



U.S. Coast Guard photo.

Acquisition Update: Fifth Fast Response Cutter Delivered to the Coast Guard

March 22, 2013

Margaret Norvell, the fifth vessel in the Coast Guard's Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutter (FRC) recapitalization project, was delivered to the Coast Guard March 21 in Key West, Fla. Margaret Norvell will be homeported in Miami to support operations in the Seventh Coast Guard District, an area comprised of 1.8 million square nautical miles of ocean ranging from the South Carolina coast to the Caribbean.

To date, four FRCs, Coast Guard Cutter Bernard C. Webber, Coast Guard Cutter Richard Etheridge, Coast Guard Cutter William Flores and Coast Guard Cutter Robert Yered have been commissioned into service. All four are homeported in Miami. The Coast Guard plans to acquire 58 FRCs to replace the service's 110-foot Island Class cutter fleet, which range in age from 20 to 27 years old. Nine FRCs are currently in production at Bollinger Shipyards in Lockport, La. The Coast Guard has ordered a total of eighteen FRCs to date.

The Sentinel-class FRC project is representative of the Coast Guard's disciplined approach to rebuild its surface fleet. The FRC uses a proven, in-service parent craft design based on the Damen Stan Patrol 4708. It has a flank speed of 28 knots and a 2,500 hours per year operational employment target. It uses state-of-the-market command, control, communications and computer technology interoperable with the Coast Guard's existing and future assets, as well as Department of Homeland Security and Department of Defense assets.

The cutter's namesake is Lighthouse Keeper Margaret Norvell. Norvell served in Louisiana with the U.S. Lighthouse Service from 1891 to 1932, beginning as an assistant keeper at the Head of Passes Light before serving as keeper of the Port Pontchartrain Light (1896 to 1924) and the West End Light (also known as the New Canal Light, 1926 to 1932). Norvell is credited with numerous rescues and acts of heroism during her career, including the 1926 recovery of a naval aviator whose aircraft crashed in Lake Pontchartrain during a fierce squall. Norvell battled through the storm for two hours in a rowboat to reach the site of the crash. She rescued the surviving aviator and rowed him back to safety. She is also remembered for sheltering over 200 residents from her small community of Milneburg, La. during a devastating storm in 1903. The Port Pontchartrain Light was able to withstand the storm, which had destroyed every other structure in the community, and Norvell cared for the displaced residents that sought shelter in the lighthouse.