

Meredith Austin, RADM, USCG (Ret.)

Proven leader with over 30 years of executive leadership experience

Professional Experience

Mer Crisis Advisors, LLC, President, August 2021 - Present

President and owner of Mer Crisis Advisors, a crisis leadership and management consulting business which advises and trains leaders in best incident response practices.

US Coast Guard, Senior Executive/Officer, May 1985 – June 2021

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Incident Command and Control, Health and Human Services (HHS), February 2020 - February 2021

- Served as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Incident Command and Control within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), Health and Human Services (HHS).
- Principal advisor to the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response on all matters pertaining to the Department's public health emergency preparedness, response and recovery activities, programs, and policies.
- Duties included: overseeing the leadership team managing the Department's Continuity of Operations Program (COOP), Critical Infrastructure Program (CIP), and the HHS Secretary's Operations Center (SOC).
- From July 2020-Feb 2021, served as the ASPR Deputy Director of the Joint Coordination Cell (JCC), established to support the Secretary in managing the COVID intra/interagency response. Oversaw response to COVID-19 by working with interagency partners (DoD and others) to improve situational awareness and coordination.

Deputy Commandant for Operations Policy and Capabilities (DCO-d), August 2018 - February 2020

- As a Flag Officer, responsible for the development and promulgation of Coast Guard Operations strategy, policy, guidance, and resourcing decisions for CG missions including intelligence; international affairs; cyber; the maritime transportation system; maritime law enforcement; defense operations; contingency planning; emergency management, ice operations, as well as asset capabilities for cutter, aviation, shore facilities, small boats, and specialized forces.
- Led USCG's Global Force Management Board process for inclusion into annual DoD products.
- Executed Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution process for DCO portfolio of Coast Guard Budget.
- Throughout 2019, coordinated with US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) to provide a cadre of CG personnel to assist in humanitarian care of migrants arriving from Central America internationally. Met to develop global strategies with counterparts in Mexico, Costa Rica, and Saudi Arabia on issues of mutual concern and training opportunities.



- Coordinated CG activities at the national interagency level during national level natural disaster responses.

Coast Guard Fifth District Commander, April 2016 - August 2018

- Coast Guard Fifth District Commander, Portsmouth, VA. Senior Executive responsible for all Coast Guard operations in the mid-Atlantic region (central New Jersey through North Carolina), protecting 156,000 square miles of ocean, bays, rivers, wetlands, and tidal marshes with historical significance and includes six states, several major ports, the world's largest Naval Base, and the US Capital. Led Coast Guard response to Hurricane Matthew in the states of North Carolina and Virginia.

Pacific Area Deputy Commander, June 2015 - June 2016

- Coast Guard Pacific Area Deputy Commander, Alameda, CA. Senior Executive responsible for all Coast Guard operations west of the Rockies to the Indian Ocean, including the Arctic and Antarctic; an area of responsibility that encompasses six of the seven continents, 71 countries, and more than 74 million square miles of ocean.

Various Leadership Assignments, USCG Officer, May 1985 - June 2015

- Held numerous significant executive positions, including Commanding Officer, Pacific Strike Team (PST); Commander, National Strike Force (NSF); and Sector Commander/Captain of the Port, Delaware Bay. Managed the Coast Guard's specialized response capabilities to oil and hazardous materials spills and Weapons of Mass Destruction events in support of Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency, and Department of Defense On-Scene Coordinators throughout the United States, its territories and other nations, in addition to supporting the Coast Guard's 11 statutory missions.
 - Commanding Officer, Pacific Strike Team 2001-2004: Served as the Deputy Incident Commander for ESF-10 at Ground Zero after 9/11, working for the EPA. Set up decontamination "washing stations" for trucks departing Ground Zero and heading to Fresh Kills landfill, as well as air monitoring at Ground Zero and the landfill. In the aftermath of the attacks on 9/11, coordinated with other Strike Team Commanders and NSF leadership to revamp hazmat and WMD training curriculum/qualification programs for Strike Team members, a progressive program to take members from trainees to Response Members, Response Technicians (equivalent to Hazmat Technicians), thru leadership positions Response Supervisor (senior Enlisted qualification) or Response Officer (for Commissioned Officers). During this time the NSF formed the backbone of the position specific ICS training cadre for the Coast Guard and assisted other federal agencies with increasing their own ICS expertise.
 - Commander, National Strike Force 2004-2007: Managed all NSF resources to support both Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; ensured the most effective and efficient use of the three teams plus NSF Coordination Center personnel (only about 120 people total to cover the nation) to support multiple Coast Guard and EPA Federal On Scene Coordinators responding over multiple Gulf states, as well as other responses around the country for more than a year. Administered the Nation's Preparedness for Response Exercise Program (PREP), conducting Tabletop as well as full scale all hazards exercises at the nation's ports. Also oversaw an expansion of NSF Capabilities

and Capacities (more people, more stuff, more skills) and guided the movement of the NSF from Headquarters Operational Control/Administrative Control (OPCON/ADCON) to the Deployable Operations Group to ensure the NSF maintained its capabilities and capacity once the transition was completed.

- Commander/COTP Sector Delaware Bay 2009-2012: Served as the Commander and Captain of the Port (COTP) for the Delaware Bay region. Led the Area Maritime Security Committee's FEMA Port Security grant subcommittee, ensuring around \$20M in grants were distributed in a strategic way to improve the security of the entire port system, not just individual facilities along the port. Adeptly worked the interagency collaborations, bringing the disparate state, local, federal, and private industry leaders in the port to work together to solve issues affecting commerce and the movement of vessels due to weather (e.g., ice, fog, hurricanes) or manmade incidents (e.g., groundings, oil spills, collisions). Oversaw response to the sinking of a high-profile DUKW ("DUCK") amphibious boat sinking with tragic loss of life and implemented new safety requirements to prevent a recurrence. During the Deepwater Oil Spill, ensured Sector was still able to perform required duties despite having upwards of 20% or more of Sector personnel deployed to the Gulf Coast at various times the spring/summer of 2010. This included a personal deployment as the Federal Incident Commander for the state of Louisiana in July through August, directing the activities of over 19,000 personnel to clean oil on the water, on the shoreline and contaminated vessels.

Education

Naval Postgraduate School: Masters of Arts in National Defense Studies-Homeland Security

University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill: Masters of Science in Public Health (MSPH) in Industrial Hygiene

US Coast Guard Academy: Bachelors of Science in Marine Science

Qualifications/Certifications

- Type 1 Area Commander (AC)
- Type 1 Incident Commander (IC)
- Type 1 Planning Section Chief (PSC)
- Type 1 Operations Section Chief (OSC)
- International Association of Emergency Managers Certified Emergency Manager (CEM)
- American Board of Industrial Hygiene Certified Industrial Hygienist (CIH) 1998-2022