The Response to Hurricane Katrina: A Study of the Coast Guard's Culture, Organizational Design & Leadership in Crisis

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ABSTRACT

Hurricane Katrina slammed into the United States Gulf Coast early on August 28, 2005 killing almost 2,000 people and causing $81 billion in damages making Katrina the costliest natural disaster in United States history. The sheer magnitude of the devastation and destruction in New Orleans and the surrounding area remains incomprehensible to many disaster planners. The subsequent response to the destruction and needs of those caught in the storm’s wake resulted in widespread criticism of local, state, and federal organizations and governments.

One agency that received widespread praise for its response to Katrina was the United States Coast Guard. The Coast Guard rescued well over 30,000 people immediately following the storm and, later, after much criticism forced the head of the federal government’s response effort to resign, President Bush placed a Coast Guard Vice Admiral in charge of the response efforts.

Why was the Coast Guard so successful in its response to Hurricane Katrina when virtually every other organization failed? Why did the President turn to a Coast Guard Vice Admiral to coordinate the federal government’s response when others had failed?

This thesis examines the Coast Guard’s Culture, Organizational Design, and Leadership Model in an effort to understand the ability, strengths and weaknesses of the service to respond to crises such as catastrophic disasters like Katrina. The research was conducted through a survey of available literature, interviews with Coast Guard members who responded to Katrina in a variety of capacities and at various levels in the organization, and personal experience and observation. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications for the future of the Coast Guard in both crisis response and everyday operations.

Thesis Supervisor: John Van Maanen
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Many people assisted me with the development of my thesis. I can not possibly thank them all properly for their extraordinary time and effort.

First, I must thank Professor John Van Maanen for his inspiration and guidance. His class in the fall term provided the impetus to me to look at the Coast Guard’s culture in my thesis research. His dedication and zeal for his work serves as a true barometer for the rest of us in our professions. My sincerest gratitude to him for all that he has done.

Second, I must thank a good friend and former co-worker, Commander Tracy Wannamaker. She was able to locate and forward to me for my research a number of Coast Guard policy documents and resources that are only available on the Coast Guard intranet that I could not personally access since I was outside the uscg.mil domain.

I must also acknowledge the steadfast dedication and heroism of all those who serve in the Coast Guard. Their stories of courage, selfless sacrifice, and dedication to their profession and the sanctity of human life despite personal hardship is truly awe inspiring. During the course of my interviews with the veterans of Hurricane Katrina I could not be more proud to wear the same uniform as these American heroes. I look forward to rejoining the Coast Guard full-time after graduation.

Finally, I must thank my fellow Sloan Fellows who provided me support and encouragement during this past year of tremendous challenge and change.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my darling daughters, Sydney and Alexandra. I greatly appreciate their unconditional and unwavering love and support during this challenging, tumultuous, yet personally rewarding year at the MIT Sloan School of Management.

I look forward to our next adventure in Washington, DC upon graduation.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

After a few unexpected changes in direction while over the Gulf of Mexico, Hurricane Katrina slammed into the United States Gulf Coast early on August 28, 2005 scoring an almost direct hit on New Orleans, Louisiana, a city, most unfortunately, that sits below sea level. When it struck the US coast, Katrina's fury was responsible for killing almost 2,000 people and causing $81 billion in damages. These statistics alone make Katrina the costliest natural disaster in United States history.

Hurricane Katrina has been equated to one of the most effective weapons of mass destruction ever unleashed on US territory. Katrina immediately destroyed virtually all communications links in its path, initially isolating those in desperate need of assistance. Then when assistance started to arrive, the levees broke immediately flooding the city of New Orleans and creating an environmental disaster and placing those first responders to the disaster in an even more dangerous situation. As the fate of those stranded by the storm became more dire, the hopelessness of the situation for many caused desperate people to attempt desperate measures. The delay in rendering assistance by many in government and emergency response created significant animosity among those in need. Unfortunately, the great majority of those first responders in the New Orleans area also suffered significant personal losses in property and family, slowing their ability to concentrate on their jobs. The sheer magnitude of the devastation and destruction in New Orleans and the surrounding area
remains incomprehensible to many disaster planners. The subsequent slow response to the almost complete destruction of the area and needs of those caught in the storm's wake resulted in widespread criticism of local, state, and federal organizations and governments.

One agency that received widespread praise for its response to Katrina was the United States Coast Guard. The Coast Guard responded immediately to the storm's passage. Despite significant personal losses, Coast Guard men and women responded with an extraordinary level of effort and dedication. Coast Guard aircraft were in the air within hours of the passage of the worst part of Katrina. Without guidance from higher authority and without direction from any other agency or organization, the Coast Guard started doing what it does best – saving lives and rendering assistance. As one interviewee described it, "This was the Big One; this was why we all join the Coast Guard, to be part of something like this." Without regard for their own personal situations, Coast Guard personnel answered the call unlike any other agency or organization involved in the response effort.

The response to Hurricane Katrina had two distinct phases. Immediately after the passage of the storm and for the next 5-7 days, the Coast Guard was directly involved in a life saving mission. The Coast Guard worked tirelessly to rescue people from life threatening situations (flooded homes, flooding waters, sunken boats, etc.) and moved those people to relative safety. That safety might be something as simple as a highway overpass, but it was certainly better than where the people were originally. The Coast Guard also delivered water and food to people in these staging areas awaiting transportation out of the devastated area.
After the life saving mission was essentially complete, the Coast Guard shifted to a concentrated effort to move people out of the area to more permanent areas of safety. It was approximately at this time that other effective elements of the federal government response effort arrived and the Coast Guard worked with these other agencies and organizations to help migrate people out of the devastated area. This second phase of the Katrina response was essentially a mission of sustainment.

The Coast Guard rescued well over 30,000 people immediately following the storm. After only 8 days tremendous criticism forced the head of the federal government's response effort to resign, President Bush placed a Coast Guard Vice Admiral in charge of the entire Federal response efforts.

Why was the Coast Guard so successful in its response to Hurricane Katrina when virtually every other organization failed? Why did the President turn to a Coast Guard Vice Admiral to coordinate the federal government's response when others had failed? In this thesis I will not explore the widespread criticism of other organizations in their Hurricane Katrina response, but will instead focus entirely on the Coast Guard's response and the elements of the organization that made that response possible.

This thesis examines the Coast Guard's Culture and its alignment to organizational philosophy and strategic thrusts, the Coast Guard's Organizational Design, and the Coast Guard Leadership Model in an effort to understand the ability, strengths and weaknesses of the service to respond to crises such as catastrophic disasters like Katrina.

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology I used to develop this thesis, including historical and academic research, interviews, and personal experience. Chapter 3
outlines the historical background of the United States Coast Guard and discusses how the organization evolved from 10 cutters in 1790 to the organization it is today. Chapter 4 examines the Coast Guard’s culture and its relationship to the organization's objectives. Chapter 5 examines the Coast Guard organizational design before Hurricane Katrina and recent proposed changes. Chapter 6 examines the Coast Guard's leadership model and competencies. Chapter 7 outlines Hurricane Katrina and its formation and arrival in the New Orleans area in 2005. Chapter 8 looks at the Coast Guard's response to Hurricane Katrina, including planning and preparation, response, and the culture, leadership, and organizational structure during the recovery. The thesis concludes in Chapters 9 and 10 with a discussion of the implications for the future of the Coast Guard in both crisis response and everyday operations.
CHAPTER 2

Methodology

Selection of Research Methods

For my thesis, I chose to fuse historical and academic research with personal interviews of participants in the Hurricane Katrina response and with my own personal experience and observations.

Historical & Academic Research

Probably my biggest challenge was to sift through all the historical information on Hurricane Katrina and distill that information to a manageable load. There are untold numbers of articles about the storm and subsequent response. However, much of the historical literature focuses on the apparent failure and shortcomings of most responders, especially within the federal government. I limited my research in this regard to national newspapers and focused on the Coast Guard’s participation in the disaster response. I also found congressional testimony by several participants in the response to be quite valuable to my research.

As the focus of my thesis was the Coast Guard response to the disaster and its relationship to culture, organizational design, and leadership models, I found much of my research centered on internal Coast Guard documents and publications. Many of
these Coast Guard documents outline or codify tenets of culture, leadership, or the design of the organization. Please see the bibliography for a complete list of internal Coast Guard documents used in my research.

I also conducted library research including such works as historical novels on the Coast Guard and academic based books on organizational culture. I chose to focus on the relationship between culture and organizational philosophy and strategic thrusts of the organization to appreciate the response to the Hurricane Katrina crisis. Finally, I reviewed previous Coast Guard theses submitted to the MIT Sloan School of Management for background information and to serve as a guide as I developed my own thesis and ideas.

**Interviews**

I conducted nine interviews of Coast Guard officers that directly participated in the response to Hurricane Katrina in the New Orleans area in the immediate aftermath of the storm passage. Those interviewees represented personnel who participated in most aspects of the storm response from individuals who directed the entire air rescue response to individual pilots. Also represented were individuals who coordinated the entire small boat rescue response to commanding officers of major Coast Guard cutters. Included, too, were individuals directly involved in shifting forces to the scene of the devastation due to organizational design and to those individuals who coordinated the activities of those surge assets. I feel my interviewees provide a good cross section of
responsibilities and missions in the response to the storm. Please see Appendix A for a complete list of those individuals I interviewed.

Although I would have obviously preferred to interview more participants, I did find that some individuals I had contacted were reluctant to relive their Hurricane Katrina experiences again. Many had been interviewed for Coast Guard historical purposes, and they simply wanted to put the experience behind them and did not want relive the past. This was especially true if they experienced significant personal loss during the storm.

Six of the interviews were conducted over the telephone and generally lasted approximately one hour. I used a prepared questionnaire as a guide for my interviews. Please see Appendix B for copy of the questionnaire. The questionnaire focused on the response to the storm and its relationship to culture, organizational design, and the Coast Guard’s leadership model. In three instances, due to time constraints and scheduling difficulties, interviewees opted to provide a written response to my questionnaire. In all instances, I found the responses to be enlightening and truly amazing stories about the will and determination of Coast Guard men and women to serve the public to the best of their abilities in extremely difficult situations.

All interviewees were assured of specific non-attribution to ensure a frank dialogue.
Personal Experience

I also used my own personal experience in the Coast Guard as a leader and a follower to provide my own perspective on organizational culture and leadership. My own personal experience in the Coast Guard includes the following assignments:

- 10 years service afloat on 5 ships of 4 different sizes/classes, commanding three of those ships for a total of 6 years in command
- One two-year assignment as Aide to the Seventh District Commander in Miami, Florida. In this assignment I was the executive assistant to a 2-star Admiral and accompanied him everywhere as he led and directed operations in the largest and most dynamic operating area in the Coast Guard. I equate this tour as earning a graduate degree in Coast Guard Senior Leadership
- One two-year assignment in Officer Personnel Management as an assignment officer/detailer and career counselor
- One three-year assignment as a financial manager at Coast Guard Headquarters

These assignments have all provided me a broad perspective with which to view Coast Guard operations as both a manager and leader and as a participant. During Katrina, I was commanding USCGC FORWARD (WMEC 911) on a counter-narcotics patrol in the southern Caribbean Sea and monitored developments in case we were diverted to assist. Other cutters in our region were diverted to assist with Katrina recovery. FORWARD remained on its scheduled counter-narcotics mission due to
geography and the fact we were nearing the scheduled end of an extended deployment that included participation in two multi-national naval exercises and passage through the Panama Canal twice.
CHAPTER 3

Historical Background of the United States Coast Guard

A few armed vessels, judiciously stationed at the entrances of our ports, might at a small expense be made useful sentinels of the laws.

— Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury
Federalist No. 12, The Utility of the Union in Respect to Revenue
From the New York Packet
27 November 1787

Earliest recorded reference to what would become the U.S. Coast Guard

Introduction

The United States Coast Guard traces its roots to 1790 as the Revenue Marine and as such is the longest, continuous sea-going service in the United States. The Revenue Marine served as the nation's only sea-going force from the end of the Revolutionary War and the disbanding of the Continental Navy until 1798 with the formation of the Department of the Navy. As one of the oldest organizations in the United States Government Executive Branch, the Coast Guard has evolved significantly from the first ten vessels authorized on 4 August 1790 to what it is today—an organization of 37,000 uniformed personnel and the 10th largest "navy" and 9th largest naval air arm in the world. Throughout its over 226-year history, the Coast Guard has evolved both as an organization and also has seen its organizational design, philosophy, and organizational culture evolve as it has grown from 10 small cutters to the large organization with an annual budget of $9 billion dollars today. Throughout this period of
development and growth, the organizational philosophy and culture have been the glue that has held the Coast Guard together through several wars, multiple crises, several homes within departments of the executive branch, and all dynamic periods in our nation's history. That culture and organizational philosophy also link today's Coast Guardsman to Captain Hopley Yeaton, the first officer commissioned in the Revenue Marine in 1791.

Coast Guard Evolution in Brief

The Coast Guard is an amalgamation of five formerly distinct federal services. The following timeline reflects the establishment of those services and when they became part of what is now the United States Coast Guard as well as changes in the organizational structure of the Coast Guard itself.

- 7 August 1789: The service, eventually to be known as the US Lighthouse Service, established under the control of the Treasury Department (1 Stat. L., 53).

- 4 August 1790: Congress authorized the Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton, to create a maritime service to enforce customs laws (1 Stat. L. 145, 175). Alternately known as the system of cutters, Revenue Service, and Revenue-Marine this service would officially be named the Revenue Cutter Service (12 Stat. L., 639) in 1863. This service was placed under the control of the Treasury Department.
• 7 July 1838: Service to provide better security of the lives of passengers on board of vessels propelled in whole or in part by steam is established under the control of the Justice Department (5 Stat. L., 304). This "service" later became the Steamboat Inspection Service.

• 14 August 1848: Congress appropriates funds to pay for life-saving equipment to be used by volunteer organizations (9 Stat. L., 321, 322).

• 30 August 1852: Steamboat Act established Steamboat Inspection Service under the control of the Treasury Department (10 Stat. L., 1852).

• 9 October 1852: The Lighthouse Board, which administered the nation's lighthouse system until 1 July 1910, was organized. "This Board was composed of two officers of the Navy, two officers of the Engineer Corps, and two civilians of high scientific attainments whose services were at the disposal of the President, and an officer of the Navy and of the, Engineers as secretaries. It was empowered under the Secretary of the Treasury to "discharge all the administrative duties" relative to lighthouses and other aids to navigation. The Secretary of the Treasury was president of the Board, and it was authorized to elect a chairman and to divide the coast of the United States into twelve lighthouse districts, to each of which the President was to assign an army or navy officer as lighthouse inspector.

• 18 June 1878: U.S. Life-Saving Service established as a separate agency under the control of the Treasury Department (20 Stat. L., 163).
• 5 July 1884: Bureau of Navigation established under the control of the Treasury Department (23 Stat. L., 118).


• 28 January 1915: President Woodrow Wilson signed into law the "Act to Create the Coast Guard," an act passed by Congress on 20 January, 1915 that combined the Life-Saving Service and Revenue Cutter Service to form the Coast Guard (38 Stat. L., 800).

• 6 April 1917: With the declaration of war against Germany the Coast Guard was transferred by Executive Order to the control of the Navy Department.

• 28 August 1919: Coast Guard reverted to Treasury Department after President Wilson signed Executive Order 3160.


• 1 July 1939: Lighthouse Service became part of the Coast Guard (53 Stat. L., 1432).

• 1 November 1941: President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8929 transferred the Coast Guard to Navy Department control.

• 28 February 1942: Executive Order 9083 transferred Bureau of Marine Inspection temporarily to the Coast Guard under Navy Department control.

• 1 January 1946: In compliance with Executive Order 9666, the Coast Guard returned to Treasury Department control.

• In April 1946 the Coast Guard created the Eastern, Western, and Pacific Area commands to coordinate cases that required the assets of more than one district.

• 16 July 1946: Pursuant to Executive Order 9083 and Reorganization Plan No. 3 the Bureau of Marine Inspection was abolished and became a permanent part of the Coast Guard under Treasury Department control.

• 1 April 1967: Executive Order 167-81 transferred the Coast Guard from the Treasury Department to the newly-formed Department of Transportation.

• In January 1973, the Coast Guard renamed the Eastern and Western areas to the Atlantic and Pacific areas, respectively.

• 1 March 2003, the Coast Guard formally transferred from the Department of Transportation to the newly-created Department of Homeland Security.
• 2004: To create unity of command in America's ports, better align field command structures, and improve Coast Guard operational effectiveness, Sector Commands are created throughout the CG by integrating Groups, Marine Safety Offices (MSO), Vessel Traffic Services (VTS), and in some cases, Air Stations. Sector Commands established in 2006.¹

Throughout this continuous evolution of the Coast Guard as an organization, the service has maintained its operational focus and commitment to service to the American public to become an instrument of national policy and value to the nation.

On an average day, the Coast Guard saves 10 lives, assists 192 people in distress, protects $2.9 million in property, interdicts 14 illegal migrants at sea, conducts 109 search and rescue cases, seizes $9.6 million worth of illegal drugs and responds to 20 oil and hazardous chemical spills.²

The Coast Guard has evolved significantly over the years as various organizations have been melded into the service. It has also evolved through a variety of changes in technology – from sail power, to steam, to diesel engines, to gas turbines in its ships – it has added aircraft and helicopters to its asset inventory (in fact pioneering the use of helicopters in sea rescue). It has also changed as the nation has changed through the Civil War and Civil Rights Movement, to name just a few of the monumental transformations to which the service has adapted. The Coast Guard has

¹ US Coast Guard Historian’s Web Site, http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-CP/history/FAQs/when.htm
² http://www.house.gov/lobiondo/coast_guard.shtml, Congressmen Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), Chairman, House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
always been an organization that adapts to its environment – whether in the Treasury, Transportation, or Department of Homeland Security departments, or in wartime or peace (the Coast Guard has fought in every war our nation has participated in), or in tough budgetary times or times of relative prosperity. Throughout all these changes, the Coast Guard has always emerged with its can-do spirit and focus, never losing sight of its mission.
CHAPTER 4

Coast Guard Culture

In order to understand fully the Coast Guard’s culture, it is important to understand how that culture is aligned or not aligned with existing organizational philosophy and current strategic thrusts. Do the Coast Guard’s current strategic thrusts align with existing organizational philosophy and culture? I will analyze the organizational philosophy using the methodology outlined in *The Strategy Concept and Process: A Pragmatic Approach* by Arnoldo C. Hax and Nicolas S. Majluf (1996).

The methodology analyzes the organizational philosophy and culture across a multitude of dimensions. Within these dimensions the existing organizational state is analyzed and compared to the ideal state using a framework called the organizational philosophy diagnosis. Using the gaps identified in the diagnosis, the methodology seeks to ensure that strategic thrusts of the organization remain aligned with the culture to ensure a good organizational fit.

**Historical Perspective**

Today’s Coast Guard is an amalgamation of 5 different and formerly independent federal services into one military service in the Executive Branch. Each of these organizations brought with it its own organizational design and culture when it merged
into today's Coast Guard. The following services became the Coast Guard (with the year established and the year it became part of what became the Coast Guard):

- Revenue Marine (also later called Revenue Cutter Service) established 1790/1790
- Steamboat Inspection Service established 1852/joined CG 1946
- Lifesaving Service established 1878/joined CG 1915
- Lighthouse Service established 1852/joined CG 1939
- Bureau of Navigation established 1884/joined CG 1949

As the Coast Guard grew and absorbed other federal services it had to incorporate these new organizations, many with their own organizational philosophies and cultures embedded and developed over scores of years, and continue to provide the service to the country that its "customers" had come to expect. This situation is similar to when a large corporation acquires or purchases another company and has to incorporate it into the larger conglomerate while ensuring that the parent company's corporate culture and philosophy permeates and prevails.

Probably the biggest reason for success for the Coast Guard in embedding its own organizational culture into these new organizations is that the culture of the Coast Guard has always been about selfless service and sacrifice for the good of the service and nation as a whole. The culture of the Coast Guard has never been about recognition or attention. This culture of anonymous sacrifice and selfless service has enabled the Coast Guard to absorb these "acquisitions" from a cultural perspective because these organizations had similar profiles and virtues. As an example, the U.S. Lifesaving Service's motto, "You have to go out, but you don't have to come back,"
refers to the expectation that its members would die trying to rescue mariners in distress if necessary. This became the unofficial motto of the entire Coast Guard after the merger of the two organizations.³

As an example of selfless sacrifice and anonymous sense of duty, one only has to read the first letter of instruction to the commanding officers of the first revenue cutters from Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury:

They will always keep in mind that their countrymen are freemen, and, as such, are impatient of everything that bears the least mark of a domineering spirit. They will, therefore, refrain, with the most guarded circumspection, from whatever has the semblance of haughtiness, rudeness, or insult. If obstacles occur, they will remember that they are under the particular protection of the laws and that they can meet with nothing disagreeable in the execution of their duty which these will not severely reprehend. This reflection, and a regard to the good of the service, will prevent, at all times a spirit of irritation or resentment. They will endeavor to overcome difficulties, if any are experienced, by a cool and temperate perseverance in their duty--by address and moderation, rather than by vehemence or violence. The former style of conduct will recommend them to the particular approbation of the President of the United States, while the reverse of it--even a single instance of outrage or intemperate or improper treatment of any person with whom they have anything to do, in the course of their duty, will meet with his pointed displeasure, and will be attended with correspondent consequences.⁴

These words from Alexander Hamilton exhibit attributes expected of Coast Guardsmen then that still resonate today and remain a significant part of the organization's culture.

Organizationally the Coast Guard has always emphasized decentralization with much decision making authority vested in the commander on-scene. Additionally, much

³ www.uslife-savingservice.org
⁴ Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton's Letter of Instruction to the Commanding Officers of Revenue Cutters, 4 June 1791.
as a large multi-national conglomerate, the Coast Guard has many, many suborganizations that specialize in one area of the Coast Guard. With a broad array of specialties and missions, the Coast Guard is a flexible and multi-mission organization. Coast Guard cutters deploy with the ability (equipment and expertise embedded) to conduct law enforcement mission, immigration missions, fisheries missions, search and rescue missions, and defense operations with the same crew and equipment onboard, and do so all in the same day if necessary. The Coast Guard has evolved into a “Swiss Army Knife” in the maritime domain.

The combination of decentralization of decision making authority and multi-mission character of the service fosters a can-do spirit throughout the organization. At the same time, the Coast Guard has worked to centralize much of the support functions and administrative overhead of the service. This apparent dichotomy – decentralization of decision making authority and the ethos of independent action while centralizing support functions in Headquarters or regional headquarters’ staffs do not conflict as much as one would expect. In fact, centralization of administrative and support functions has actually standardized these procedures service-wide and made these functions more transferable and more transparent. The Coast Guard will always focus its efforts on those conducting the mission and will seek to support those forces in the most efficient way possible. The headquarters’ directorates are the centralized administrative support and policy making parts of the organization, while the Areas and Districts (Regional and sub-regional geographic operational commands) conduct the everyday missions of the Coast Guard.
Organizational Philosophy Diagnosis

Using the model outlined in Arnoldo Hax and Nicolas Majluf’s book, I will investigate the Relationships with Stakeholders, Broad Organizational Objectives, Organizational Policies, and Organizational Values & Culture. I will analyze the existing situation and the desired state and look to see if there is alignment across all four areas. Please see Exhibit C for a more detailed analysis of the Coast Guard using this model.

Relationships With Stakeholders

Coast Guard employees are the most valuable asset of the service. Existing training and professional development programs work hard to ensure that the employees have the skills, knowledge and abilities necessary in today’s demanding operational environment. Military employees will work long hours without complaint due to ethos of selfless service and sacrifice. The challenges for the future include the need to change the organization and systems so the full scope of employee abilities are identified and utilized to the benefit of the entire organization and, most critically, achieve a balance between demanding and exciting work and the appropriate amount of time off and rest.

The Coast Guard has probably one of the most unique “customer bases” in not only the U.S. Government, but probably in most of the world. The Coast Guard has 24 statutory missions under five broad areas:
• **Marine Safety**
  - Search & Rescue
  - Marine Safety
  - Recreational Boating Safety
  - International Ice Patrol
  - Port Security

• **Maritime Mobility**
  - Aids to Navigation
  - Domestic Ice Breaking
  - Vessel Traffic & Waterways Management
  - Bridge Administration
  - Rules of the Road

• **Maritime Security**
  - Drug Interdiction
  - Alien Migrant Interdiction
  - Exclusive Economic Zone and Living Marine Resource Enforcement
  - General Maritime Law Enforcement
  - Law and Treaty Enforcement

• **National Defense**
  - Defense Duties
  - Homeland Security
  - Port and Waterways Security
  - Polar Icebreaking

• **Protection of Natural Resources**
  - Marine and Environmental Science
  - Living Marine Resources Protection
  - Foreign Vessel Inspections
  - Marine Pollution Education, Prevention, Response and Enforcement

Each of these missions has a customer and although there is some overlap, there still are 24 different customer segments. Some customer segments are easy to please – the person on a sinking boat could not be happier to see the Coast Guard
rescue helicopter overhead – while others – those facing regulatory enforcement – seek to achieve balance and common understanding. The Coast Guard has an exceptional reputation for professionalism throughout the entire maritime community world-wide and must maintain that reputation in the future.

The entire United States is a stakeholder in the Coast Guard – a public organization. The key for the Coast Guard in the future in its relationships with U.S. citizenry is to leverage the recent positive exposure – Hurricane Katrina Response and even the blockbuster movie “The Guardian” - to increase Congressional funding and, more importantly, to aid in recruiting new personnel and retaining existing personnel.

The Coast Guard’s relationships with its suppliers have undergone a significant evolution. The Coast Guard’s Deepwater Acquisition Project is a novel procurement strategy not seen before in military procurement. The Coast Guard faces mass obsolescence of its entire inventory of Deepwater (defined as more than 50 nautical miles offshore) cutters, aircraft (fixed wing and rotary), and communications platforms. Rather than seek normal one-for-one replacement of each asset, the Coast Guard and industry teamed together to design and build a “system of systems” that are all mutually interdependent and interoperable. This acquisition project is unique in the service’s history and has gone through some growing pains. However, the 20-year and well over $14 billion recapitalization project has changed the approach of the Coast Guard to its capital improvement strategy. In the past, the government has always sought a lowest cost procurement strategy. The Deepwater project has taken, in essence, a Total System Lock-In approach to procurement between the contractor and the Coast Guard.
This new strategy will produce mutually supportive solutions as the Coast Guard recapitalizes its offshore patrol capability.

The Coast Guard maintains almost fanatical relationships with its communities. Coast Guard units are rallying points in many local communities and will need to continue to leverage that support and translate it into congressional support and subsequent budgetary increases.

**Broad Organizational Objectives**

The current Commandant issued his Strategic Objectives shortly after taking command. Although not a large departure from his predecessor's emphasis on Readiness, People, and Stewardship, the new Strategic Objectives clearly make mission execution a bedrock of the Coast Guard's culture. It is the number one priority again. The past several Commandants had in their strategic agenda a number of objectives, but none in the past 20 years had made mission execution the hallmark of the agenda. Objectives such as Balance, Stewardship, the Coast Guard Family, and Preparation had emerged as organizational objectives. It is probably due to the Coast Guard culture that mission execution never needed to be emphasized because it was always taken for granted—"of course, the mission will get done, but let's also look at balance and stewardship." However, many Coast Guardsmen had served and retired without the Commandant making mission execution the number one priority for the organization. After several accidents and fatalities directly attributable to poor mission execution, the Commandant apparently felt it was time to take the Coast Guard back to
its roots by focusing on the mission and having the rest of organization focus on supporting the people executing the mission. Please see Exhibit D for the full text version of the Commandant's strategic vision.

The Commandant identified a number of strategic drivers for the Coast Guard:

The Global War on Terrorism, Maritime Transportation Security Act, Homeland Security Act, National Strategy for Homeland Security, and the National Strategy for Maritime Security have mandated new areas of mission emphasis for us. Your extraordinarily successful operations in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 significantly elevated our visibility and the demand for our services across all levels of government. Our unique blend of capabilities, competencies and authorities applied across multiple missions are recognized and valued as never before. As a result, expectations for our performance and contributions in routine and crisis operations are greater than ever. Meeting new demands while sustaining the trust and confidence of the public we serve requires us to continually challenge ourselves and improve the way we do business.\(^5\)

The Commandant’s Strategic Vision focuses efforts on three broad organizational objectives. First, mission execution remains the hallmark of his vision. He wants to focus the entire organization on improving and sustaining mission execution. The Commandant also seeks to further align the Coast Guard’s entire command and control architecture to support mission execution. The Coast Guard will continue to develop and embrace interagency cooperation and will seek to achieve operational objectives in all missions and command:

- Clear Objective
- Effective Presence
- Unity of Effort
- On-Scene Initiative
- Flexibility
- Managed Risk
- Restraint (notice this Operational Objective formalized only 3 years ago has the hallmark of Secretary Alexander Hamilton’s letter to the very first Revenue Marine officers.)

\(^5\) Admiral Thad Allen, “Commandant’s Strategic Vision” (Washington, DC: 2006).
The Commandant seeks as the third objective the principle of mission support. The operational demands placed on the service in the post-9/11 environment have taxed people, support systems, and infrastructure beyond designed capabilities. The existing fleet of deepwater assets is beyond its useful service life and employees are working unrealistic hours with outdated equipment. The Commandant pledges to reevaluate and realign the Mission support system, including organizational structures, human resources, maintenance, logistics, financial management, and information systems to ensure that all employees have the tools and support they need to do their job. The Commandant envisions a service where the men and women in the Coast Guard are the best trained and most versatile workforce in government equipped with the most capable fleet of multi-mission ships, aircraft, boats and command and control systems available.

Organizational Policies

Overall, the Coast Guard's organizational policies facilitate its culture and strategic intent. The management style of the Coast Guard, as in any military organization, is a hierarchal organization based on rank and experience. However, the management style is frequently a “hands-off” management style. This is attributable to the fact that the service is widely dispersed throughout the United States and abroad and often times a functional leader’s “boss” may be quite a distance away. This style has evolved throughout the seagoing basis of the Coast Guard when cutter commanding officers had the authority and expectation of sound independent action
and mission execution in the public's benefit. The key for the entire Coast Guard is to achieve a balance where information that decision makers and policy makers need is available, but is not so available and obtainable that it stifles innovation of those operating on-scene. Unfortunately, the oversight of decision makers has worked its way both up to the most senior personnel and down to the lowest levels of the organization as the connectivity improvements in the 21st century have facilitated direct and immediate communications throughout all levels of the operational chain of command.

The existing organizational policies of the Coast Guard characterize a service that is multi-mission, maritime, and military. While there is a hierarchy for administrative reporting, operational commanders on-scene have the authority to take independent action. The direction the service needs to go is to seek an organizational structure that is flatter and more flexible for its members and is more transparent for its customers and stakeholders. The Coast Guard has already taken a significant step in this direction by implementing its Sector Organizational Design that consolidated several independent units with different oversight and operational responsibilities into a larger, more streamlined single command that offered "one-stop shopping" for all members of the maritime community.

The Human Resource Management system in place is enormous and quite ponderous. In general, it meets staffing needs well, but is usually slow to implement training system changes. This remains most evident during periods of expansion. A military organization promotes from within – the service cannot hire an experienced manager off the street and instantly make them an admiral: instead if they need an admiral, they promote a captain, which creates a vacancy and must promote a
commander to captain, etc. As a result, during periods of rapid expansion such as the period immediately after September 11th, it takes several years to produce the desired pay-grade, training, and experience matches with the promotion of people to fill new positions and vacancies. A previous Commandant termed this situation “juniority” as it relates to shortages of experience and training in the workforce during rapid expansion. Of course, the desired human resource system is one that matches personnel, skills, and abilities to operational units exactly when needed. This is much easier to conceptualize than it is to implement.

The finance and purchasing system of the Coast Guard is going through major changes as the Coast Guard works to comply with CFO Act Audit requirements throughout government. The Coast Guard is shifting much of its financial support structure to a more centralized approach in order to provide the data required during external audits. Previously, the financial system was extremely decentralized so that the smallest Coast Guard unit had the ability to purchase whatever it needed whenever needed. Unfortunately, the training given and documentation required of these decentralized purchases did not align well and the Coast Guard has had a difficult time complying with the CFO Audit. As a result, centralization and oversight have become more commonplace. The desire for clean financial audits in the government has momentum and support. The hope is that such centralization will not affect the ability of the Coast Guard member on-scene to do the right thing whenever needed. In the decentralized model, the member had the ability and authority to get spare parts or supplies when needed.
The technology in use in the Coast Guard is, in general, outdated and difficult to maintain and support. There are state of the art systems in use on larger cutters and aircraft. Here, the Coast Guard works with the US Navy to maintain interoperability. However, smaller ships and aircraft lack these state of the art systems. The Deepwater system and other long-awaited projects made possible by post 9/11 funding increases will enable the Coast Guard to achieve technological relevancy and enable it to do its job better and probably at less cost than at the present.

Organizational Values & Culture

The Coast Guard's organizational values and culture remain rooted in its ethics, beliefs, and rules of personal behavior that have evolved in the 226-year history of the service.

The ethics of a law enforcement and regulatory service that interfaces with the public everyday demands all members of the service remain above reproach. The Coast Guard has a zero tolerance philosophy concerning proper conduct and will continue to eliminate and separate from the service those that do not meet these expectations of service.

The Core Values of the Coast Guard are Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty and remain the cornerstones of conduct and beliefs. Please see Exhibit E for a more detailed explanation of these core values. There is no room for negotiation in the core values of the Coast Guard nor is there an acceptable threshold of compliance. It is all or nothing.
The Coast Guard also has rules of personal behavior that have little ambiguity. The Coast Guard expects its members to adhere to the core values and to provide equal opportunity for all employees. The Coast Guard remains committed to eliminating sexual and all other forms of harassment in its increasingly diverse workforce. The Coast Guard seeks to be the employer of choice for all Americans.

Coast Guard culture has always expected everyone to do their duty and to do so without flash or attention. To be understated is to be a true Coast Guardsman. As an example of being understated, Captain John Francis, US Revenue Cutter Service when asked by Harpers Weekly, about firing the first shot of the US Civil War from the USRC HARRIET LANE in Charleston, South Carolina replied, “It had the desired effect.” This was the first naval shot of the entire United States Civil War and as such remains of enormous historical significance.

Implications

The implications of this strategic assessment of the organizational philosophy show that the Coast Guard’s Relationships with Stakeholders, Organizational Policies, and Organizational Values & Culture remain firmly aligned with the broad organizational objectives established by the Commandant. There is always room for improvement and the Coast Guard has identified many of these areas and will take or has taken steps to improve and close the gaps that already exist. The employees of the Coast Guard remain the most valuable asset of the organization. The training, leadership, and

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experience of its workforce remain the key attribute of success for the service. Decentralized decision making relies on the culture of the organization and maximizes the utility of the service in a multi-mission environment. The broad organizational objective emphasizes mission execution taking the Coast Guard back to its roots of selfless service and sacrifice.

**Conclusion**

The Coast Guard's organizational philosophy, design and culture are in alignment with the current strategic thrusts by the Commandant. However, there are signs of strain in the post 9/11 environment. Help is on the way in the form of the Deepwater Acquisition Project and other technological improvements to reduce the strain and workload on a workforce that is seemingly less experienced than before during the period of rapid expansion began. The principles of decentralized command and ethos of independent action will continue to be tested. The Commandant's emphasis on mission execution from the very top of the service to the bottom brings the Coast Guard back to its raison d'etre – service for the public good.

The Coast Guard can not however continue to operate at its current pace for much longer because the can-do spirit and selfless service culture in the organization will continue to push its members to sacrifice at the expense of their own well-being. This situation will inevitably lead to a drain on the workforce once the ethos of selfless service overcomes the reality of being pushed to the breaking point for individuals. When this happens, there will certainly be a drain on the workforce. That workforce
remains the most valuable asset of the entire service. The future viability of the Coast Guard rests on the ability to retain its best people.

Despite the challenges, the Coast Guard culture remains well aligned with its organizational philosophy, strategic thrust and operational focus. The evolution of this organizational culture over a period in excess of 200 years and through a variety of organizational transformations and technological innovations remains steadfast in its focus on operational success and service to the public.
Coast Guard Organizational Design

The organizational design of the Coast Guard has gone through many transformations as new agencies have been incorporated into the service and new technologies are adapted (for instance, aviation) for operational use. This chapter will not attempt to explain the evolution of the Coast Guard's organizational design, but will focus on the design in place during the response to Hurricane Katrina and attempt to understand and explain the impact the design had on the response effort.

I must note at the outset of this chapter that the Commandant of the Coast Guard announced a major reorganization of the Coast Guard's operational chain of command while writing this thesis. I will attempt to analyze this realignment with an eye to future crisis response.

Historically, the Coast Guard has always been spread thin throughout its vast area of responsibility. Commanders in the field were always given wide latitude to act and respond as operational needs dictated. The Coast Guard never has had all the assets it would like to have to be able to respond to every contingency, in every location. The expectation of commanders was that he or she would do the best job possible with the assets available. The culture of the organization (discussed in the previous chapter) was to get the job done and worry about documentation or paperwork later.

As the Coast Guard evolved, District Commanders were given broad responsibility and developed large supporting staffs. A District Commander is
analogous to a regional or district manager in a large corporation. A District Commander was a one or two star admiral who had operational responsibility for a geographic area usually covering several states. Within the district, there would be several small commands covering large harbors and smaller coastal areas, air stations, cutters, and a variety of other operational commands. The District Commander's staff also had maintenance and repair responsibilities, operational coordination and support activities for within the district, and a variety of other support functions ranging from telecommunications to personnel administration. In essence, each District Commander had his or her own self-contained Coast Guard Kingdom. Coast Guard headquarters provided policy oversight, but the real day-to-day operations were performed within each district.

Through a series of reorganizations in the 1980s and 1990s, most of the support and logistic functions of the districts were consolidated in large commands on par with the District Commanders. The District Commanders still directed operations within their district, but virtually everything else was consolidated and centralized in Maintenance and Logistics commands, the Personnel Command, or at Headquarters, which became much larger and more involved in issues beyond the policy formulation and resourcing activities it had traditionally directed.

Coast Guard operations, although directed and coordinated at the District level have always been decentralized. The on-scene commander – the commanding officer of the cutter, the coxswain of the utility boat, the pilot in command of the rescue aircraft – have all been granted broad decision rights to make life and death decisions on any mission. The District Commands or intermediate commands between the on-scene
commander and the district have always provided support, additional resources, or guidance but have also had implicit faith in the decision making of the leader on-scene. This tenet of the Coast Guard – on-scene initiative - is one of the most fundamental aspects of the organization. The organizational structure exists to support the on-scene commander, regardless of his or her rank or status.

One other aspect of the organizational structure of the Coast Guard that cannot be overlooked is the two different major operational specialties in the service and the tension that has always existed between them. With the incorporation of the Bureau of Steamboat Inspection into the Revenue Cutter Service, two cultures were brought together that never entirely meshed. The Revenue Cutter Service had always been about enforcement and the Life Saving Service had always been selfless service and saving lives at all cost. In the 20th century, the Coast Guard had two distinct, parallel functional organizations within its operational structure. The people in these two parallel organizations were known as “M-types” and “O-types.” The “M-types” were in the marine inspection field and were primarily focused on safety, compliance, and pollution response. The “M” stood for marine safety. Within this field, collaboration and mutually supportive solutions with industry were sought. The “O-types,” on the other hand, were life-savers and enforcement personnel who put themselves in harm’s way on small boats, cutters, and later, aircraft. The “O” stood for operator. For years, the Coast Guard’s Law Enforcement Manual required all Coast Guard boarding teams to be armed; however, it made an explicit exception and allowed “M-types” to conduct their boarding unarmed to foster mutual cooperation and collaboration with industry. These two cultures never really merged within the Coast Guard. As a result, there were (and,
to some extend, still are) two distinct and separate career paths, policy positions, and organizational structures to support these two entities. In most ports, there were two (or three, if there was an air station in the area) separate Coast Guard commanders – one commanded the “O-types” and another commanded the “M-types”. This lack of unity of command finally led to the creation of Coast Guard Sectors in 2004 and essentially mashed the two organizations together under one commanding officer. This process has been uneven, largely dependent on the personalities involved in each regional area. New Orleans became Sector New Orleans eleven days before the arrival of the Hurricane Katrina.

The Coast Guard organizational structure during Hurricane Katrina is shown in Appendix F. On the left side of the diagram, the Eighth Coast Guard District is headquartered in New Orleans. Sector New Orleans and Air Station New Orleans are two of the Mission Execution Units. Within Sector New Orleans are several sub-units including Station Gulfport and Station New Orleans. The Eighth Coast Guard District reports to Atlantic Area that oversees several other districts. Atlantic Area has the responsibility to shift resources across district boundaries when operations require.

Not shown in Appendix F are close to one dozen “Headquarters Units.” These commands, like the Personnel Command, or the Command and Control Engineering Center are units that perform CG-wide functions usually of a policy nature and report directly to a Headquarters staff element.

In general, the structure of the Coast Guard could be best described as a functional organization at the Headquarters Level and a multi-task divisional organization based on geography at the operational level.
The functional organization at the headquarters level provides the economies of scale needed for overhead functions. It also provides greater concentration of knowledge and skills and provides for a widely accepted career path for officers within functional areas and best positions the organization to accomplish functional goals – for instance passing the CFO Act Audit. The weaknesses of this type of organization structure at headquarters is that it creates a hierarchy that slows decision making, results in some silos and poor horizontal coordination across functional areas and can stifle innovation and/or push aside organizational goals for functional ones in each area. In my experience at Headquarters I have seen both the strengths and weaknesses of this organizational structure first hand.

In the field, where operational decisions are made, the divisional structure based on geography is most aligned with the strategic thrust and culture of the organization. Decentralized operational decision making is well-suited for a fast changing environment that requires quick adaptation. This results in greater customer service because there are many more contact points for service recipients. The weaknesses of this divisional structure are that there is less economies of scale and some duplication of resources across geographic areas. However, since the Coast Guard has always been spread thin, there is much less duplication of resources than one might expect. In addition, a slight duplication of resources is a small price to pay when lives are at stake in rescue situations or when terrorists might threaten the coastline.

It appears that the Coast Guard really has a hybrid organizational design since it has two distinct organizational structures. Yet, because the operational organization and the support organizations generally do not report to each other this hybrid structure
is not a problem. The operational chain of command is clear and distinct. An aspect of some hybrid organizations is that all employees have two (or more) masters and that is not the case in the Coast Guard. The operational organization relies on the functional support organization for many support services but generally cannot direct the support as much as desired. However, given the strategic thrusts of the Coast Guard and the culture that emphasizes getting the mission done, the support organizations and functional areas have, almost without exception, provided superior and outstanding support to the operational side of the service whenever and wherever needed.

Although the support side of the Coast Guard works in a different chain of command, they understand the operational nature of the organization and provide exceptional support. This fact can be traced to the fact that all senior officers in the Coast Guard have been operators at some stage of their career. The officer promotion process values operational experience more so than functional expertise. There is an assignment rotation whereby officers generally develop both operational and functional expertise. For instance, I am both a financial manager in the Coast Guard and a shipboard operator. Therefore, the senior leadership of the Coast Guard are all officers that have a functional expertise (financial management or naval engineering for example) and also have considerable operational experience either afloat or managing smaller cutters or boats. Therefore, the operational focus of the organization is present in the functional support managers. The Coast Guard’s promotion system would rarely, if ever, promote any officer to a position of senior leadership who does not have operational experience.
I now use the Star Model developed by J. R. Galbraith in *Designing Organizations* (2002) to discuss the organizational design of the Coast Guard across the dimensions of strategy, people, structure, processes, and rewards. The Star Model is a framework that analyzes organizational designs across these dimensions. Its purpose is to ensure alignment with the actual structure across these critical dimensions.

The strategy of the Coast Guard is clear – operational focus – to provide superior support and response capabilities to the nation in a variety of mission areas. These aspects were discussed in the previous chapter.

The People aspect of the star model is well aligned to the organizational mind-set of the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard’s policies and practices regarding recruiting, selection, rotation, training and development of its workforce are all focused on supporting the operational strategy. As discussed earlier, the development and promotion of officers remains firmly rooted in operational experience. This results in all leaders of the organization, whether the Director of Resources (CFO), leading operational commands, or the Telecommunications Information Systems Command being firmly rooted in Coast Guard operations and fully understanding the needs and desires of the operator from first hand experience. The Coast Guard is a flexible organization that requires flexible people and its personnel policies and career management systems reinforce these tenets.

The structure of the Coast Guard, discussed earlier, provides the shape, distribution of power, degree of specialization, and span of control of the organization at various levels. There are two distinct organizational designs – the support functions and the operational commands – within the Coast Guard. This structure provides a
balance between economies of scale in support functions and decentralized, responsive operational units in the field.

The processes of the Coast Guard are not ideal. This is expected with two separate organizational structures in place. However, given the unique nature of the Coast Guard and its missions, the structure works well and the processes work well to support the operators, especially in times of crisis. The only real decisions that matter in the Coast Guard are operational decisions and the processes in place to support those decisions work well and are streamlined. Processes to support the latest changes at, for example, the Uniform Board do not work well and are very cumbersome. However, these decisions are not important to Coast Guard customers so the organization tolerates the slow decision making of policy issues at Headquarters.

The rewards process of the Coast Guard is firmly aligned with operational success. A military organization with a pay scale mandated by Public Law does not have any sort of monetary flexibility to reward its members. However, the Coast Guard, like other military and public organizations, has mastered the art of non-monetary compensation. Military decorations and medals reward performance. The Coast Guard also has a device worn on its decorations to signify operational performance. The culture of the organization values awards with this operational distinguishing device much more so than similar awards without the device. Top performers in the organization are promoted earlier than their peers. In the Coast Guard, military members are frequently directed to move to new units every couple of years. Top performers are usually given their preferred choices for new assignments. These top choices are normally in highly desired areas or positions of greater responsibility.
Everyone in the service recognizes the importance of performance in assignment preference.

In summary, Galbraith's star model helps to show how the organizational design of the Coast Guard is aligned across all facets.

**Recent Reorganization**

As noted earlier, Admiral Thad Allen, Commandant of the Coast Guard, recently announced a plan to reorganize the Coast Guard and create a new organizational structure to direct operations.

The following *Navy Times* article explains the new structure:

The head of the Coast Guard announced Tuesday that he will realign the service's major operational commands, consolidating them into a single fleet command led by a three-star admiral. Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Thad Allen also announced plans to meld the service's support units into a single entity he says will better serve the operational forces.

In a speech to active-duty and reserve personnel in Washington, D.C., Allen said he'll eliminate Atlantic and Pacific area commands, headquartered in Portsmouth, Va., and Alameda, Calif., respectively, and place them under one operational field commander. That field commander will answer to the deputy commandant for operations, a new position that falls below the vice commandant in the chain of command. Next to the deputy commandant for operations on the organizational chart is another new position, the deputy commandant for mission support, who will be responsible for overseeing all support staff, including financial systems, data systems, logistics, technology and communications.

Allen said the realignment will support the Coast Guard better as it adapts to its expanded role as the country's primary maritime security force. "This is a radically changed mission environment," Allen said of the Coast Guard's post-Sept. 11, 2001, operations. "This is not my father's Coast Guard." In his speech, Allen said the realignment of the operating
forces will ensure that the service is “more responsive to mission execution.”

Shortly after taking over as commandant in May 2005, Allen said he would divide the Coast Guard’s operational units into three commands—shore-based sector forces, patrol (Deepwater) forces and deployable special forces. He said the command changes he announced Tuesday also were needed, to eliminate turf battles and ensure cooperation with other military commands.

“Our structure at times works against us, in operations with Joint Interagency Task Forces and combatant commanders whose operating areas are not the same as our area boundaries,” Allen said. Allen said a decision has not been made as to where the field command would be based. The deputy commandant for operations, a three-star admiral, will work at Headquarters. In terms of realigning the support units, Allen said he has listened to service members who complained of systemic problems within the Coast Guard’s logistics, administrative and financial systems. He said a streamlined support structure would better support operations and eliminate redundancy and some of the frustration with the Coast Guard’s disparate systems. “We have been running some parts of the Coast Guard like we’re a small business, when we’re a Fortune 500 company,” Allen said.

Allen said the changes will not require additional personnel, and he added that a time line has not been set for implementing them. But he stressed that the service needs to adapt to its expanded mission set or risk readiness. “I made a commitment to be a commandant of change, transition and transformation. I did not ask for this job to be the commandant of the status quo,” Allen said.

The Coast Guard has come under fire in the past year for problems with its major acquisition program, known as Deepwater. The $24 billion, 25-year project has experienced a number of project delays, requirement changes and setbacks, but the service, which has the seventh oldest naval fleet in the world, needs the contract’s promised ships, aircraft and communications equipment. Earlier this year, Allen announced several changes to the Coast Guard’s programs and acquisition offices, including hiring additional staff and increasing the service’s scrutiny of Deepwater contractors Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman. Allen also has spent the last two weeks pleading continuation of the massive contract to Capitol Hill. The commandant said Tuesday he hopes his continued efforts to transform the Coast Guard will win over lawmakers. “I need the support of Homeland Security and the Administration, and I’ve got that. I will continue to earn the support of Congress,” Allen said.  


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This change in the organizational design of the Coast Guard is not surprising. The Coast Guard always seems to be reorganizing in some regard. However, this change is somewhat unusual. After the success of the Coast Guard response during Hurricane Katrina – of which ADM Allen was the Principal Federal Official in charge of the response – it is surprising that there is a desire to further consolidate and centralize an operational design that relies on the Coast Guard’s culture of decentralization and on-scene initiative. Although it is not clear that the centralization of operational oversight will lessen the on-scene commander’s initiative, any attempt to consolidate increases the power of those in charge. This increase in power may also result in an increase in information and monitoring.

An example is this regard comes from my own experience with Area Staffs. The Atlantic and Pacific Area’s were initially staffed to be force providers and broker as well as shift major assets across district boundaries. With this centralization of asset oversight, the Area Staffs grew and became an extra layer of operational oversight. The new structure announced in February will now eliminate the Areas and further centralize operational oversight at Headquarters. At Coast Guard Headquarters, Captains “(O-6s)” do most jobs of any significance. Thus, the change will ratchet up the seniority of the operational oversight. Given the increasing connectivity of operational units, this appears then to allow significant senior oversight and significant intrusion into an on-scene commander’s initiative.

I also have a hard time understanding the need for this apparent radical change given the success of the existing design when it mattered most during Hurricane Katrina.
Moreover, this is an organizational change that seems to fail on many dimensions. Taking John Kotter's (2007) eight preconditions for successful organizational change, the newly announced structure does not appear viable. It is in fact weak on a number of factors. For example, Kotter's first step is to establish a sense of urgency through potential crises or major opportunities. The *Navy Times* article hardly communicates any real crisis or massive opportunity. Kotter's second step is to form a powerful coalition. In this case, it may not matter since if the Commandant says to do it, it will happen. The third step is to create a vision. From my perspective, no vision has yet been communicated. Although I am outside the uscg.mil domain and can not access most internal policy documents, I am not sure the vision is well distributed and communicated (step 4.) The remaining Kotter steps, to empower others to act on the vision, to create short-term wins, to consolidate and spread improvements, and to institutionalize new approaches remain to be seen.

In conclusion, the organizational design of the Coast Guard for Hurricane Katrina was well aligned with the operational focus and culture of the organization and positioned the service well to respond during the crisis. The upcoming changes in the organizational design of the service will need to be tested in a similar crisis before making any value judgments.
In my view, the Coast Guard, with its well over 200 years of service and famous and well respected leaders simply does not have a well-developed, time-tested, and formalized leadership program. Many of my interviewees had similar thoughts. However, in the past several years, there have been significant and positive strides toward a formalized leadership program applicable at all levels in the organization. The establishment of the Leadership Development Center (LDC) at the US Coast Guard Academy and the incorporation of the Chief Petty Officers Academy and the Chief Warrant Officers Indoctrination Course into the LDC umbrella have all been positive and significant steps, but there is still a long way to go. It will probably take a generation to firmly establish a formalized leadership model across all levels of the organization.

For most of the Coast Guard's existence, leadership was learned by doing and making mistakes, For instance, I do not remember receiving any formalized leadership training during my four years at the Coast Guard Academy. I had some very basic leadership "pointers" provided to me during a one or two day course as I prepared to be platoon leader for incoming cadets one summer, but that was all. Moreover, I have no idea if that leadership "program" was integrated into a larger Coast Guard-wide program or if provided for me on an ad hoc basis at the Academy. (I feel it was Academy-specific.)
After graduation, I reported aboard my first ship, as a division officer and was told “to get to work.” I immediately headed out and started making leadership mistakes. Fortunately, I had some terrific mentors in the form of other officers in the wardroom and senior enlisted personnel who helped guide me through those first two years. I must have done something right, because my next assignment was as the Commanding Officer of an 82-foot patrol boat as the only officer in charge of a crew of ten enlisted personnel. My age at the time, 23, was the median age of the crew onboard.

This leadership model – learn by doing and making mistakes – served the Coast Guard well for over 200 years and can trace its roots to the midshipman officer training program onboard ships before the establishment of academies. However, it is far from ideal. I have drawn parts of my leadership style from those with whom I serve – either under or above. Some of those attributes are great and some are not the most enlightened. Fortunately, my style has developed and evolved throughout my career, hopefully for the better.

Starting in the 1990s, the Coast Guard realized that it needed a much more formalized and much more consistent leadership model to continue to attract and retain the best workforce.

Over the past dozen years or so, the Coast Guard has worked hard to formalize leadership across the organization and to make leadership training available to everyone, regardless of rank or position. This is a reflection that everyone in the Coast Guard can and will lead somebody at some time, possibly tomorrow. Many leadership related programs have been standardized and made more homogenous across the service. The Leadership Development Center at the US Coast Guard Academy has
been at the forefront of this effort. Much of this effort has been to codify and organize extant leadership philosophies and programs already in place or to formalize existing structures.

For years, Coast Guard officers have been evaluated across a number of qualities ranging from initiative to responsibility and the like. The most recent Officer Evaluation Form reflects 23 qualities that an officer is to embody. Moreover, each officer is evaluated on each of these qualities. Enlisted evaluations are similar and, depending on the rank of the individual, they are evaluated across a number of similar dimensions.

Realizing the desired traits and characteristics of high performers, the Coast Guard then formalized the leadership competencies of its members. These competencies are quite similar to the personnel evaluation forms. They fall into four broad categories: leading self, leading others, leading performance and change and leading the Coast Guard. (Please see Appendix G for the Coast Guard’s Leadership Competencies.)

Understanding that these competencies provide the framework, the Coast Guard also realizes that the old model of making mistakes and learning still holds value. In a leadership publication, the official voice of the Coast Guard says:

Leadership training, mentoring and member/employee development take place, primarily, at the local command, and local commanders are ultimately responsible for the professional development of their subordinates. This makes sense. The knowledge, skills and abilities a member/employee acquires must be validated, and the primary place where members/employees can do so is in the workplace. It is in the workplace where knowledge, skills, and abilities can be applied, analyzed,
tested, synthesized with existing competencies and then, evaluated through performance.\textsuperscript{8}

The Coast Guard realizes also that not every person in the organization requires the same level of expertise in all areas. The existing leadership model framework grows with the individual as that individual develops and is promoted through the organization. The Coast Guard, like other military organizations, starts its new employees out at the bottom and they work their way up through the hierarchy. No one can enter a military structure in the middle; they start at the bottom of their respected status – enlisted or officer. This provides great opportunity to inculcate the individual with the culture of the organization and the leadership ethos of the organization as they rise through the ranks. Similarly, the culture and ethos of the organization effectively weeds out those individuals who are not a good fit with the organization before they get to positions of relative power and can potentially do the organizational harm.

The Coast Guard's leadership model has many attributes. The program foundation includes the Coast Guard's vision, core values, and societal influences. The building blocks are leadership competencies and expectations of performance. Above that are organizational, unit, and individual processes that assess and develop the leadership skills needed for mission success. Responsibility for leadership development has always been and will continue to be shared by each individual, his or her unit, and the organization. The individual element includes identifying one's own strengths and shortcomings, developing a personal plan for improvement, and taking initiative in pursuing education. The unit provides support such as formal and informal indoctrination and training, counseling, and mentoring. The Coast Guard organization

provides formal systems and processes such as assignments, policy, training, and education.\footnote{U.S. Department of Homeland Security. U.S. Coast Guard. \textit{Coast Guard Leadership Development Program, COMDTINST M5351.1}. Washington, DC. 12 Dec 1997.}

Leadership competencies and formalized programs have all contributed to a greater "professionalization" of the Coast Guard's workforce. However, the essence of the organization remains the on-scene commander's initiative and leadership while facing life or death on the operational mission. The realization and understanding that the real leadership training happens on the job – and by definition, in the helicopter, on the small boat, or at sea – means that operational leadership will continue to be the cornerstone around which the Coast Guard will continue to be successful.
Hurricane Katrina was one of the strongest storms to make landfall in the United States in the last 100 years. As noted, it was the costliest natural disaster in the history of the United States causing an estimated $81 billion in damages devastating the US Gulf Coast up to 100 miles inland. It was one of the deadliest hurricanes ever, killing at least 1836 people and leaving at least 750 more missing. At its peak, it was the sixth strongest hurricane recorded in the Atlantic and had the third lowest measured central pressure at landfall (a measure of intensity) with 125 mph winds when it slammed into the US Gulf Coast.\(^\text{10}\)

Hurricane Katrina initially formed as tropical depression #12 over the southeastern Bahamas on August 23, 2005 as the result of the interaction of a tropical wave with the remnants of tropical depression #10. The storm organized, intensified and was upgraded to a tropical storm and named Katrina on August 24\(^{th}\). Katrina continued to intensify and headed west towards Florida. It reached minimum hurricane strength just before making landfall in the vicinity of Hallandale, Florida on August 25\(^{th}\). The storm weakened for seven hours as it passed over the land mass of Florida, but upon entering the Gulf of Mexico it rapidly intensified over the warm water.

Hurricane Katrina grew enormously in size over the warm water as it intensified and reached its peak strength as a Category 5 storm on August 28\(^{th}\) with maximum

\(^{10}\) National Climate Data Center, www.ncdc.noaa.gov
sustained winds of 175 mph and minimum central pressure of 902 mb. Due to the internal dynamics of a hurricane, a storm can not remain Category 5 for very long and will weaken over time. Katrina went almost due west upon entering the Gulf of Mexico but a weakening high pressure ridge over central Texas moved to the west and this allowed Katrina to gradually turn to the northwest and then north and make a direct hit in the Gulfport and New Orleans area. Initial forecasts had Katrina continuing west towards the Texas coast. Katrina’s turn to the north and the New Orleans area only gave those locations a short time to prepare for the storm’s arrival.

On August 28th, when the size and intensity of the storm were clear, the National Hurricane Center issued a warning covering the Gulf Coast Area. The National Weather Service’s New Orleans/Baton Rouge office vividly-worded bulletin predicted that the area would be "uninhabitable for weeks" after "devastating damage" caused by Katrina, which at that time rivaled the intensity of Hurricane Camille.11

Katrina then weakened somewhat and made landfall on the Gulf Coast early on the morning of August 29th with sustained winds of 125 mph and hurricane force winds extending over 100 miles from the center due to the extreme size of the storm.

Hurricane Katrina caused widespread devastation from its winds and rain. Rainfall amounts in excess of 8-10 inches were common in the path of the storm. As the storm weakened over land, rainfall became the biggest concern causing widespread flooding and even spawning tornadoes as far inland as Georgia. Katrina did not lose hurricane strength until it was more than 150 miles inland. It was downgraded to a tropical depression near Clarksville, Tennessee and remnants of Katrina persisted until

reaching the Great Lakes on August 31st.\textsuperscript{12} (Please see Appendix H for a graphical display of the storm's path and intensity.)

The heavy rains, storm surge, and heavy winds weakened the levee system for New Orleans. Two days after the passage of Katrina, the levees broke putting 80% of New Orleans, which is below sea level, underwater.

Katrina was the equivalent of weapon of mass destruction. Its winds and rain destroyed communication networks and power distribution grids virtually eliminating a coordinated response and preventing a clear assessment of the damage for several days. Over 1.7 million people were without power and clean drinking water was unavailable. The rain and flooding weakened the levees and caused them to collapse flooding New Orleans and surrounding areas. Some parts of New Orleans were under 20 feet of flood water. The winds destroyed thousands of homes and buildings. The wind destroyed traffic signs and collapsed bridges. Combined with the flooding of the city from rain and collapsed levees, movement within and around various parts of the city was difficult to impossible. Katrina caused significant beach erosion and untold environmental damage (from damage to the oil and chemical refineries in the area and other wastes that were covered by the flood waters.) The magnitude of the destruction is nearly impossible to comprehend and certainly exceeded any prediction or scenario planning by disaster planners.

The Coast Guard was the first organization to leap into this desperate situation to do what it does best, save people and do everything possible to help.

\textsuperscript{12} \url{www.wikipedia.com} April 1, 2007.
The Coast Guard response to Hurricane Katrina was one of determination, spirit, and resolve. Despite the destruction of most of the Coast Guard’s own infrastructure and support, communication networks, and general command control authority initially, the Coast Guard responded immediately after the passage of the danger associated with the storm. The Coast Guard was rescuing people and saving lives while other agencies and organizations were trying to figure out what to do. In the end, the response to Hurricane Katrina has been widely criticized, investigated, and derided, with one notable exception – The U.S. Coast Guard’s effort is now looked at as the standard for future responses for all agencies and organizations.

Planning and Preparation

Coast Guard units have established hurricane plans that outline steps to take prior to the arrival of a forecasted storm. These hurricane plans focus primarily on safeguarding assets and, if necessary, moving Coast Guard members and their families out of the path of the forecasted storm. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hurricane Katrina’s path in the Gulf of Mexico was somewhat unpredictable. Units in the New Orleans area only had about two days of advance notice that the storm was going to make a direct hit in that area. During busy hurricane seasons, like the one in 2005,
Coast Guard units are in an almost perpetual state of hurricane readiness. As always, there is a fine line between hurricane preparedness and being ready to respond before and after a hurricane. If the safety of Coast Guard personnel and equipment is the only concern, units would simply pack up and move out of the hurricane region entirely until the winter. Obviously, that is not possible, so Coast Guard units balance the ability to respond to emergencies immediately before the arrival of a storm and then position themselves to respond immediately after the storm clears.

For Katrina, Coast Guard units in the impact area moved their assets (boats, planes, cutters, helicopters) to various locations out of the direct path of the storm while maintaining a core group of people in place to coordinate the return of the assets after the storm passed. Non-essential personnel and family members were evacuated, and alternate command posts were established in St. Louis and other areas inland out of the path of the storm. These movements were all part of established hurricane plans that had been in place and executed several times in the past, including several times during the 2005 hurricane season. Some of the more dramatic parts of the plan, establishing alternate command centers and evacuating personnel and family members, are condition-based parts of the plan. When these tripwires were activated for Katrina, they were executed as planned. One interviewee noted that there was nothing unusual in the preparation for Katrina than there was for any other storm until about 36 hours before the storm came ashore. When it was clear that New Orleans was going to be "smashed," the more elaborate parts of the plan were activated.

As one interviewee noted, Coast Guard District 8 (the regional operational command that included New Orleans and most of the Gulf Coast) had recently revised
most of their hurricane plans. Rear Admiral Duncan, the commander of District 8 was a veteran of Charleston's Hurricane Hugo in 1989 and witnessed first hand the potential destructive power of a large hurricane. This focus on hurricane preparedness from experience helped invigorate many hurricane plans at individual units. One of the lingering visions of poor hurricane planning is the picture of the stranded USCGC POINT LEDGE on Veteran's Drive in Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands after the passage of Hurricane Marilyn in September 1995. POINT LEDGE and her crew did not evacuate from the path of the oncoming storm and was stranded after losing her battle with the destructive forces of the storm when it made a direct hit on St. Thomas. The picture of the POINT LEDGE on the street was on the front page of many major newspapers and gave the Coast Guard a black eye.

Hurricane plans are normally just dusted off each year and put into practice, but RADM Duncan's focus brought these plans into a fresh and critical review. It is important to note that the best hurricane plan simply prepares a unit for the arrival of a storm and seeks to safeguard assets and equipment to enable an effective response after the storm. All hurricane plans end with the passage of the storm and the resumption of normal operations and damage assessments. Hurricane plans do not create post-hurricane response organizations or hurricane response guidance that are different than everyday Coast Guard operations. These plans simply prepare for the arrival of a storm and ensure the safeguarding of assets and equipment.

One interviewee noted that he felt that he had free reign both before and after the passage of Katrina. He stated that there was not much guidance from above and senior commanders trusted him to “do the right thing.” It was clear what the commander's
intent was and no guidance was needed after the passage of the storm. He remarked that this was “a good thing because there were not communications available after the passage of the storm anyway.” He stated that the only interaction he had with more senior commanders was to ask for more equipment and personnel. He stated he “felt very blessed to run operations without interference from above with anything other than ‘how can we help?’”

Response

After the passage of Katrina, Coast Guard assets tasked to District 8 quickly returned to the area and immediately commenced rescue operations and damage assessments. These rescues were all conducted under the auspices of the local Coast Guard person in the area, whether they were in communications with higher authorities or not. The simple approach was that if it needed to get done, it got done. Notifications would come later once communications were established. Immediately it became clear to local operational commanders that the District 8 assets would not be sufficient to conduct the recovery efforts. Local operational commanders sent requests for additional resources (people, boats, aircraft, etc.) almost immediately. All interviewees remarked that it was very clear from the outset that additional resources were required.

For the first three or four days after the passage of Katrina, Coast Guard units simply focused on doing whatever they could do to help with whatever they had that survived the storm in their own general geographic area. At this point, communications were almost non-existent except for face-to-face meetings. RADM Duncan was the first
official “down range” and essentially told his units in the area ‘to do good things and help was on the way.’ Despite significant personal loss and uncertainty about family members location and safety, Coast Guard men and women stationed in the New Orleans area immediately set out to help others in any way possible; using whatever resources they had available.

During this initial period, described by most as simply as “a life-saving period,” Coast Guard units did whatever possible to save lives from desperate circumstances. This period was described by one interviewee as “controlled chaos.” It was also described as a “frantic operation.” The loosely structured operational effort made it quite easy to meld new people from other units outside District 8 because it was so free flowing. Learning was swift. Coast Guard mission execution was already ingrained in every Coast Guard member from previous training and experience.

Every Coast Guard unit or asset knew what was going on in its immediate area, but had little knowledge of what was happening in other geographic areas. Coast Guard helicopters were all over the city rescuing people from flooded homes and small boats were moving people from flooded areas of the city across the river to areas that were safe. These missions were all done simply on the initiative of the pilot or coxswain. One interviewee noted that most pilots worked their own area of the city several times because on their last mission they had seen people in need of a rescue. Overall operational guidance was limited due to almost non-existent communications. Thus, on-scene initiative, by the pilot, or coxswain, was imperative for success. One interviewee noted that there was virtually no tactical oversight at this time and instead
operational commanders focused on obtaining logistical support from outside the affected area.

Coast Guard air operations during this period were “loosely coordinated,” if at all. The key was the on-scene initiative of the individual pilot. There was loose coordination of the mission tasking by the Coast Guard Air Station in New Orleans and an overhead cover aircraft for airspace deconfliction, communications coordination, and some basic mission tasking, but, essentially, individual pilots “freelanced” their rescue operations wherever they thought people needed help. The Coast Guard pilots and commanders were comfortable with this freelancing because it was effective in mission accomplishment and entirely consistent with the principle of on-scene initiative embedded in the organization’s culture. Coast Guard freelancing had worked since the beginning of Coast Guard aviation in emergency rescues when life and death decisions are made regularly.

When DOD air assets arrived in theater and were incorporated into the general aviation picture, one interviewee noted that DOD leaders and pilots were “horrified” at the lack of control and direction. The Coast Guard interviewee noted that “the DOD way of direct control was better once life and death was no longer an issue, but simply was not an option when life and death was staring everyone in the face.” This interviewee noted that when Hurricane Rita hit a few weeks after Katrina, it showed how the Coast Guard system worked much better than the DOD model in life and death circumstances. Prior to the arrival of Rita, DOD officials set up a very rigid and inflexible grid system for post-Rita recovery air operations utilizing all available aviation assets. Since Rita hit in

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13 Deconfliction involves ensuring aircraft are not at the same altitude in the same general area, it is roughly analogous to air traffic control in the vicinity of an airport.
a place different than forecasted, the grid system was essentially useless because it was not over the area that was hit. Immediately after the storm passed, Coast Guard pilots ignored their assignments in the DOD grid and immediately deviated from the plan and flew directly to the scene of the disaster and started saving lives. All of the DOD pilots flew in their assigned grids doing nothing but wasting fuel for several hours until Coast Guard officials were able to convince DOD personnel to scrap their useless grid and get needed resources where they could be of use.

During the “life saving period” after Katrina, senior leaders in the Coast Guard worked diligently to communicate to the outside world the vastness of the devastation and the need for additional resources. While other organizations and government agencies were trying to decide who was in charge or who should actually request assistance using a proper channel or form, the Coast Guard was immediately flowing resources to the New Orleans area to assist with the rescue of endangered people.

After about 4 days, additional Coast Guard assets – airframes, pilots, security personnel, small boats, maintenance personnel, etc. – began to flow to the area. It was imperative that these Coast Guard assets and personnel arriving in the theater be self-sustained for at least two weeks because of the lack of supplies and the difficulty of getting supplies to the area. Eventually, over half of the Coast Guard’s aviation airframes were employed in the New Orleans area with airframes and crews coming from as far Alaska and Hawaii. This placed tremendous pressure on those assets remaining at home bases around the US to provide locally required emergency response readiness. The entire response to Hurricane Katrina was a Coast Guard-wide effort, regardless of whether the individual was in the New Orleans area or not.
One interviewee noted that one of the biggest keys to success during this period was the standardization programs in place for operational training. This is most prevalent in aviation operations. It was common for a pilot from one air station in one part of the country to fly a helicopter from another air station in another part of the country. Moreover, a crew might include a rescue swimmer from a third air station in a third part of the country, along with a flight mechanic/hoist operator from a fourth air station in a fourth part of the country. All could fly together on a mission and to work seamlessly together saving lives because of the standardization of training and operations.

Later, Department of Defense assets and other federal government agencies arrived and the nature of operations shifted from emergency response and life saving operations to sustainment operations. Unfortunately, my interviewees felt that the DOD assets took on a leadership role in the recovery operations despite their minor involvement in the true rescue effort. As one interviewee noted, “there was an inverse relationship between the sophistication of the asset and the number of lives saved. Coast Guard trailerable small boats with a small outboard engine saved many more people than any combat ready DOD helicopter.”

While it is impossible to name all the Coast Guard heroes in the Katrina aftermath, one person who regularly was mentioned in my interviews was Petty Officer Rodney Gordon. He was selected as the Coast Guard’s Enlisted Person of the Year for 2005 based on his performance during the response to Hurricane Katrina. Just one of the many things he accomplished after the passage of the storm was quickly learning out how to operate a DOD fuel farm at a former base. Every fuel farm is just a bit
different in its operation to pump, re-circulate, and test the fuel. After local DOD personnel were baffled by the operation of this particular fuel farm, Petty Officer Gordon put himself to work and figured it out after several hours without any special tools or guidance. His diligence and perseverance were essential to tapping over 80,000 gallons of aviation fuel that made the rescue of over 30,000 lives possible. This is just one of hundreds of examples of Coast Guard men and women doing the “right thing” to get the job done after Katrina.

Culture & “Can do-itis”

Coast Guard culture enabled and fostered the response to Katrina. Despite the personal loss, destruction to command and control communications and virtually the entire Coast Guard support infrastructure, Coast Guard units and personnel responded valiantly to the need for help after the passage of Katrina. In a sense, the Coast Guard suffers from what I will call “can do-itis.” Coast Guard people always do whatever they can with whatever they have, even if it is not ideally suited for the task. This is, of course, a good thing and a hallmark of the Coast Guard’s organizational culture.

To borrow from a shoe advertising slogan, the Coast Guard’s mantra whether in Katrina or in everyday operations has been simply to “Just do it.” During Katrina this was most evident when communications were non-existent. Simply relying on the on-scene initiative of those in charge and letting the Coast Guard culture of “just do it” take over, the service was able to achieve great things. One interviewee noted that giving direction like “do your best” or “I don’t know what needs to be done, but just get out
there and do it” would seem like a recipe for disaster in many organizations, but in the Coast Guard it led to success. On-scene people used the resources they had as best they could and worked as hard as they could because they did not want to waste time, especially daylight hours. The maintainers would work all night readying the equipment for the next day’s missions. A classic example noted by an interviewee was how a Lieutenant and a petty officer without any regard of rank worked together, side by side, to fix a hoist on a helicopter (without the hoist no one could be rescued rendering the helicopter useless except only in a logistics mode) throughout the night using the headlights from a running car for illumination. They knew how important it was to get the helicopter back in service. By morning, the hoist was repaired and the helicopter saved lives that next day. One interviewee noted the phenomenal can do spirit of everyone involved. “Not a slacker in sight,” was how he described the dedication of everyone involved.

Another interviewee noted that what made the Coast Guard successful during Katrina where other agencies failed is that the average Coast Guard member is used to operating by themselves and making decisions with minimal interference and oversight. “Coast Guard people are use to being alone,” he said, “they “smile and wave at leaders when they stop by, and then just do it when they leave.” Another interviewee noted that what makes the Coast Guard work is “its culture of decision making that is developed in crisis.” Coast Guard members evolve in a response organization that faces crises every day and make decisions every day. An organization that micromanages its people and pushes decision making to the highest level can not expect its personnel to act
independently and solve problems when a crisis like Katrina hits if they have never made an independent decision in their career to that point.

According to my interviewees, this lack of independent decision making was one of the big failures of other organizations during the Katrina response. Many organizations focus on authorization and paperwork. Without proper authority, assets do not move. In the Coast Guard the opposite is true. Assets sitting still are met with probing questions during emergencies and there is a culture in the Coast Guard to act now and figure out the paperwork later (if at all.) This attitude hurts the organization in audits and CFO act compliance. However, it saves lives and that is the mission of the organization.

As an example of the dichotomy between the Coast Guard’s act now to save lives and figure out the paperwork later and the mindset of other organizations, during Katrina, a US Navy helicopter crew that delivered supplies to the impacted area offered to help with rescues and were immediately enveloped into the Coast Guard’s rescue plan. After spending several hours saving lives, when that helicopter crew returned to its parent Navy air station much later than expected, Navy officials reprimanded the crew for not following orders to return immediately after the logistics mission. Although the airframe and pilots were saving lives, the Navy officials felt that it was more important for the helicopter and pilots to be available for future potential logistics missions. In contrast, in the Coast Guard, the pilots would have been reprimanded for thinking logistics was more important than saving lives.

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One interviewee stated that whenever the Coast Guard identifies a crisis, it rolls up its sleeves and gets to work. Other agencies generally do not have the same ability and flexibility to react because they do not have a culture that encourages lower level decision making. Coast Guard leaders are promoted and come up through an operational pipeline where they make decisions throughout their entire career. They are exposed to emergencies and empowered to make decisions throughout their career in the organization. By the time they become senior leaders (and have been in the organization for 20 years), they have it “embedded in the brain that the Coast Guard is a response organization that doesn’t sit around, we make it work.” This interviewee stated that he is still in the Coast Guard because he is “empowered to do things, make decisions, and help people.”

Several of the individuals I interviewed noted that one of the greatest blessings of Katrina was that it destroyed the communications networks. All of those I spoke with who were operating in the New Orleans area noted that without email and other communications they were able to focus on their job and operations and were able to ignore reporting and notifying higher authority in the first few days when most lives were at stake.

An interviewee noted that most people in the Coast Guard who had been in the service any length of time before the transition to the Department of Homeland Security were used to an organization that was “broke and poor due to consistent budgetary cuts while in the Department of Transportation.” This cultural understanding may have made it easy for units to operate in the wake of Katrina without much in the way of supporting infrastructure. Another interviewee used the euphemism of “managing scarcity” as a
cultural tenet in the organization that clearly facilitated operations in a distressed environment. Another cultural aspect known by the average Coast Guard member is that he or she is "naturally unafraid." Again, developing in an organization that routinely operates to rescue people in harsh weather develops members that are "naturally unafraid."

An interviewee noted that Coast Guard members "don't give up until the mission is done." One interviewee noted that an unintended consequence of this approach that Coast Guard members as part of their cultural ethos will do it until it is done regardless of the impediments and will not hesitate to embarrass or irritate other organizations in the process.

Coast Guard members apparently never said "that is not my job" during Katrina operations. They simply did what was needed. Members worked together to get it done regardless of rank or position in concert with a shared vision.

One officer noted that it is "amazing that in the Coast Guard, whenever everything hits the fan, as in Katrina, all of the Coast Guards problems and complaints about administration shortcoming, training shortfalls, lack of money, qualifications, etc. all go away." Everyone forgets about problems and simply focuses on the mission and gets it done. The cultural ethos here is that in crises, Coast Guard members rise to the occasion, despite shortages or equipment problems.

In the end, what made the Coast Guard's response to Katrina so successful from an organizational perspective is that everyone had the same goal and shared a strong organizational culture built on effective emergency response. Katrina was the "Big One," the reason many people joined the Coast Guard in the first place. With a shared
vision and culture of “just doing it,” the organization was able to respond quickly and effectively. The organization has developed people with the desire and experience to make decisions and to act when needed. Interestingly, one interviewee noted that ‘it was hard to shift back from crisis mode to normal operations after Katrina with all the coordination and oversight that accompanies normal operations with good communications in place.’

Leadership

It is difficult to separate leadership from organizational culture in the Coast Guard. Both work closely together for organizational success that sometimes the line between them becomes quite blurry. However, despite an organizational culture of can do-itis, leadership was fundamental to the success of the Coast Guard's Katrina operation.

One aspect of leadership during Katrina is, as one interviewee noted, "leadership of the response was way out of the pay grade of many individuals." However, leadership worked because the organizational culture allowed if not demanded that those individuals step up and succeed. What perhaps separates the Coast Guard from other organizations in crisis situations is that leadership and decision making is pushed farther down during such periods whereas other organizations in crisis seem to push decision making farther up the hierarchy. As an example, immediately after the passage of Katrina, a second class petty officer was a flotilla commander of NINE Coast Guard small boats in the vicinity of the University of New Orleans and she directed the rescue of over 3500 individuals from a life threatening situation to safety across the river.
She did this without any direction or guidance from above and simply led her people and assets.

One interviewee stated: “It isn’t about the plan, it is about leadership.” Many other organizations and Congressional hearings sought the Coast Guard’s “Plan” used for the Katrina response. The idea was that if other entities could get their hands on the “plan” and modify it for their own use, everyone would be as successful as the Coast Guard in future disasters. Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet like a good plan to prepare for future disasters. Instead, what is needed is a flexible and responsive organization that has decision making at the right level and leadership at all levels to adapt to the environment. As another interviewee noted, “the Coast Guard develops its leaders every day at all levels of the organization.” No individual is immune from leadership development in the Coast Guard. This effort pays enormous dividends in crisis situations because the leaders are already in place when they are needed. This interviewee also noted that the Coast Guard’s three top priorities are “people, people, and people.” The Coast Guard is devoted to developing its people to take on new and demanding duties every day.

The Coast Guard’s leadership competencies were published after Katrina. When I asked the interviewees who were involved in Katrina about the competencies and their relation to the operation, my question was universally met with disdain. The published leadership competencies are an obvious attempt to codify what the Coast Guard looks for in leadership. However, those that exercised operational leadership at the cutting edge of crisis found the competencies lacking and often described them as “something for academics or for program managers or training commands, but not much use in the
operational world.” One interviewee stated that Coast Guard Pub 1 and the seven operational principles (discussed in Chapter 4) are “the real essence of leadership.” He felt the Coast Guard’s leadership competencies are about “management, not leadership.” One interviewee likened the definition of leadership “to what you would find in dog obedience school, not in an agile military organization.” He also stated that if the Coast Guard needs a publication to capture the leadership model, “it should be an inspirational good read with some great examples. The current Commandant’s Instruction misses the mark, it is boring.”

Leadership was successful during Katrina because of the vision members shared as to the organization’s purpose. There was no need for a halftime speech to motivate anyone. One interviewee noted: “It is the people, not the policy that gets things done. The storm proved it’s all true.”

Organizational Structure

Structurally, what made the Coast Guard’s response to Katrina successful was that the operators took control and everyone else supported them. Decentralization of operational command has been a hallmark of the Coast Guard’s organizational structure since its inception. Similarly, decentralized decision making provided the independence and responsiveness the organization needed in the emergency response role.

Senior leaders also worked hard to push back when “stupid requests” came down from more senior leaders or DOD organizations. Senior leaders on-scene worked
hard to maintain a big picture despite limited communications and provide overall
guidance for the prioritization of operational objectives.

Senior leaders worked diligently to bring resources from other Coast Guard units
to the affected area. Atlantic Area and Pacific Area staffs facilitated this flowing of
resources across district boundaries while balancing response capabilities across the
entire nation. Within District 8, the District staff utilized resources both within the District
and those requested and directed to it by the Areas to assist. The biggest challenge for
these extra assets was to find real estate and logistics support for the personnel and
equipment. Everyone in the Coast Guard wanted to assist in the Katrina recovery, but
District 8 needed these additional assets to be self-sustaining because of the lack of a
support infrastructure immediately after the passage of the storm.

In all of my interviews, I sensed that operational commanders could have used
more assets to accomplish their mission more quickly. Nevertheless, at the same time,
they were quite pleased with the flow of additional resources and their ability to meld
new arrivals into the overall force structure. No operator I interviewed felt he had too
many assets and could not effectively employ them. Similarly, every operator I
interviewed praised senior commanders for providing everything they asked for in a
timely manner. The flow of resources to the operational front lines was seamless, rapid,
and instrumental in the success of the rescue operation. As one interviewee noted,
“any trend towards centralization of assets is a step in the wrong direction because of
the diffused nature of operations and independent operations required in crisis
response.” Most operators commented in their interviews about the inconvenience of
providing regular updates to more senior commanders, especially those far from the
scene. In their eyes, it seemed that the there was an inverse relationship between the distance of the senior commander from the scene and the need to provide the periodic update on operations.

The centralization of Coast Guard operations ashore into Sectors in most ports was an ongoing initiative in the Summer of 2005. In New Orleans, Group New Orleans (the O types) combined with Marine Safety Office New Orleans (the M types) to create Sector New Orleans only 11 days before the arrival of Hurricane Katrina. Because New Orleans is a port dominated by traditional “M” interests, the Sector Commander was the legacy Marine Safety Officer Commanding Officer and his Deputy was the former Group Commander. Because of Katrina, relationships between legacy O and M types that might have normally taken several weeks or months to gel were forced to gel overnight to ensure continuity of Coast Guard operations in the port and river.

Interestingly, because of the enormity of the task at hand after the passage of Katrina, the new Sector New Orleans essentially split apart – the legacy M types focused on port security, pollution, and damaged vessel inspections and the legacy O types focused on small boat operations, rescuing people, and aids to navigation restoration. The fact that the Sector did not survive in the pressure of a crisis, does not bode well for the Sector model. This is especially true in the future when Sector commanders are generalists instead of legacy M or O types.

Will the Sector model work in a Katrina-like disaster in the future when the Commanding Officer is a Civil Engineer and the Deputy is a Lawyer and the majority of the operational staff is evacuated to some alternate command post? Only time will tell.
New Orleans was fortunate that the “newness” of the Sector had not brought about a decay in the functional expertise of the commander and deputy commander.

Decentralized decision making, especially at the operational level by the pilot or coxswain on-scene will enable the Coast Guard to respond quickly and ably to any future crisis. Any assets on-scene are valuable assets because the pilot or coxswain will know what to do with them and will presumably do the “right thing.” The objective for senior leaders is to ensure that operators have all the equipment and supplies they need to accomplish the mission.

**Conclusion**

In the end, what made the Coast Guard’s response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina a successful one was a combination of culture, leadership, and organizational structure. Success was clearly indicative of a three legged stool that needs all three legs for support. Any attempt to replicate just one of the legs will not produce the same result in future crises. As one interviewee so eloquently said when I asked, in retrospect, what would you have done differently in your Katrina response, he replied, “Nothing.”
The Coast Guard has a proud history and its response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina only further demonstrated the value of the organization to the nation. Additionally, the response to Katrina showcased what has made the Coast Guard such a valuable resource to the country in crisis situations—a organizational culture that just gets it done, a sense of leadership that is embedded in all levels of the organization every day, and an organizational structure that facilitates decentralized decision making and the flow of resources where they can be best utilized. Additionally, the response to Hurricane Katrina also highlighted some areas that the Coast Guard will need to examine further as it continues to evolve organizationally to ensure that the service can continue to provide its valuable service to the nation and the public at large.

During Hurricane Katrina, Coast Guard members in theater worked long hours in oppressive heat and humidity and in areas with destroyed or non-existent infrastructure to support their efforts. Clearly, the culture that emphasizes a “just do it” response fostered this “can do-it is” in these extreme condition. That is the nature of a Coast Guard member—to work as hard as humanly possible, and maybe even a bit more, regardless of the conditions. This approach has developed out of “managing scarcity” and follows the understated public servant that emerged hundreds of years ago. However, that ethos may be reaching a system dynamics tipping point in every day operations.
Since September 11th, 2001, I have witnessed first hand the additional demands placed on the Coast Guard. For the first several years, the demands were ever increasing and the people and resources had not caught up to the workload. In the last few years, the size of the service has grown and the additional resources required to support the new and changing workload have started to come into service. However, instead of a normalizing of the workload, the service has instead just worked harder and longer with more people and more resources.

This has put an enormous strain on people and equipment in the service and I sensed during my last tour afloat that organizationally the service is approaching a tipping point where the workforce will not be able to meet the demands placed on it. Instead of new resources reducing workload through technology or “working smarter,” workload is actually increasing because the new resources are more capable and more capability should result in more results. In addition, the organizational pressure is to produce more in terms of drug seizures, lives saved, etc. At some point, this demanding workload will drive members from the service. All the technology and all the gadgets and all the resources are useless without the highly motivated Coast Guard members to operate them. Organizationally, the service needs to achieve a balance where Coast Guard culture says work hard without complaint and just do it and yet at the same time recognizing that members need a break also. Coast Guard members will always work hard if there is something to do. Unfortunately, in the Coast Guard there is always something useful and productive to do.

Another unintended consequence of the Coast Guard response to Hurricane Katrina is that now the service has been held up as a standard bearer of performance in
crisis to all, inside and outside of government. With that expectation, comes increased scrutiny and even higher performance expectations for the next incident. The Coast Guard has already experienced the heightened expectations and attention not normally associated with the service. The Coast Guard’s Deepwater program – a modernization program for replacing offshore cutters and aircraft – has had some significant problems and cost overruns recently. In the past 216 years of the Coast Guard, an issue like this would have been well below the radar of anybody except those directly involved in the Coast Guard. However, given the expectations and high esteem the Coast Guard is now held, the contracting issues have resulted in Congressional hearings and public attention focused on the service of a sort rarely experienced in the Coast Guard’s history. Organizationally, the service will need to understand its role in the public eye and the expectations placed on it in everything it does – not just rescues, but also in internal administration and contracting.

Another issue that Hurricane Katrina highlighted is the continued need for decentralized organizational structure and decision making, especially in crisis. The ability of the Coast Guard to respond as it did was directly attributable to the way the organization was operationally structured and the on-scene initiative of those involved. Over the past several years, the Coast Guard has worked to centralize functions and oversight to reduce duplicity and save money. Any attempts at centralization work directly against what made the Hurricane Katrina response possible. Centralization to save money will only make the response to the next Katrina more difficult if not impossible. The more the Coast Guard centralizes functions, the more it becomes like other organizations that simply could not decide and act in the aftermath of Katrina.
Again, the organization is creeping towards a tipping point where the cost savings of centralization will soon outweigh the benefits of decentralized response capability. When this happens, the next crisis will be a response disaster for the Coast Guard because it will be hamstrung in its ability to react. I see the biggest threat to the ability to respond in crisis is the Coast Guard’s continued attempts to centralize financial management and purchasing authority. During Katrina, one interviewee noted that operational units “spent money like it was falling out of the sky.” This is another example of the organizational culture that says just get it done and figure out the paperwork later. If the unit needed lubricating oil to keep operating, it bought lubricating oil from wherever it could find it. It did not get three bids or buy from a GSA approved source or other normal purchasing guidelines, it simply bought lubricating oil from wherever it could to keep its equipment running. This happened because the operators in charge understood the overriding need for lubricating oil. If purchasing becomes centralized, professional purchasers will be doing all the buying and they may well be more concerned with following purchasing guidelines than keeping equipment running because they live only in the purchasing world. This poses a distinct threat to the Coast Guard’s culture and can lead to operational bottlenecks that slow response.

The response to Hurricane Katrina also highlighted the need for standardization in equipment and training across the entire service. This has always been the case but in aviation the standardization was much more pronounced and better enforced than in other communities. The response to Katrina showed that standardization across the entire organization is absolutely necessary in crisis response. The ability of a pilot, rescue swimmer, flight mechanic, and airframe to go on a mission together despite all
being from different air stations was critical to mission success. Other communities, especially the small boat community (to a lesser degree) and the cutter community (to a much lesser degree) are standardized, but not nearly to the level of the aviation community. In future crisis responses, I project the aviation model of crewing to be used on small boats and cutters and organizational standardization will be absolutely necessary for success. The current hull and crew swaps in the cutter community during extended shipyard periods and maintenance periods should help start this standardization across afloat platforms.

The response to Hurricane Katrina also showcased to the entire Coast Guard that sometimes “the 80% solution” is appropriate. As one interviewee noted, another part of the Coast Guard culture is that we work very hard to try and get everything perfect (the 100% solution), even if the marginal cost of the effort to get from 80% to 100% creates diminishing returns on investment. This is part of the organizational culture that says work hard until the job is done and our culture says the job is done when it is perfect. Fortunately, during Katrina there was not enough time to get to the 100% solution because lives were at stake. For instance, helicopters rescued people from life threatening situations (flooded homes, no means of escape) and then delivered them to place of relative safety (for instance a highway overpass) and then returned to rescue more people in life threatening situations. In the past, leaving somebody on a highway overpass would not have been acceptable. Instead, the helicopter would have delivered the people to a shelter or hospital to continue care. In Katrina, there wasn’t enough time to do that and there weren’t enough helicopters (despite the additional airframes brought to District 8) to rescue everyone in life threatening situations the first
few days, so simply getting people to relative safety was enough. I am not saying that the Coast Guard should shirk on its duties to get people to safety, but it helped put things in perspective to see that a highway overpass, although not as good as a shelter, was much better than a flooded home with rising water around. I should note that the Coast Guard would bring water and food to those on the overpasses and would coordinate with local officials to get a bus to evacuate the people from the overpass to a shelter. These people were not left on the overpass to fend for themselves. Instead, the Coast Guard realized that it did not have to take care of these people entirely, but instead focused on simply getting them to a point of relative safety.

The response to Hurricane Katrina also highlighted that the Sector model – a centralization of resources model – still has some growing pains to consider. In Katrina, the Sector broke apart into its legacy organizations to respond to the crisis. The magnitude of the situation probably forced the issue, using the divide and conquer approach, but it could also foreshadow some structural problems with the Sector model. Hopefully, after a few years of better integration in the Sectors, people will be better versed in both the M and O side of the structure and not need to break apart for future crises. However, the fact that in the first real test of the Sector model in crisis, the Sector reverted back to its more familiar structure.

Finally, the response to Hurricane Katrina really provided telling evidence of what the Coast Guard is truly about as an organization in spotlight of the national media. I feel that the Coast Guard with its culture, organizational structure, and its leadership model is simply a response organization. The Coast Guard as an organization has evolved into a group that is ready for everything all the time and does the right thing.
when needed without being asked. A weakness of the organization is that it is not structured for long term, sustained operations and should continue to leave leadership of those endeavors to DOD and other differently structured organizations. The Coast Guard needs to continue to reinforce its fire station mentality and should avoid trying to become more centralized or “DOD-like” in organizational design.
In conclusion, the Coast Guard’s response to Hurricane Katrina was a success when other organizations, governments, and agencies were in disarray. The Coast Guard’s organizational culture, leadership model, and diffused organizational structure were all vitally important to the response effort and all contributed in a mutually supportive way to enable success.

The Coast Guard was able to respond immediately and effectively in crisis because crisis response is the bread and butter of the Coast Guard. The entire culture of the organization is developed around and thrives in times of crisis. The idea that permeates the entire organization is to just do it and figure out the paper work later. With that approach, the Coast Guard actively seeks out and effectively responds to crises. The bigger challenge for the Coast Guard, also evidenced in Katrina, is that after the life saving or crisis is over, and the operation shifts to sustainment or rebuilding, the Coast Guard is not well organized nor does it have the culture to operate in this mode in the long term. This is because everyone in the Coast Guard wants to and will work until they drop in a crisis mode. The Coast Guard does not have the people or equipment resources or the culture to work in a long-term recovery operation without burning out its assets.

The DNA of the Coast Guard has several attributes that enabled success in Katrina and will continue to enable success in future crises. First, leadership, initiative,
and on-scene decision making are embedded in that DNA and developed at all levels of the organization. The Coast Guard has a diffused operational structure that demands on-scene initiative. The diffused organizational structure only works because the DNA of the Coast Guard encourages initiative, leadership, and decision making. The organizational structure works because the culture and leadership are in alignment.

Similarly, the personnel policies of the Coast Guard work to reinforce that culture. The promotion process for officers focuses on operational performance and the assignment process encourages (almost demands) officers have operational tours several times in their career. As a result, when any officer is a position of significant leadership, he or she has a wealth of operational experience and understands what it takes to get the job done, especially in crisis. Therefore, officers are ready to make decisions and support their operators because they have been in their shoes before.

As stated earlier, leadership is embedded in the culture and the DNA of every Coast Guard member. The recent attempt to codify that leadership into a Commandant's Instruction was a failure as viewed by operators. It was a first step, but needs significant rework to make it a touchstone document for all people in the Coast Guard. In fact, most people I interviewed had to find the document after I forwarded my interview questionnaire to them.

Finally, the essence of the Coast Guard and what made the service effective in its response to Katrina was its decentralized organizational framework. Recent trends towards centralization and oversight will weaken future ability to respond to similar crises. These centralization efforts, if continued unabated, could work to change that DNA that has made the Coast Guard so successful in responding to crisis. The Coast
Guard is successful because its organizational structure, its organizational culture, and its leadership are all in alignment and all are mutually supportive like three legs of a stool. If one leg changes significantly through further centralization or something else, the entire stool may collapse under the weight of the organization.
Appendix

A

List of Interviewees

The following is a list of interviewees and their position during the response to Hurricane Katrina. Comments are not attributed to any individual.

Commander Steven Baynes, Commanding Officer, USCGC DECISIVE
Captain Neil Buschman, Chief of Operations, Atlantic Area
Captain Joseph Castillo, Chief of Operations, Eighth Coast Guard District
Lieutenant Commander Thomas Cooper, Engineer Officer, Air Station New Orleans
Captain Bruce Jones, Commanding Officer, Air Station New Orleans
Chief Warrant Officer 4 (Bos'n) Stephen Lyons, Commanding Officer, Station Gulfport
Captain Robert Mueller, Deputy Commander, Sector New Orleans
Commander Robert Tarantino, Commanding Officer, USCGC SPENCER
Lieutenant Commander Timothy Tobiasz, Operations Officer, Air Station New Orleans
Appendix

Interview Questionnaire

- What was your role in the Coast Guard's Katrina Response? Was your role based on an existing response plan or did you adapt to the prevailing circumstances?

- What did you do to prepare for the arrival of Katrina? How much direction/guidance did you receive from higher authority? Or, did you provide guidance/direction to subordinates? If so, how specific was it? Was your preparation and actions part of an existing plan, or was it specific to Katrina? What instructions or references did you frequently rely on or refer to in executing your preparations and subsequent response to Katrina?

- Did you feel your response to the disaster was coordinated with appropriate local, state, and other federal agencies? Why or why not?

- What aspects or features of the pre-Katrina Coast Guard organizational chain of command facilitated your response? What parts of the organizational chain of command would you change (or have been changed) post-Katrina to facilitate more streamlined response to future disasters?

- What was your most reliable source of information immediately prior to the arrival of Katrina and during the subsequent response after passage of the storm?

- How would you describe the Coast Guard's "Corporate Culture", either within the framework of the Core Values or in addition to them? Corporate Culture can be described as the moral, social, and behavioral norms of an organization based on the beliefs, attitudes, and priorities of its members.

- What aspects of your description of the Coast Guard's Corporate Culture made your role in Katrina easier? What aspects hindered your response?

- How would you describe the Coast Guard's Leadership Competencies/model? Would you change anything regarding the Coast Guard's leadership model? Do think there are any shortcomings in the model?

- What aspects of your vision of the Coast Guard's Leadership Competencies/model facilitated your role (or your unit's role) in the Katrina response? What aspects of the Leadership model slowed or hindered your response?
Organizational Philosophy Analysis

This analysis is a framework using the Hax and Majluf (1996) model across the dimensions indicated. The existing state I developed through observation and research and the desired state is the ideal situation envisioned through policy documents and statements.

Relationships with Stakeholders

- Employees
  - Existing – Employees are the Coast Guard's most valuable asset. Extensive training programs and professional development programs are provided. Promotion systems are based on merit and seniority; Promises of defined benefit retirement system after 20 years of service exist; Extensive non-monetary benefits are provided, including medical care, leave/vacation time, assignment priorities, etc. Employees will work long hours without complaint.
  - Desired – Continue to treat employees as the most important asset. Maintain existing benefit and non-monetary compensation packages. Maintain equity with other military services. Change the organization and systems so the full scope of employee's abilities is employed. Recognize and identify unique skill sets among employees and assign accordingly. Reward technical skills and advanced education of workforce. Achieve balance between demanding workload and appropriate time off.

- Customers
  - Existing – The Coast Guard's customers are the entire maritime community. The Coast Guard has an exceptional reputation within the maritime community.
  - Desired – Continue to deserve this exceptional reputation. Become more responsive to needs of industry in regulatory arena. Achieve balance between maritime security and cost for declining and pressured industry.
• **Stakeholders**
  o **Existing** – The entire US citizenry is a stakeholder of Coast Guard. Continue to maintain reputation while public conscious of CG expands.
  o **Desired** – Leverage recent exposure (Hurricane Katrina Response and The Guardian Movie) to increase Congressional Funding and aid in recruiting and retention efforts.

• **Suppliers**
  o **Existing** – Have long-term relationships with capital asset suppliers. Current Deepwater Recapitalization Project has a 20-year life span. Most other contracts are standard government contracts guided by Federal Acquisition Regulations based almost entirely on lowest price.
  o **Desired** – Work closely with Deepwater Contractor and achieve System Lock-In from the perspective of both to achieve mutually supportive results. Work to justify best product solutions to other government contracts.

• **Communities**
  o **Existing** – Coast Guard Units are rallying points in local communities, especially smaller ones. Several cities in US are officially designated Coast Guard Cities. Commanding Officers of many CG units are pillars of the community and as respected as senior politicians. Coast Guard presence is nation-wide.
  o **Desired** – Continue to leverage respect in local communities and translate that into budget increases and increased recruiting and retention.
Broad Organizational Objectives

- **Mission Execution**
  - *Existing* - Unique blend of capabilities, competencies and authorities applied across multiple missions are recognized and valued as never before. As a result, expectations for performance and contributions in routine and crisis operations are greater than ever. Meeting new demands while sustaining the trust and confidence of the public served requires meeting continuous challenges and making improvements.
  - *Desired* - Focus the entire organization on improving and sustaining Mission Execution. By structuring service as a three-pronged force: shore-based operations, maritime operations, and deployable operations. Continue bold steps of creating Sectors for shore-based operations. Continue to advance the Deepwater acquisition for maritime presence, patrol, and response. Create truly deployable forces. Expand deployable force capabilities and support them with proper doctrine, logistics, training, and exercises. Across all forces partner with other services and agencies to integrate efforts.

- **Command & Control**
  - *Existing* – Very Decentralized, local mission commanders and commanding officers have significant decision making and autonomy. Interagency cooperation remains essential and embryonic.
  - *Desired* – Develop and embrace interagency cooperation. Espouse fundamental Operational Objectives in all missions and command – Clear Objective, Effective Presence, Unity of Effort, On-scene Initiative, Flexibility, Managed Risk, & Restraint

- **Mission Support**
  - *Existing* – Operational Demands post 9/11 have taxed people, support systems, and infrastructure beyond designed capabilities. Existing Fleet of Deepwater assets is beyond its useful service life. Employees are working unrealistic hours with outdated equipment.
  - *Desired* - Reevaluate and realign our Mission Support system, including organizational structures, human resources, maintenance, logistics, financial management and information systems. All employees must have the tools and support needed to do their job. Ensure Coast Guard men and women are the best trained and most versatile workforce in government, equipped with the most capable fleet of multi-mission ships, aircraft, boats and command and control systems available. Remain aligned with our Department, sister services, and partner agencies.
Organizational Policies

- **Management Style**
  - **Existing** – Hierarchal organization based on rank and experience. Pyramid of reporting responsibilities both administrative and operational.
  - **Desired** – Management Style that provides the information required for decision makers and policy makers but does not stifle innovation of the operator.

- **Organizational Policies**
  - **Existing** – Multi-Mission, Maritime, Military. Hierarchy for administrative reporting, however, operational commanders on-scene are expected to make life and death decisions instantly.
  - **Desired** – An organizational structure that is flatter and more flexible for employees and more transparent for customers and stakeholders. An example is the Sector Organization implementation.

- **Human Resource Management**
  - **Existing** – Human Resources Management system is enormous and quite ponderous. It meets staffing needs well, but is usually slow to implement training system changes. Personnel system is entirely military and must promote from within. Takes several years to produce desired pay-grades during expansion. Problem of “Juniority” throughout the service during post 9/11 expansion.
  - **Desired** – Human Resources System that matches personnel, skills, and abilities, to operational unit needs on time.

- **Finance**
  - **Existing** – Financial support is centralized at CGHQ. Current financial procurement authority is at the lowest organizational level possible enabling all CG units to do “the right thing” whenever needed.
  - **Desired** – Desire for Clean Financial Audits in Government has forced some retrenchment in purchase authority in order to capture better data required for financial reporting to Congress. Hope is that such retrenchment will not affect the ability of the Coast Guard person on-scene from the ability to do the right thing whenever needed.
• Technology
  o **Existing** – Coast Guard equipment and capital assets are, in general, outdated and difficult to maintain and support.
  o **Desired** – Deepwater system, additional post 9/11 funding, and related projects will enable the Coast Guard to achieve technological relevancy and enable it to do its job better and less cost to the people that currently run outdated systems.

Organizational Values & Corporate Culture

• Ethics
  o **Existing** – Law Enforcement and Regulatory agency interfaces with public everyday. All actions must be ethical and above board for sake of the organization's reputation.
  o **Desired** – Continue zero tolerance approach to ethical situations and conduct. Eliminate and separate from the service those that do not meet ideals of service.

• Beliefs
  o **Existing** – Core Values of Honor, Respect, Dedication to Duty.
  o **Desired** – Maintain Core Values and instill in new employees despite the apparent lack of emphasis in everyday civilian life prior to entry into the service.

• Rules of Personal Behavior
  o **Existing** – Adherence to Core Values, equal opportunity for all employees.
  o **Desired** – Eliminate sexual harassment in diverse workforce. Coast Guard will be the employer of choice for all Americans for its opportunity and ethical behavior standards.
Coast Guard Commandant’s Strategic Vision

To the Men and Women of the Coast Guard:
I am deeply honored and humbled to serve you and the American people as the 23rd Coast Guard Commandant. I pledge you my passion, devotion, and energy to ensure you have the best possible tools, support, and leadership to carry out your missions, wherever you sit in our Service.

Situational Assessment:
Let me be frank and very clear: We operate in a strategic environment that has changed dramatically in the past five years and will continue to change. This requires continuous adaptation from the Coast Guard. I realize there has been extensive change in our Service in the past decade and the new Sector structure is still "breaking in." However, we live in a world of dynamic threats and hazards and must adapt accordingly. We will not change for change's sake but purposefully, with strategic intent and always focused on our first priority and duty to the Nation: Mission Execution.

Strategic Drivers:
The Global War on Terrorism, Maritime Transportation Security Act, Homeland Security Act, National Strategy for Homeland Security, and the National Strategy for Maritime Security have mandated new areas of mission emphasis for us. Your extraordinarily successful operations in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 significantly elevated our visibility and the demand for our services across all levels of government. Our unique blend of capabilities, competencies and authorities applied across multiple missions are recognized and valued as never before. As a result, expectations for our performance and contributions in routine and crisis operations are greater than ever. Meeting new demands while sustaining the trust and confidence of the public we serve requires us to continually challenge ourselves and improve the way we do business.

My Strategic Vision:
We will focus our entire organization on improving and sustaining Mission Execution. We will do this by structuring our service as a three-pronged force: shore-based operations, maritime operations, and deployable operations. We've taken bold steps forward by creating Sectors for shore-based operations. We've taken equally bold steps by advancing the Deepwater acquisition for maritime presence, patrol, and response. And we've created truly deployable forces. We must now expand our deployable force capabilities and support them with proper doctrine, logistics, training, and exercises. Across all of our forces, we will partner with other services and agencies to integrate our efforts. To further optimize the mission execution of this three-pronged force, we will assess our command and control structure. We will also reevaluate and realign our Mission Support system, including organizational structures, human resources, maintenance, logistics, financial management and information systems. Each of you, regardless of your pay grade, job or rating, or where you sit in our organization, is critical to mission success. You must have the tools and support you need to do your job. We will ensure Coast Guard men and women are the best trained and most versatile workforce in government,
equipped with the most capable fleet of multi-mission ships, aircraft, boats and command and control systems available. We will remain aligned with our Department, sister services, and partner agencies. I have already assigned responsibility for a substantial list of specific initiatives to our Flag and SES corps. Information on these initiatives will follow shortly and I will keep you updated on their progress.

We have an extraordinary legacy of excellence as America's Coast Guard. We will build on that legacy. We will rise to meet all the challenges confronting us. Let's turn to. Semper Paratus!

Admiral Thad Allen
Coast Guard Core Values

Short Description: Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty

Honor
Integrity is our standard. We demonstrate uncompromising ethical conduct and moral behavior in all of our personal actions. We are loyal and accountable to the public trust.

Respect
We value our diverse work force. We treat each other with fairness, dignity, and compassion. We encourage individual opportunity and growth. We encourage creativity through empowerment. We work as a team.

Devotion to Duty
We are professionals, military and civilian, who seek responsibility, accept accountability, and are committed to the successful achievement of our organizational goals. We exist to serve. We serve with pride.

These core values are more than just Coast Guard rules of behavior. They are deeply rooted in the heritage that has made our organization great. They demonstrate who we are and guide our performance, conduct, and decisions every minute of every day. Because we each represent the Coast Guard to the public, we must all embrace these values in our professional undertakings as well as in our personal lives.

Source: US Coast Guard Personnel Manual, COMDTINST M1000 (series)
Appendix

Coast Guard Organizational Structure

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Commandant (G-C)

Vice Commandant (G-CV)

Chief of Staff (G-CSS)

Atlantic Area

Pacific Area

Districts

Maintenance & Logistics Command

Mission Essential Units

Mission Support Units

Deputy Assistant Commandant

Intelligence & Counterintelligence Investigations (TIS-2)

Response (G-R)

Engineering & Log (G-L)

Planning, Exercises & Development (G-PED)

Acquisition (G-A)

Source: US Coast Guard Official Web Site – www.uscg.mil (March 1, 2007)
Coast Guard Leadership Competencies

Coast Guard Leadership Competencies
Leadership competencies are the knowledge, skills, and expertise the Coast Guard expects of its leaders. The 28 leadership competencies are keys to career success. Developing them in all Coast Guard people will result in the continuous improvement necessary for us to remain always ready — Semper Paratus. While there is some overlap in these competencies, they generally fall within four broad categories, described below:

**Leading Self**
Fundamental to successful development as a leader is an understanding of self and one's own abilities. This includes understanding one's personality, values, and preferences, while simultaneously recognizing one's potential as a Coast Guard member.

**Leading Others**
Leadership involves working with and influencing others to achieve common goals. Coast Guard members interact with others in many ways, whether as supervisor, mentor, manager, team member, team leader, peer, or worker. Positive professional relationships provide a foundation for the success of our Service. Developing the competencies within this category will increase the capacity to serve.

**Leading Performance and Change**
The Coast Guard and its members constantly face challenges in mission operations. To meet these challenges, leaders must apply performance competencies to their daily duties. Having these competencies enables each leader — and the Service — to perform to the utmost in any situation.
Leading the Coast Guard
The Coast Guard does not exist in a vacuum. As leaders gain experience in the Coast Guard, they must understand how it fits into a broader structure of department, branch, government, and the nation as a whole. At a local level, leaders often develop partnerships with public and private sector organizations in order to accomplish the mission. The Coast Guard “plugs in” via its key systems: money, people, and technology. A leader must thoroughly understand these systems and how they interact with similar systems outside the Coast Guard. An awareness of the Coast Guard's value to the nation, and promoting that using a deep understanding of the political system in which we operate becomes more important as one gets more senior. Leaders must develop coalitions and partnerships with allies inside and outside the Coast Guard.

28 Leadership Competencies

Category: Leading Self

Accountability and Responsibility
Coast Guard leaders know ours is a military service and recognize the organizational structure and the chain of command. Each individual is sensitive to the impact of his or her behavior on others and the organization. Leaders take ownership for their areas of responsibility, are accountable to effectively organize and prioritize tasks, and efficiently use resources. Regulations and guidelines that govern accountability and responsibility allow leaders to use appropriate formal tools to hold others accountable when situations warrant.

Followership
All Coast Guard members are followers. The followership role encompasses initiative, commitment, responsibility, accountability, critical thinking, and effective communications. Followers look to leaders for guidance and feedback; they expect challenging tasks to both learn and develop competence. Actively involved, they seek to understand through listening, responsible questioning and feedback. Followers have the responsibility to work with leaders to ensure successful mission accomplishment.

Self Awareness and Learning
Coast Guard leaders are self-objective. They continually work to assess self and personal behavior, seek and are open to feedback to confirm strengths and identify areas for improvement, and are sensitive to the impact of their behavior on others. Successful leaders use various evaluation tools and indicators to assist in this process of understanding themselves. Coast Guard leaders understand that leadership and professional development is a life-long journey and always work to improve knowledge, skills, and expertise. To that end, they seek feedback from others and opportunities for self-learning and development, always learning from their experiences. Leaders guide and challenge subordinates and peers, encouraging individuals to ask questions and be involved. Leaders are open to and seek new information and adapt their behavior and work methods in response to changing conditions.
Aligning Values
Coast Guard leaders develop and maintain an understanding of the Coast Guard Core Values of Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty. Leaders align personal values with organizational values, reconciling any differences that exist. Leaders embody the highest standards of Coast Guard Core Values, can communicate their meaning, hold peers and subordinates accountable to these organizational merits, and use them to guide performance, conduct, and decisions—every day.

Health and Well-Being
Leaders consider the environment in which they and their people work, attending to safety and well-being. They effectively identify and manage stress. They set a personal health example with emphasis on a program of physical fitness and emotional strength. Leaders encourage others to develop personal programs including physical, mental, and spiritual well-being.

Personal Conduct
Leaders demonstrate belief in their own abilities and ideas; are self-motivated, results-oriented, and accountable for their performance; recognize personal strengths and weaknesses; emphasize personal character development; and use position and personal power appropriately. They understand the relevance and importance of Coast Guard Core Values and strive for personal conduct that exemplifies these values.

Technical Proficiency
Coast Guard leaders’ technical knowledge, skills, and expertise allow them to effectively organize and prioritize tasks and use resources efficiently. Always aware of how their actions contribute to overall organizational success, leaders demonstrate technical and functional proficiency. They maintain credibility with others on technical matters and keep current on technological advances in professional areas. Successful leaders work to initiate actions and competently maintain systems in their area of responsibility.

Category: Leading Others

Effective Communications
Coast Guard leaders communicate effectively in both formal and informal settings. Good listeners, they reinforce the message they convey with supportive mannerisms. Leaders express facts and ideas succinctly and logically, facilitate an open exchange of ideas, ask for feedback routinely, and communicate face-to-face whenever possible. They write clear, concise, and organized correspondence and reports. Successful leaders prepare and deliver effective presentations. In situations requiring public speaking they deliver organized statements, field audience questions, confidently communicate with the media and other external entities, and distinguish between personal communication situations and those as a Coast Guard representative. Competent coaches, supervisors, followers, performance counselors, interviewers, and negotiators, leaders know how to approach many situations to achieve organizational goals.
Influencing Others
Coast Guard leaders possess the ability to persuade and motivate others to achieve the desired outcome: to create change. They influence and persuade by communicating, directing, coaching, and delegating, as the situation requires. Successful leaders understand the importance and relevance of professional relationships, develop networks, gain cooperation and commitment from others, build consensus, empower others by sharing power and responsibility, and establish and maintain rapport with key players.

Respect for Others and Diversity Management
Through trust, empowerment, and teamwork, Coast Guard leaders create an environment that supports diverse perspectives, approaches and thinking, fairness, dignity, compassion, and creativity. They demonstrate sensitivity to cultural diversity, race, gender, background, experience, and other individual differences in the workplace. Leaders guide and persuade others to see the value of diversity, building and maintaining a healthy working environment.

Team Building
Leaders recognize and contribute to group processes; encourage and facilitate cooperation, pride, trust, and group identity; and build commitment, team spirit, and strong relationships. Coast Guard leaders inspire, guide, and create an environment that motivates others toward goal accomplishment; consider and respond to others’ needs, feelings, and capabilities; and adjust their approach to suit various individuals and situations. Coast Guard leaders have a historical perspective of leadership theory that they continually develop through personal experience and study of contemporary leadership issues. They work with subordinates to develop their leadership knowledge and skills. Coast Guard leaders adapt leadership styles to a variety of situations and personify high standards of honesty, integrity, trust, openness, and respect for others by applying these values and styles to daily behavior.

Taking Care of People
Successful leaders identify others’ needs and abilities in the Coast Guard, particularly subordinates’. They ensure fair, equitable treatment; project high expectations for subordinates and/or their teams; express confidence in abilities; recognize efforts; and use reward systems effectively and fairly. Leaders appropriately support and assist in professional and personal situations and use formal programs to resolve situations positively.
Mentoring
Drawing on their experience and knowledge, leaders deliberately assist others in developing themselves, provide objective feedback about leadership and career development, and help identify professional potential, strengths, and areas for improvement. Successful leaders identify with the role of mentor to their staff. They have the skill to advise and develop others in the competencies needed to accomplish current and future goals. Leaders seek out mentors for themselves and may be engaged in the formal Coast Guard mentoring program both as mentors and mentees.

Category: Leading Performance and Change

Customer Focus
Coast Guard leaders know who their customers are and make every possible effort to find out their customers' needs and to hear their customers' voices. Leaders understand the importance of measuring and monitoring the degree to which their customers' needs are met or exceeded and continually strive to improve that. Coast Guard leaders understand the distinction between "customer" and "boss" and act accordingly to balance competing demands.

Management and Process Improvement
Successful leaders demonstrate the ability to plan, organize, and prioritize realistic tasks and responsibilities for themselves and their people. They use goals, milestones, and control mechanisms for projects. Leaders seek, anticipate, and meet customers’ needs—internal and external. To achieve quality results, Coast Guard leaders monitor and evaluate progress and outcomes produced by current processes, ensure continuous improvement through periodic assessment, and are committed to improving products, services, and overall customer satisfaction. They effectively manage time and resources to successfully accomplish goals.

Decision Making and Problem Solving
Leaders identify and analyze problems; use facts, input from others, and sound reasoning to reach conclusions; explore various alternative solutions; distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information; perceive the impact and implications of decisions; and commit to action, even in uncertain situations, to accomplish organizational goals. They evaluate risk levels, create risk control alternatives, and implement risk controls. Successful leaders are able to isolate high-importance issues, analyze pertinent information, involve others in decisions that affect them, generate promising solutions, and consistently render judgments with lasting, positive impact.

Conflict Management
Coast Guard leaders facilitate open communication of controversial issues while maintaining relationships and teamwork. They effectively use collaboration as a style of managing contention; confront conflict positively and decisively to minimize impact to self, others, and the organization; and reduce conflict and build relationships and teams by specifying clear goals, roles, and processes.
Creativity and Innovation
Leaders develop new insights into situations and apply innovative solutions to make unit and functional improvements. Leaders create a work environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation. They take reasonable risks and learn from the inevitable mistakes that accompany prudent risk-taking—and they apply this same thinking to those who work for them, encouraging innovation and helping their people apply the lessons learned. Leaders design and implement new or cutting-edge programs and processes.

Vision Development and Implementation
Leaders are able to envision a preferred future for their units and functions, setting this picture in the context of the Coast Guard’s overall vision, missions, strategy, and driving forces. Concerned with long-term success, leaders establish and communicate organizational objectives and monitor progress toward objectives; initiate action; and provide structure and systems to achieve goals. Leaders create a shared vision of the organization, promote wide ownership, manage and champion organizational change, and engineer changes in processes and structure to improve organizational goal accomplishment.

Category: Leading the Coast Guard

Stewardship
The Coast Guard’s unofficial motto was once, “You have to go out – but you don’t have to come back!” This bravado was a testament to the bravery and commitment to service of Coast Guard men and women. But a more appropriate motto might be, “You have to go out, and you have to come back, and you have to bring our resources back because we'll need them again tomorrow!” Performing the mission at ANY cost is an unacceptable risk, not only to those immediately involved, but to all those who would have benefited from the efforts of those people and their resources tomorrow, and next week, and next year. Protecting the nation’s investment is important and presents a difficult decision when it means failing now in order to succeed tomorrow. Achieving the proper balance is a crucial element of leading.

Technology Management
Technological advances make it possible to improve mission performance, provided prudent investments are made up front. Coast Guard leaders use efficient and cost-effective approaches to integrate technology into the workplace and improve program effectiveness. Leaders develop strategies using new technology to enhance decision-making. They fully appreciate the impact of technological changes on the organization.
Financial Management
The Coast Guard’s budget and financial management systems are analogous to a nervous system. Leaders must demonstrate broad understanding of the principles of financial management and marketing expertise necessary to ensure appropriate funding levels for their areas of responsibility. They prepare, justify, and/or administer the budget for the unit or program; use cost-benefit thinking to set priorities; and monitor expenditures in support of programs and policies. Leaders seek and identify cost-effective approaches and manage procurement and contracting appropriately.

Human Resource Management
Coast Guard leaders understand and support the civilian and military staffing systems and assess current and future staffing needs based on organizational goals and budget realities. Making decisions that are merit-based, they ensure their people are appropriately selected, developed, trained, assigned, evaluated, and rewarded. Leaders take corrective action when needed. They guide and mentor others in appropriate interaction with these system elements. Leaders support personnel completing requirements for advancement, special programs, or future assignment; recognize positive performance and development through the formal reward system; and assist others in requesting formal training or developmental assignments.

Partnering
The Coast Guard exists within a broader envelope of partners and stakeholder organizations. Leaders must develop networks and build alliances, engaging in cross-functional activities where it makes sense. Leaders collaborate across boundaries and find common ground with a widening range of stakeholders at the local and national level and use their contacts to build and strengthen internal bases of support.

External Awareness
Leaders identify and keep up to date on key national and international policies and economic, political, and social trends that affect the organization. Coast Guard leaders understand near-term and long-range plans and determine how best to be positioned to achieve the advantage in an increasingly competitive national economic climate.

Entrepreneurship
Leaders seek and identify opportunities to develop and market new products and services within or outside of the Coast Guard. Leaders are willing to take risks and initiate actions that involve a deliberate risk to achieve a recognized benefit or advantage.

Political Savvy
Coast Guard leaders identify the internal and external politics that impact the work of the Coast Guard and the Department. Leaders approach each problem situation with a clear perception of organizational and political reality and recognize the impact of alternative courses of action.
Strategic Thinking
Coast Guard leaders react to crises immediately and routinely solve urgent problems. In keeping with the concepts described as Stewardship, Coast Guard leaders must also consider multiple time horizons and very complex interactions. This requires thinking strategically, which consists of adopting a systems view, focusing on intent—what are we really trying to accomplish?, thinking across time horizons, creating and testing hypotheses, and being intelligently opportunistic—taking advantage of current conditions.
Appendix

Hurricane Katrina Path and Intensity

11:40AM EDT 31-AUG-2005

11AM 8/30
Last Advisory Issued

11AM 8/30
Downgraded to a Tropical Depression

8AM 8/29
KATRINA Makes Landfall

6AM 8/29
Downgraded to a Tropical Storm

5AM 8/27
1AM 8/26
KATRINA Becomes a Hurricane

2AM 8/28
5PM 8/25
Upgraded to a Tropical Storm

11AM 8/24
7PM 8/25
Tropical Depression

5PM 8/23
KATRINA Makes Landfall

12 Forms


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