

Canadian Coast Guard

Coast Guard SAR cutters, which are stationed at many locations along the coasts, could be additional security assets if required.

Feb 2005 – The W. Jackman cutter is shown here participating in a SAR exercise with an Air Force Cormorant helicopter.

PHOTO: CANADIAN COAST GUARD SAR NEWFOUNDLAND REGION

How will SOA Status Affect the CCG?

While visiting Yarmouth, Nova Scotia on 1 April 2005, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Honourable Geoff Regan, formally announced that the Canadian Coast Guard had become a Special Operating Agency (SOA). This was some 15 months after Prime Minister Paul Martin had announced changes to the structure of the Government of Canada as a response to continental security concerns, notably the formation of the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada. During that time gap, Coast Guard officials were doing their best to figure out what the changes, which included Special Operating Agency status for the Coast Guard, meant in practical terms, and to establish links with other departments concerned with security – CSIS, National Defence and the RCMP.

Special Operating Agencies are becoming quite common. An SOA is an operational organization, within a government department, that is mainly involved with delivering a specific service. They are as diverse as the Passport Office and the Canadian Forces Housing Agency.

The Coast Guard is now the largest SOA; in fact, during the 15-month organizing phase, consideration was given to making branches of the Department of

Fisheries and Oceans, such as the Canadian Hydrographic Service, into their own SOAs. If that had been done, the patrol vessels and personnel could have been another SOA, smaller and more manageable perhaps, certainly with a specific service to deliver. The reason this was not



PHOTOS: CANADIAN COAST GUARD

done is that multi-tasking of units (the way that Coast Guard conducts many of its operations today) is considered to be very efficient. Special Operating Status has therefore been conferred on the Coast Guard as a whole. Its head is the Coast Guard Commissioner who reports to the Deputy Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

On a practical level, the change means the CCG can maintain and operate its existing assets, which have, over the years, been squeezed for operating funds. Down the road, it means some new ships, and it is also seen as enhancing the Coast Guard's prestige. As for the new emphasis on security, the greater part of the Coast Guard's work will only be marginally affected. Navigation aids must still be maintained, icebreaking services provided, scientific work must continue, and fisheries patrols and search and rescue services must go on as usual. Some vessels that are assigned to the watch for terrorists will provide some of the new security patrols but, in most cases, ships that are doing their normal duties will be simultaneously available for security work.

SERIOUS ABOUT SECURITY

In the discussions that led up to implementation of SOA status, it was argued, especially by Senator Colin Kenny (Chair of the National Security and Defence Committee), that the Coast Guard ships should be armed and personnel should receive appropriate training. The Fisheries Protection Service operated in that fashion in the past, and to a limited extent does so today. Although this aspect has been de-

The Coast Guard cutter Isle Rouge is now jointly crewed with the RCMP. Note the RCMP logo and stripe, and the words POLICE on front and sides.



PHOTO: CCG SAR NEWFOUNDLAND REGION

Research vessel *Louis M. Lauzier*, originally the fisheries patrol vessel *Cape Harisson*, temporarily chartered out to the Memorial University of Newfoundland, will be assigned security patrol duties and join other patrol craft next year after an extensive refit. She may revert to her former name.

emphasized of late, the FPS has made recent arrests and brought in fishing violators such as the Spanish trawler *Estai* in 1995 (when machine gun fire across the bow finally persuaded her to stop). However, while the government has not ruled out arming Coast Guard ships in the future, a new policy, which began 16 July 2005, has instead placed armed RCMP officers on board when necessary.

A few days prior, RCMP Chief Superintendent Mike McDonnell told the CBC that the security patrols would not be random but targeted, based on intelligence that has been gathered. This statement conforms with existing RCMP policies with regard to drug smuggling vessels and those carrying illegal immigrants. It was never their plan to carry out continuous air and sea patrols which are very expensive in fuel and crew costs. Most of the spectacular seizures, like that of the *Scotia Maid* off Cape Breton (July 1990), and the *Donegal* off Newfoundland earlier this year, were made based on intelligence obtained from informers or from U.S. authorities that had tracked the ships up the coast.

To coordinate security measures, Marine Security Operation Centres (MSOC) have been established on both coasts under the codenames *Trident* (Halifax) and *Athena* (Esquimalt). Co-located with the Maritime Command's control centres, their function is to collect information from various government agencies; they will not exercise operational control of units. The RCMP will establish an equivalent centre for the Great Lakes (no poetic codename has yet been assigned).

ANTI-TERRORISM

Anti-terrorism security measures on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts will differ markedly in one respect from those on the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence. The

oceanic efforts will be directed outward against threats approaching the continent, with airforce and naval assets being called only if needed. Those on the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes borders will watch our own shores, in deference to U.S. sensibilities, since the American public is convinced that there are terrorist threats emanating from Canada. The work of vessels assigned to the Great Lakes will probably result in increased interceptions of illegals trying to reach the USA, mostly from China, and interdictions of drugs: marijuana going south, guns and cocaine going north.

Search and rescue will be a secondary task for these joint CCG/RCMP patrols, although it will probably take up a fair portion of the vessels' time. There is, however, always the possibility that a terrorist effort could be encountered, and the deterrent factor – the existence of patrols – is valuable in itself.

Coast Guard Ships presently assigned to St. Lawrence and Great Lakes security patrols are the 22 metre, Search and Rescue cutters *Isle Rouge* and *Cape Hurd*, built in 1980. The RCMP is contributing the 18 metre catamaran cutter *Simmonds*, built in 1995. Next year, after a \$2M refit to convert her back to patrol duties, they will be joined by the 38metre *Louis M. Lauzier*, built in 1976 as the fisheries patrol vessel *Cape Harrison* but converted in 1983 for oceanographic research. All will display combined Coast Guard and RCMP insignia and have personnel from both services on board. They will be replaced with four new 40metre vessels by 2009, at a cost of about \$78M.

On the coasts, the Air Force's Aurora aircraft are the primary observation platforms. As far as the Coast Guard is concerned, patrols will be carried out with existing ships that are generally multi-tasked. RCMP officers will be on board only when intelligence has indicated a specific threat. The four new vessels

classified as mid-shore conservation and protection vessels (the new name for fisheries patrol) will be similar to those intended for the Lakes. Two fisheries research ships are also promised to replace existing ships but they are not part of the security measures.

There is no plan to incorporate dedicated Search and Rescue assets to security operations but the station-based search and rescue cutters that are home-ported around the coasts would, like other Coast Guard ships, be capable of contributing to the security shield. In an emergency. These SAR cutters are all 15 or 16 metre craft of modern design and capable of embarking RCMP officers if circumstances require. The Coast Guard's hovercraft, stationed at Vancouver and in the St. Lawrence, could also be useful.

The effect of the new organizational regime on Arctic operations will not be significant: one can hardly imagine an Islamic terrorist threat in that area. Global warming is opening up the channels and extending the navigation season. On the one hand, there is likely to be more shipping activity in the Arctic, on the other, there is less ice. What effect this will have on plans to replace the aging icebreaker fleet remains to be seen. Increased foreign submarine activity is a slightly more annoying possibility but the Navy will be responsible for handling that problem.

In summary, the designation of the Coast Guard as an SOA is likely to do it nothing but good. After years of retrenchment and shrinking funds it promises survival and improvement, and eventually some new ships, and maybe hovercraft and helicopters in the future. Morale will be improved and this organization will continue to serve the nation as it and its predecessors have done since 1868. **FL**

The author wishes to thank Bernard Collin for his assistance compiling the illustrations.

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