



Coast Guard Cutter Charles Sexton. Photo courtesy of Bollinger Shipyards.

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

Dec. 10, 2013

The Coast Guard accepted delivery of Coast Guard Cutter Charles Sexton, the eighth vessel in the Coast Guard's Sentinel-class Fast Response Cutter (FRC) recapitalization project, Dec. 10 in Key West, Fla. Charles Sexton will be the second of six FRCs to be homeported in Key West, Fla. Once commissioned, it 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.

To date, seven FRCs have been commissioned into service. The seventh FRC, Charles David Jr, the first FRC homeported in Key West, was commissioned Nov. 16, 2013. 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 24 FRCs to date.

The cutter's namesake is Machinery Technician First Class Charles Sexton, who gave his life during a rescue operation conducted off the coast of Washington near the Columbia River bar, an area of large standing waves and often treacherous conditions. On Jan. 11, 1991, Sexton was a crew member aboard a motor lifeboat dispatched to assist the 75-foot fishing vessel Sea King, which was quickly taking on water in the vicinity of the Columbia River bar. Sexton boarded the Sea King and began assisting its four crew members. First, he helped stabilize a crew member that was injured after falling on the deck. Next, using several de-watering pumps, he began removing water from the vessel. Sexton worked for six continuous hours to keep water from overcoming the Sea King.

While being towed to safety, the vessel capsized without warning. Sexton and two of the fisherman were trapped in the interior spaces of the vessel and could not be rescued. Sexton was posthumously awarded the Coast Guard Medal for extraordinary heroism.

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.