



U.S. Coast Guard photo.

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

May 21, 2013

The Coast Guard accepted delivery of Paul Clark, the sixth vessel in the Coast Guard's Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutter (FRC) recapitalization project, May 18 in Key West, Fla. Paul Clark is the final FRC to be homeported in Miami and once commissioned will provide 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. The seventh FRC, Charles David, will be the first of six FRCs to be homeported in Key West, Fla.

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. The Coast Guard plans to acquire 58 FRCs to replace the service's 110-foot Island Class patrol boat 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 Fireman First Class Paul Leaman Clark. Clark served in World War II and participated in Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa, in November 1942. Clark was a landing boat engineer responsible for the hazardous task of unloading soldiers and supplies from the boats on to the beach, where personnel were vulnerable to enemy fire.

Early in the invasion, Clark was unloading a landing boat on the shore of French Morocco that came under fire from a Luftwaffe aircraft. The assault damaged the boat and wounded two of the boat's crew members, one of them mortally. Clark, in the face of the great danger, assumed control of the boat, withdrew from the beach and sped towards a U.S. Navy destroyer, the USS Palmer, where he transferred the wounded crew members to safety. He then returned the damaged boat to the beach to complete its mission. Clark was awarded the Navy Cross for his heroism, one of only six Coast Guardsmen to receive the award during World War II.