian Embassy, the crew of a US Coast Guard UF-1 amphibious aircraft removed an ill Russian seaman from the merchant ship *Jana* in the Bering Sea. The plane, with an interpreter and a doctor aboard, landed in a blinding snow storm at Dutch Harbor, where the patient was transferred to a hospital.
- 1981-The icebreaker CGC *Westwind* departed her homeport of Milwaukee for the Caribbean. She was assigned to relieve a high-endurance cutter on a counter-drug patrol.
- 1996- Two Coast Guard HH-60 helicopters with support from an HC-130, all from AIRSTA Elizabeth City, rescued the seven crewmembers of the 67-year old schooner *Alexandria* when she went down in a fierce storm 50 miles southwest of Cape Hatteras.

## 10 December

- 1905-"To evaluate its use in lighthouse work, radio equipment was installed experimentally on Nantucket Lightship in August of 1901. On December 10, 1905, while riding out a severe gale, *Lightship No. 58* on the Nantucket Shoals Station sprang a serious leak. There being no recognized radio distress signal at that time, the operator could only repeatedly spell out the word "help". Although no reply was received Newport Navy station (radio) intercepted the call and passed it on to the proper authorities. The lightship tender *Azalea* was dispatched to the assistance of *Lightship No. 58*, and upon arrival at the scene passed a towline. The long tow to a safe harbor began, but after a few hours it was quite evident that *Lightship No. 58* was sinking. *Azalea* took off her crew of thirteen men only minutes before she sank. This pioneer use of radio had indeed proved Its worth in rescue operations."
- 1941-Germany and Italy declared war on the United States.
- 1981-A Coast Guard HH-52A landed on CGC *Dependable's* flight deck, marking the 5,000th helicopter landing on board the cutter. According to Coast Guard aviation records, this was the most helicopter landings ever recorded on board a cutter. The landing occurred off Dauphin Island in the Gulf of Mexico.
- 1993- Secretary of Transportation Andrew H. Card, Jr., awarded the military members of the Coast Guard the Humanitarian Service Medal and the civilian employees the Coast Guard Public Service Commendation for their services during the Haitian migrant crisis from October 1991 through November 1992. During that period, a flotilla of over 27 Coast Guard cutters rescued 35,000 Haitian migrants from hundreds of overcrowded and unseaworthy vessels.

## 11 December

- 1881-Six men landed from a boat on Race Point, Cape Cod, and were soon after found, wet, chilled, and much exhausted, by the patrolman from Station No. 6, Second District. He learned that they were the captain and crew of the Canadian schooner *J. A. Hatfield*



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that had been sunk in a collision with an unknown bark the previous night. The patrolman conducted them to the light keeper's dwelling nearby.

- 2014-CGC *Mellon* returned to Seattle following a seven-week deployment in the Eastern Pacific Ocean after interdicting nearly 700 pounds of cocaine seized from seagoing drug smugglers. The drugs, recovered during a single bust off the coast of Central America, were worth an estimated street value of \$18.6 million. Three suspects were detained during the operation. The more than 150-person crew of *Mellon* left Seattle on 25 October to conduct anti-narcotics and search and rescue missions along the coast of Mexico and Central America. Their efforts resulted in six law enforcement boardings and the disruption of an additional 1,900 pounds of cocaine shipments headed for the U.S. Just as *Mellon* began its journey homeward on 24 November 2014, the cutter was diverted to lead search and rescue operations in the case of a missing U.S. sailor. The sailing vessel *Seven Sisters* was found capsized off the coast of Mexico with no crew present after the vessel was reported as overdue to the port of Acapulco. Over the course of nearly a week, *Mellon* launched its attached MH-65 Dolphin helicopter and crew up to four times a day and covered more than 26,000 square miles of ocean while searching for the lost sailor. Extra lookout watches were set aboard the cutter in hopes of finding him, but the case was suspended after the search efforts proved unsuccessful. Another search and rescue operation involved a few unlikely survivors. About 300 miles off the coast of Guatemala, *Mellon's* crew spotted four sea turtles and a dolphin entangled in more than 100 feet of abandoned fishing line. A small crew launched one of the small boats to rescue the animals and remove the debris from the water. After nearly an hour of cutting the animals free, they were released and appeared to be uninjured.

## 12 December

- 1876-The first ever examination for Revenue Cutter cadets was held in Washington, D.C.
- 1965-Division 13, Coast Guard Squadron One (RONONE) was established for service in Vietnam.
- 1994-CGC *Munro* responded to a mayday from the Greek-registered 798-foot container ship *Hyundai Seattle* approximately 550 nautical miles south of Adak, Alaska. The freighter reported an engine room fire that left the ship dead in the water. An HH-65 attached to the cutter hoisted 27 crewmen to safety. The freighter was later towed safely into Seattle.

## 13 December

- 1965-The Treasury Department received "official word" to commence a project to build a number of LORAN stations throughout Southeast Asia in support of the escalating U.S. efforts in the Vietnam War. The LORAN project was code-named "Tight Reign."
- 2014-Coast Guard search and rescue crews were relieved by Republic of Korea assets in their search for 26 crewmembers from the fishing vessel *501 Oryong* that capsized 30 November 2014, near Chukotka, Russia, in the Bering Sea. The Coast Guard completed more than 24 searches covering more than 4,576 square miles utilizing two cutters, two helicopters, and multiple airplanes. Coast Guard crews will continue to partner with the Republic of Korea to provide search and rescue planning support. Two Republic of Korea Navy P-3 Orion aircraft joined the search for survivors on 6 December 2014. The Republic of Korea vessel *Sam-Bong* arrived at the *501 Oryong's* last known position and



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began their investigation. The Coast Guard offered to assist the Kamchatka Border Guard Directorate and the Republic of Korea with their search for survivors and deployed the following assets: CGCs *Munro*, *Alex Haley*, HC-130s from Air Station Kodiak and two SAR planners from Juneau deployed to Anchorage to work with South Korean Navy P-3 aircrews. The Republic of Korea reported the *501 Oryong*, with 60 crewmembers, was hauling in its catch when a wave hit and flooded the vessel's storage chambers with seawater. Good Samaritans rescued eight crewmembers, but one died of complications, 26 bodies were recovered, and 26 crewmembers were reported missing.

## 14 December

- 1846-Revenue Captain Alexander Fraser protested in a report to Congress against "unjust imputations" made against the Service for its involvement in the failure of the first steam cutters. He also requested the authority to employ medical aid on cutters and to provide pensions for personnel disabled in service.
- 1854-Congress authorized the appointment of the first lifeboat station keepers at \$200 per year each and superintendents for Long Island and New Jersey serving under Secretary of Treasury who "may also establish such stations at such lighthouses, as, in his judgment, he shall deem best."
- 1911-On 14 December 1911 President William Howard Taft proclaimed the Convention entered into between the United States, Great Britain, Japan and Russia for the preservation of the fur seal and the sea otter. As this treaty prohibited entirely the killing of seals, and sea otters, on the part of the four nations concerned, in the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea, it was necessary that the movements of the Revenue Cutter fleet that enforced the agreement "correspond generally" to the progress of the seal herd in its annual northern migration. During the 1912 season the following cutters were assigned: *Rush*, *Manning*, *McCulloch* and *Tahoma*. This was the first regular patrol in enforcement of the regulations issued pursuant to the International Convention proclaimed on 14 December 1911. Prior to that date Revenue Cutter vessels enforced the regulations of the Paris Tribunal of arbitration decreed 15 August 1893 for the preservation of the fur seal. The patrol of the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea was first inaugurated in 1895 for the enforcement of the provisions of the Act of Congress approved 6 April 1894. The cutters *Rush*, *Bear*, *Corwin*, *Grant* and *Perry* were the first cutters assigned to carry out this patrol which commenced in 1895.
- 1996: The 735-foot M/V *Bright Field* collided with the New Orleans Riverwalk, causing substantial damage and injuring over 100 people. Coast Guard forces responded.

## 15 December

- 1835-The superintendent of the lighthouse system wrote to Winslow Lewis, "I perceive by a Mobile paper which I received this morning that the Mobile Point light has been fitted by you as a revolving light" similar to the nearby Pensacola lighthouse. "I am very sorry that you have done so." Lewis was a contractor who -- almost by himself -- virtually controlled the administration of the lighthouse system. The incident helped cause a Congressional investigation that ultimately created a modern lighthouse system in this country.
- 1839-Near Gloucester, Massachusetts, a storm from the southeast caught and dragged ashore or drove to sea over fifty vessels. An eyewitness wrote: "From one of the beach to



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the other, nothing could be seen but pieces of broken wrecks; planks and spars...ropes and sails...flour, fish, lumber...soaked and broken..." The local fishermen manned two boats, the Custom House boat and the newly launched Revenue Cutter *Van Buren* and "fearlessly risked their lives for the safety of their fellow creatures" and brought many safely to shore.

- 1943-Coast Guardsmen participated in the landings made on Arawe Peninsula, New Britain.
- 1944-Coast Guardsmen participated in the landings made on Mindoro, Philippine Islands.
- 1976: The Liberian-flagged 644-foot tanker *Argo Merchant*, with 7.5 million gallons of oil on board, grounded on a shoal 28 miles southeast of Nantucket. Coast Guard helicopters from AIRSTA Cape Cod rescued her 38-man crew. CGCs *Sherman* and *Vigilant* responded, along with other vessels, but heavy weather prevented the containment of the spill. The tanker broke in two on 21 December.

## 16 December

- 1831-Secretary of the Treasury John McLane ordered Revenue cutters to conduct "winter cruises." The USRC *Gallatin* became the first cutter "directly authorized by the government to assist mariners in distress."
- 1960- A United Airlines DC-8 with 83 passengers on board collided with a TWA Super Constellation carrying 42 in the New York City area. Coast Guard helicopters, working with the aircraft of the Army, Navy and New York Police Department, transported the injured passengers from the Constellation's wreck on Staten Island to a nearby hospital. Coast Guard vessels also searched the New York harbor area. The debris they picked up was used by the Civil Aeronautics Board in its determination of the cause of the mishap.

## 17 December

- 1897-The Overland Expedition, consisting of three officers from the Revenue Cutter Service, departed from the cutter *Bear* off Nunivak Island to rescue 300 whalers trapped in the ice at Point Barrow, Alaska. The rescuers were First Lieutenant D. H. Jarvis, Second Lieutenant E. P. Bertholf (later commandant), and Surgeon S. J. Call. The rescuers had to travel over 1,000 miles overland to reach the whalers.
- 1903-Life-Saving Service personnel from Kill Devil Hills Life-Saving Station helped carry materials to the launch site for the first successful heavier-than-air aircraft flight by the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina and then assisted the brothers in their flights that day. The life-savers were John T. Daniels, W.S. Dough and A.D. Etheridge.
- 1942-CGC *Natsek*, part of the Greenland Patrol, disappeared in Belle Isle Strait while on patrol. There were no survivors among her 24-man crew. It was thought that she capsized due to severe icing.
- 1942-The Navy credited CGC *Ingham* with attacking and sinking the submerged U-626 south of Greenland.
- 1951-President Harry Truman presented the Collier Trophy to the Coast Guard, the Department of Defense and the "helicopter industry" in a joint award, citing "outstanding development and use of rotary-winged aircraft for air rescue operations."



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Coast Guard Commandant VADM Merlin O'Neill accepted the trophy for the Coast Guard.

- 2014-President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro announced the beginning of a process of normalizing relations between the two countries. The Coast Guard announced its statement regarding the Cuba policy changes due to this change the following day, 18 December 2014.

## 18 December

- 1912-The Lighthouse Service suffered its first gas-powered buoy accident when one exploded during maintenance. The explosion killed a machinist, John A. Dunbar, who was a member of the crew of the Lighthouse Tender *Amaranth*.
- 2014-The Coast Guard issued the following statement regarding "The Coast Guard on Cuba Policy Changes" announced by President Barack Obama on 17 December 2014: "Coast Guard missions and operations in the Southeast remain unchanged. The Coast Guard strongly discourages attempts to illegally enter the country by taking to the sea. These trips are extremely dangerous. Individuals located at sea may be returned to Cuba."

## 19 December

- 1881-While the head keeper and six men of his crew were conducting drills away from their Gurnet Point, Massachusetts, Life-Saving Station, the surfman who remained in charge at the station saw a schooner standing inside of Brown's Island Shoals. He realized that unless the vessel was warned she would go aground. So he rowed out to the schooner in a small boat and piloted her clear. She proved to be the schooner *Milton* and had mistaken the channel entrance to Plymouth Harbor.
- 2014-CGC *Decisive* returned to its homeport in Pascagoula, Mississippi, following a six-week patrol in the Caribbean Sea supporting the Joint Interagency Task Force-South. During the deployment, the 70-member crew of *Decisive* was primarily responsible for conducting counter drug operations in support of U.S. and international laws. *Decisive* worked directly with federal and international partners at JIATF-S and the 7th Coast Guard District to combat transnational organized crime networks operating in the Caribbean Basin. *Decisive's* efforts directly contributed to the prevention of more than 4,100 pounds of contraband from reaching American shores. During *Decisive's* 39-day deployment, the cutter's crew also conducted a professional exchange with members of the Honduran Navy. These interdictions were part of *Operation Martillo*, an international operation focused on sharing information and bringing together air, land and maritime assets from the U.S. Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security, as well as Western Hemisphere and European partner nation agencies, to counter illicit trafficking.
- 2015-CGC *Escanaba* returned to its homeport in Boston following a successful 52-day deployment in the Eastern Pacific Ocean. During the patrol, *Escanaba* steamed more than 11,200 miles, successfully transited the Panama Canal for the first time in more than 10 years, and interdicted 1,009 kilograms of cocaine, two vessels, and five narcotic smuggling suspects. *Escanaba's* crew worked in partnership with an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew from the Coast Guard's Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron, based



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out of Jacksonville, Florida, to pursue and conduct boardings of eight vessels in five cases.

## 20 December

- 1934-Coast Guard pilot CDR Elmer F. Stone set the world record for amphibian airplane speed. Over a measured three-kilometer course at Langley Field CDR Stone attained a maximum speed of 196.89 miles an hour and an average speed of 191.17 while flying a Grumman JF-2 "Duck" amphibian, besting the previous record set by Alexander P. De Severesky the previous year.
- 1943-CGC *Bodega* grounded off the Canal Zone. No lives were lost.
- 1991- On 20 December 1991, the United Nations adopted General Assembly Resolutions (UNGAs) 44-225, 45-197, and 46-215, thereby establishing a worldwide moratorium on all high seas drift net fishing that was to be in effect by 31 December 1992.
- 2013-CGC *Alert* returned to its homeport of Astoria, Oregon, following an 81-day deployment. While away *Alert* covered more than 12,000 miles, conducting a counter-drug enforcement patrol in the Eastern Pacific and a rigorous training assessment by the Afloat Training Group in Everett, Washington. *Alert's* crew conducted law enforcement operations off the coast of Central America in early October, 2013. An MH-65 Dolphin helicopter crew and a fast response boat crew conducted multiple at sea boardings from *Alert*, disrupting more than 4,000 pounds of illegal drug shipments. Additionally, *Alert's* crew rescued six Ecuadorian fishermen who had spent a week stranded adrift on the open ocean. The crew participated in several community relations events, while taking time to resupply the cutter and provide crew rest. While on a port call in Golfito, Costa Rica, *Alert's* crew competed against Costa Rican Coast Guard crewmembers in a soccer tournament. In Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, *Alert's* crew helped complete a restoration and painting project for a local park. After two months of conducting maritime law enforcement and search and rescue operations, *Alert* traveled to Everett to complete three weeks of required training. Every 18 months, Coast Guard cutters undergo Tailored Ships Training Availability to ensure crew proficiency and readiness. Experienced Coast Guard and Navy inspectors evaluated *Alert's* ability to respond to situations involving weapons proficiency, seamanship, navigation, damage control, emergency medical treatment and engineering casualty response. *Alert* successfully completed 118 drills and exercises with an impressive overall score of 96-percent, earning the coveted "Battle E" award for operational excellence in all mission areas. As per tradition, *Alert* flew a broom from its port yardarm, signifying a "clean sweep" of certification in all mission areas.

## 21 December

- 1907-The Commandant, Captain Worth G. Ross, USRCS, by letter, advised the Chamber of Commerce of Baltimore, Boston and Philadelphia, the New York Maritime Exchange and the Navy's Chief Bureau of Equipment that wireless telegraph sets had been installed on the following Revenue cutters operating on the Atlantic coast and would use the following call letters: USRC *Algonquin*: RCA; USRC *Gresham*: RCG; USRC *Mohawk*: RCM; USRC *Onondaga*: RCO & USRC *Seminole*: RCS.
- 1936-Executive Order No. 7521 authorized ice breaking operations by the Coast Guard.



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- 1960- The tanker *Pine Ridge*, with 37 crewmen on board, reported it was breaking in two about 120 miles off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina. Immediately, the Coast Guard dispatched aircraft and vessels to the scene and alerted nearby US Navy and merchant vessels. After the arrival of a Coast Guard UF-2G amphibian aircraft, the bow section of the *Pine Ridge* capsized, throwing some members of the crew overboard; the stern section, however, remained afloat and upright. Mountainous seas rebuffed every attempt of the tanker *Artemis* to rescue the seamen in the water. Life rafts and emergency equipment, meanwhile, were airdropped, and the helicopters from the aircraft carrier *Valley Forge* successfully removed the 28 survivors from the still floating stern section. Of the bow section and the 9 missing crewmen, only debris and lifejackets were found, despite a widespread air and surface search.
- 1971-The last two cutters of Coast Guard Squadron Three (RONTHREE) in service in Vietnamese waters during the war, CGC *Cook Inlet* (WHEC 384) and CGC *Castle Rock* (WHEC 383) were decommissioned and transferred to the South Vietnamese Navy.

## 22 December

- 1819-The Revenue cutter *Dallas* seized a vessel laden with lumber that had been unlawfully cut from public land in what was one of the first, if not the very first, recorded instances of a revenue cutter enforcing an environmental law.
- 1837-Congress authorized President "to cause any suitable number of public vessels, adapted to the purpose, to cruise upon the coast, in the severe portion of the season, and to afford aid to distressed navigators." This was the first statute authorizing activities in the field of maritime safety, thus interjecting the national government into the field of lifesaving for the first time. Although revenue cutters were specifically mentioned, the performance of this duty was imposed primarily upon the Revenue Marine Service and quickly became one of its major activities.

## 23 December

- 1904-Near Oak Island and Fire Island, New York the American schooner *Frank W. McCullough* ran aground on Fire Island Bar, 2 miles from the former station and 4 from the latter, at about 9 am. The Oak Island crew reached the vessel at 10:30 am and the Fire Island crew a half hour later. They found her pounding heavily and leaking badly. They manned the pumps and assisted the crew in throwing overboard the cargo of lumber; but on the flood tide the sea began to break over the wreck and the were obliged to give up for fear of being washed overboard. The Fire Island surfboat filled in the seaway and foundered. At midnight the sea moderated and all hands, 14 surfmen and 5 of schooner crew, abandoned the wreck in the Oak Island surfboat and at 2 a.m. reached the shore. The vessel was lost.
- 2014-CGC *Legare* returned to its homeport of Portsmouth, Virginia following a 52-day patrol through the Caribbean and into the eastern Pacific Ocean. During their patrol, *Legare's* crew transited through the Panama Canal and coordinated with multiple countries in Central and South America, along with partner agencies to stem the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. The unified effort resulted in the interdiction of multiple suspected drug smugglers and vessels transporting approximately 1200 kilograms, or approximately 2,645 pounds of cocaine, worth an estimated estimated street value of \$40 million.



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## 24 December

- 1955- A Coast Guard helicopter was the first rescue unit to reach a flood disaster scene in Yuba, California. Its crew hoisted 138 persons to safety within 12 hours. The first 58 were made possible because of the light from a small handheld searchlight from positions of peril among chimneys, television antennas, and trees. In all, the Coast Guard assisted Federal, state, and local agencies in saving over 500 persons by helicopters and boats.

## 25 December

- 1944- Allied forces liberated and occupied Palompon and Leyte in the Philippines.
- 1998- Coast Guard helicopters from Air Station Barbers Point rescued balloonists Richard Branson, a British billionaire, American millionaire Steve Fossett, and Per Lindstrand when bad weather forced them to ditch their balloon off Hawaii during their attempt to be the first balloonists to circle the globe.

## 26 December

- 1943-Landings at Cape Gloucester were conducted by Coast Guard-manned LSTs 18, 22, 66, 67, 68, 168, 202, 204, and 206. The *LST-22* shot down a Japanese "Val" dive bomber while *LST-66* was officially credited with downing three enemy aircraft. Two of her crew were killed by near misses. *LST-67* brought down one Japanese dive bomber while *LST-204* shot down two and the gunners aboard *LST-68* claimed another. The *LST-202* claimed three enemy planes shot down.
- 2004-Following a 9.0 magnitude earthquake off the coast of Sumatra, a massive tsunami and tremors struck Indonesia and southern Thailand, killing over 104,000 people in Indonesia and over 5,000 in Thailand. CGC *Munro*, deployed as part of Expeditionary Strike Group 5 (ESG-5), along with the other units in the Group, responded. The cutter shuttled more than 80 tons of humanitarian relief supplies from Singapore to USS *Bonhomme Richard* (LHD-6), also part of ESG-5, for distribution to the victims of the tsunami.

## 27 December

- 1968-In October 1968, the United States Air Force requested additional LORAN-C coverage in Southeast Asia and by 27 December 1968 the Coast Guard had received authorization to proceed with the project. This led to the construction a LORAN station at Tan My, South Vietnam, that supplemented the other LORAN stations in Southeast Asia first established in 1966 under an operation code-named *Tight Reign*.
- 1977-The Coast Guard awarded Tacoma Boat-building Company, Inc., of Tacoma, Washington, a \$110,207,245 contract for the detail design and construction of four 270-foot Medium Endurance Cutters.
- 2012-Watchstanders at Coast Guard Sector Anchorage first received contact from the crew of the tug *Aiviq*, which was towing MODU *Kulluk*, a Royal Dutch Shell Company ice-strengthened oil drilling barge, back to its winter port of Seattle. In extremely heavy seas, the tow line parted and *Aiviq* requested Coast Guard assistance. CGC *Alex Haley* was diverted from its patrol and, after *Aiviq* experienced total engine failure, attempted to take both the rig and *Aiviq* under tow. The line parted and fouled *Haley's* port



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propeller, forcing the cutter to return to Kodiak for repairs. CGCs *Hickory* and *SPAR* were dispatched to provide further assistance while Royal Dutch Shell sent three additional tugs to the scene. Coast Guard aircraft rescued the rig's 18-man crew safely on 29 December and delivered spare engine parts to *Aiviq*. Despite these efforts *Kulluk* went aground at Oceans Bay, Alaska, on 31 December 2012. The rig was later refloated and towed to Unalaska. No injuries or pollution incidents were reported and ultimately *Kulluk* was scrapped.

## 28 December

- 1835-The "Dade Battle" occurred when Seminole Indians ambushed and killed Major Francis Langhorne Dade and his Army command while they were on the march on Fort King Road from Fort Brooke to reinforce the troops at Fort King (Ocala). This battle was the immediate cause of the Second Seminole War, a war in which the Revenue Cutter Service played an important role.
- 1857-The light was first illuminated in the Cape Flattery Lighthouse, located on Tatoosh Island at the entrance to the Straits of Juan de Fuca, Washington. "Because of Indian trouble it was necessary to build a blockhouse on Tatoosh Island before even commencing the construction of the lighthouse. Twenty muskets were stored in the blockhouse, and then the lighthouse work began."
- 1903-An Executive Order extended the jurisdiction of the Lighthouse Service to the non-contiguous territory of the Hawaiian Islands.
- 2014-CGC *Tahoma* returned safely to its homeport of Kittery, Maine after a 55-day patrol conducting operations and training in the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank. *Tahoma's* law enforcement teams conducted boardings of commercial fishing vessels to inspect safety gear and enforce marine resource management to ensure sustainable fisheries in the North Atlantic. On 1 December 2014 *Tahoma's* crew assisted the disabled F/V *Madison Kate* following an engine casualty. *Tahoma's* crew put the vessel in tow and safely transferred it to a Coast Guard Station Brant Point motor life boat.

## 29 December

- 1897-Congress prohibited the killing of fur seals in the waters of the North Pacific Ocean. The Revenue Cutter Service was tasked with enforcing the law.
- 1903-An Executive Order extended the jurisdiction of the Lighthouse Service to Guantanamo, Cuba.
- 1998- The 578-foot cargo vessel *Violetta* caught fire in the Houston ship channel. Twenty-three of her crew were rescued. CGC *Point Spencer* spent several days fighting the fire on board the vessel.

## 30 December

- 1876-The British ship *Circassian* was destroyed off Bridgehampton, Long Island, following a successful rescue of 49 persons on December 11 by the Life-Saving Service. During later salvage operations in a storm the ship drifted out of the sand, resulting in the loss of 28 of its salvage crew including 12 Shinnecock Indians.
- 1944-Coast Guard-manned USS *FS-367* rescued survivors from USS *Mariposa* at San Jose, Mindoro, Philippine Islands.



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- 1958- The 590-foot tanker *African Queen* ran aground and split in two 10 miles off Ocean City, Maryland. Within two hours 15 helicopters from the nearby Coast Guard, Navy and Marine Corps bases evacuated all 47 crewmen successfully. The Coast Guard Rescue Coordination Center at New York coordinated the operations.
- 1997- The 493-foot freighter *Merchant Patriot* began taking on water in stormy seas. Coast Guard air assets from AIRSTA Clearwater arrived on scene and, along with Air Force units, rescued the ship's captain and her 27 crewmen. The vessel, however, remained afloat and was later towed to Freeport, Bahamas.

## 31 December

- 1881-At 4 a.m. the patrolman from Station No. 34, Fourth District, New Jersey, discovered a vessel ashore on the south bar at Townsend's Inlet, NJ about three miles south of the station and a mile offshore. He reported at the station at once and the vessel was boarded by the life-saving crew within an hour and a half. She proved to be the schooner *Joseph F. Baker* with a crew of eight persons. After endeavoring to work the vessel off with her sails, the keeper made preparations to run an anchor and heave her off. By this time a wrecking vessel came alongside, and her captain arranged with the master of *Baker* to take his vessel off. The life-saving crew, which had meantime been joined by the keepers of Station 33 and 35, finding they could be of no further service, left the vessel, taking ashore dispatches for the captain. A steamer towed the vessel off the bar
- 1891-The Act of 1894 that created the office of Captain Commandant of the Revenue Cutter Service also had a provision that created the office of Engineer-in-Chief. Captain Russell John W. Collins, USRCS was the first RCS Engineer-in-Chief, being appointed to that position on 31 December 1891.
- 1952- Sinbad, the canine-mascot of the cutter *Campbell* during World War II, passed away at his last duty station, the Barnegat Lifeboat Station, at the ripe old age of 15. He served on board the cutter throughout World War II and earned his way into Coast Guard legend with his shipboard and liberty antics. To date he is the most decorated mascot to have ever served in the Coast Guard.
- 1980- The 14 remaining LORAN-A stations closed down at midnight, ending Loran-A coverage, which began during World War II.
- 1985-Vice President George Bush paid an official visit to the officers and crew of CGC *Steadfast* while the cutter was in Nassau, Bahamas. Accompanied by RADM Richard P. Cueroni, commander, 7th District and various other U.S. and Bahamian officials, the vice president officiated at an awards and wreath-laying ceremony in honor of the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System and the joint U.S. Bahamian operations.
- 2014-Watchstanders at the Coast Guard Sector Honolulu command center received notification the morning of 31 December 2014 that the tour boat, *Mahana Nai'a* with 55 people on board was taking on water in the engine room near Kihei. A Response Boat-Medium crew from Coast Guard Station Maui was diverted to the scene where once on scene, two crewmembers from the RBM went aboard the *Mahana Nai'a* with a P6 pump and a damage control kit and successfully dewatered the port engine room. The RBM then safely towed the *Mahana Nai'a* to Pier 47 at Maalaea Bay.



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