

## 2007: The Year of the DOG

*Story and photos by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.*

ST. MARY'S, Ga. – A sleepy little town in Southern Georgia may not seem like the ground level for one of the biggest organizational changes in the Coast Guard, but St. Mary's is home to Maritime Safety and Security Team Kingsbay (91108) -- one of the many units that will be reallocated under the authority of the Coast Guard Deployable Operations Group this summer.

The Deployable Operations Group is one of the many reorganization initiatives that Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Thad Allen is implementing in the Coast Guard. The DOG, as the Coast Guard's number one man calls it, will be a new command structure with deployable, specialized forces aligned under a single, unified command.

“My goal is to create a more agile, flexible force that could deploy in advance of an event, if you knew it was coming, or after an event to mitigate any threats or hazards,” Allen said shortly after becoming the commandant.

This means Lt. Cmdr. Paul Murphy, the commanding officer of MSST Kingsbay, and his crew of about 100 men and women would transition under the command of the DOG. MSST Kingsbay and the other deployable units will retain their current operational requirements and locations.

MSSTs are one of the Coast Guard's newest deployable units specializing in waterborne and shore-side antiterrorism force protection for strategic, high-interest vessels and critical infrastructure. The quick response force of the MSST was created under the Maritime Transportation Security Act 2002.

Commissioned in 2003, the crew of MSST Kingsbay is no stranger to change in the post-9/11 Coast Guard. They were still in training to become a newly commissioned unit when the Coast Guard transitioned to the Department of Homeland Security in March 2003. The first MSST was commissioned almost one year after the terror attacks in New York and Washington. Since then, 12 maritime safety and security teams have been created at various strategic points throughout the United States.



Petty Officer 2nd Class Shane Coleman of Maritime Safety and Security Team Kingsbay, Ga., lowers his dog, Ferro, from a training tower here. This is how Coleman would get Ferro aboard a ship to search it for explosives. Coleman and Ferro's unit should be under the command of the Deployable Operations Group by summer 2007. Coast Guard photograph by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.

These 12 teams make up the bulk of personnel transitioning to the DOG. For Murphy, it's a new chapter in the ever evolving world of his still adolescent homeland security unit.

“We're excited about the change. I think people are starting to realize that this is becoming a more solid career path, and the members of my crew can see themselves staying at tactical units for a couple of tours now because the promise the DOG offers,” Murphy said.



Adm. Thad Allen, the 23rd commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, addresses crews from the Charleston, S.C., area on numerous issues including the implementation of the Coast Guard's Deployable Operations Group, status of the Coast Guard Deepwater Project, and the latest information about the 123-foot patrol boats that were taken from service and the National Security Cutter. Coast Guard photograph by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.

Murphy's unit has participated in numerous security operations within their designated area of responsibility, which aligns with their present parent command Coast Guard Atlantic Area in Portsmouth, Va. Most notably, the crew of MSST Kingsbay's responded to the recovery efforts during Hurricane Katrina – the incident that pushed Allen to begin creating the DOG.

“Based on our experiences in the response to the gulf hurricanes, I am convinced we can better exploit the special operational capabilities inherent to these deployable units,” Allen said.

Special operational capabilities are abundant in the new MSSTs. The skipper at MSST Kingsbay has

personnel qualified for just about every maritime security threat known.

Kingsbay is home to two canine detection teams, radiation detectors, qualified divers, law enforcement teams that can vertically insert onto a ship from a helicopter, entangling systems for fleeing or threatening vessels and less-than-lethal weapons just to name a small portion of the crew's abilities. These specialized abilities are essentially standard at all MSSTs.

“We can offer a unique quick response force consisting of the whole team or certain elements within team. We are capable of rapid, nationwide deployment via air, ground or sea in response to changing threat conditions, evolving maritime homeland security mission requirements or natural disasters,” said Murphy.

Allen believes that these specialized capabilities would be better served and more effectively implemented in the Department of Homeland Security's layered approach to security under the command of the DOG.

“This new command would build common doctrine between the deployable forces. The new command would train, equip and provide those forces to whoever needs them,” said Allen.

Accompanying the 12 MSSTs into the new DOG will be the Maritime Security Response Team in Chesapeake, Va., eight separate Port Security Units, Tactical Law Enforcement Teams South and Pacific located in Miami and Alameda, Calif., and three National Strike Force Teams. These teams should be under the command of the initial operating capability of the DOG by July 15, 2007. No expansion or consolidation of these unit’s operational requirements will occur during initial operating capability.

With so much change in the Coast Guard in recent years, the people of the units that will be most affected are optimistic.

“I believe and my crew believes that we will better be able to respond to a threat or incident under the same template of operations with other deployable units that the DOG offers,” says Murphy. “The DOG makes me hopeful on standardizing not just MSST Kingsbay’s response to an incident, but the Coast Guard’s response to an incident.”



As part of stepped up security on the eve of the presidential inauguration, Petty Officer Chad Vanover of Maritime Safety and Security Team Kingsbay stands guard over the water front near the Washington Monument. Coast Guard photograph by PA1 Donnie Brzuska, PADET Jacksonville, Fla.

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