

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Bertholf* crewmembers watch from cutter's forecastle as *Bertholf* navigates toward Hong Kong, April 15, 2019 (U.S. Coast Guard/Matthew S. Masaschi)



A Globally Integrated U.S. Coast Guard on a World Stage

By Michael N. St. Jeanos

The Coast Guard is a global force with broad authorities and unique capabilities. . . . We are an instrument of national power at home and abroad, providing solutions across the full spectrum of operations, from security cooperation up to armed conflict.

—ADMIRAL KARL L. SCHULTZ, COMMANDANT, U.S. COAST GUARD

U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) domestic competencies can help achieve a globally integrated national security strategy, including counteracting Chinese aggression and influence in the South China Sea as well as Chinese and Russian expansionism into Africa. Global integration transcends the U.S. functional and geographic combatant command construct, allowing for lines of effort across all instruments of national power and domains without geographic constraints. The recent COVID-19 pandemic, for example, underscores our increasingly globalized threat posture—and the corresponding need for globally integrated response capabilities.

Captain Michael N. St. Jeanos, USCGR, currently serves on Active duty at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, DC, as Coordinator to the International Maritime Organization for an upcoming member state audit.



Coastguardsman assigned to Pacific Tactical Law Enforcement Team, Law Enforcement Detachment 108, right, Palauan law enforcement official, and Sailor assigned to USS *Spruance* inspect foreign fishing vessel as part of DOD Oceania Maritime Security Initiative, designed to protect partner-nations' waterways and fisheries, Pacific Ocean, June 3, 2016 (U.S. Navy/Will Gaskill)

Although the USCG is best known for its domestic proficiencies, it also supports Department of Defense (DOD) operations worldwide through its cutter fleet and deployable specialized operations teams. Its nonmilitary capabilities—particularly its vast interagency experience—can help shape the maritime operating environment abroad, offering an asymmetric advantage in locales sensitive to U.S. military presence and where a less threatening and more nuanced footprint might prove advantageous.

In a May 6, 2019, article published in *The Hill*, Admiral Karl L. Schultz, commandant of the USCG, stated that “illicit networks, natural disasters, competing great powers, and hostile adversaries do not respect borders, and in some cases rules-based order.” He went on to say that the USCG, as a global force with “broad authorities and unique capabilities,” has never been more significant as

an instrument of national power both domestically and abroad.¹ Fully leveraging these Coast Guard competencies can bring a valuable nonmilitary, interagency skill set to the DOD playbook.

Global Integration in Africa and the South China Sea

The concept of global integration is not new. In 1951, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) General Omar N. Bradley discussed addressing the worldwide strategic situation in a globalized construct through Joint Chiefs of Staff coordination.² More than 67 years later, CJCS General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., addressed Joint Staff personnel at the Pentagon on the need for global integration to maintain a competitive advantage with limited resources. The context of his talk centered on a changing national security dynamic involving a Great Power

competition with China and Russia, which challenges our ability to operate freely across all domains (land, sea, air, and cyberspace) and thereby allows violent extremism and other asymmetric threats to proliferate throughout the global environment. General Dunford confirmed that we will need to adapt to ensure we can project power where and when needed in current and future threat environments.³

Historically, we have employed a regional or functional approach to address global strategic threats, operating in a linear and binary framework. This is no longer possible, and we must address current and emerging adversaries by operating transregionally, often without a clear endstate, through application of all instruments of national power and across all domains.⁴

U.S. global integration has lagged in Africa and the South China Sea. In

Africa, the China-Africa partnership employs a regional and transcontinental approach toward infrastructure development, engaging in bilateral agreements such as development of the Tanzanian port of Dar es Salaam.⁵ China has also demonstrated strong interest in leveraging Africa's rich mineral resources while opening trading markets and accessing naval ports on the continent. African signatory nations to China's Belt and Road Initiative gain Chinese development and investment in return for this increased access; however, predatory lending practices have created a patron-client relationship from which these nations will not be able to easily extricate themselves.⁶ As China has made great strides in securing port access in key developing areas in Africa and moves aggressively to expand its exclusive economic zone and exert naval dominance in the South China Sea, the United States has not been able to fully contain or counter Chinese efforts.⁷

Russia is also exerting influence in underdeveloped nations, particularly those on the resource-abundant African continent. Though many African countries are mineral and hydrocarbon rich, their populaces have failed to realize the benefit of these resources because of corruption and governmental ineptitude; the results are a lack of economic opportunities and a large and disenfranchised youth population, both of which have led to the rise of violent extremist organizations. In his 2019 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Thomas Waldhauser, USMC, commander of U.S. Africa Command, discussed Russia's increased influence and militaristic approach in Africa within the context of the U.S.-Africa Command Strategic Approach. General Waldhauser indicated countering this threat will require all instruments of national power in a whole-of-government approach, including strengthening partner capabilities.⁸

U.S. Africa Command does not have robust dedicated resources, though, and has relied on outside support. The U.S. National Guard's State Partnership Program, for example, has proved itself one of U.S. Africa Command's most valuable endeavors. The program,

pairing 14 African nations with 11 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, creates ongoing relationships with African partners for building and improving peacekeeping capacity, disaster management competency, and partner readiness. It has the potential to expand to several more African nations that have requested partnerships, and such growth offers the USCG an opportunity to engage from a maritime interagency perspective.

In 2018, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa continued an annual exercise series with exercises Phoenix Express, Cutlass Express, and Obangame Express to build maritime capabilities of African partner nations, marking the first time in almost 30 years that Somalia participated in a security event outside its borders. In 2018, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa conducted Operation *Junction Rain* as part of the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership Program, partnering USCG personnel with Cape Verdeans and Senegalese to counter illegal activities. Capacity-building through U.S.-facilitated exercises, conferences, and operations has offered a strong return on investment.⁹

Fully Leveraging the USCG Globally

Although the United States has made some progress through these partnerships, more can be done to counter and contain Chinese and Russian efforts. In addition to USCG support for DOD through cutters and expeditionary specialized forces, Coast Guard nonmilitary competencies such as fisheries enforcement, marine safety operations, and disaster response could be employed asymmetrically to counteract Chinese aggression in the South China Sea and Chinese and Russian influence in Africa.

Daniel Ward, in a 2017 *Military Review* article, assesses the USCG as a highly valuable but underutilized counterterrorism and counterinsurgency asset due to its dual law enforcement and military roles. He proposes enhanced USCG engagement with DOD for these types of operations, though perception of the Coast Guard in a more nonmilitary posture often hampers its inclusion. The author makes a strong case that the

USCG is, in fact, ideal to be employed for lower intensity conflict. Ward concludes that the USCG's "wealth of capabilities" directly linked to stability operations—particularly those within the civil affairs arena with a focus on maritime, coastal, and riverine environments—provides skill sets not found elsewhere within DOD or the U.S. Government.¹⁰

Furthering this theme, Rear Admiral David Callahan, USCG, in testimony before the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee in 2011 concerning USCG Reserve integration with DOD, discussed not only the use of deployable Coast Guard Port Security Units but also the *Deepwater Horizon* oil spill response and the strong interagency skills the USCG Reserve displayed during that event.¹¹

The USCG is currently engaged internationally outside of traditional DOD and security-related roles. The Arctic is perhaps one of the most visible examples, with polar icebreakers and membership in an Arctic Council composed of the United States, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Russian Federation.¹² This resource-rich environment is somewhat atypical, as it lacks an appreciable population and clear ownership under international maritime law. It is an outlier. And yet the specter of global warming opening this once impassible maritime trade route will entail manifest changes in USCG engagement. The Coast Guard is already moving to recapitalize its polar icebreaking capabilities and increase visibility in this emerging maritime corridor.¹³

In April 2019, the USCG *Bertholf* visited Hong Kong—the first USCG cutter to visit in 17 years. A state-of-the-art 418-foot national security cutter operating under tactical control of the commander, U.S. Navy 7th Fleet, its mission centered on professional exchange and capacity-building with partner nations in addition to directed maritime patrols.¹⁴ In contrast to President Theodore Roosevelt's "Great White Fleet" circumnavigation of 1907, intended to project U.S. naval might, this "White Ship" is taking a more nuanced approach to reshaping the maritime operational environment.¹⁵



Seychelles coastguardsmen simulate boarding vessel during subject matter expert exchange with U.S. Coast Guard as part of Africa Maritime Law Enforcement Program while in Victoria, Seychelles, September 24, 2019 (U.S. Coast Guard/Augustus Manzi)

Asymmetric Application of Fisheries Enforcement

Global integration in fisheries enforcement provides an excellent example of the USCG partnering to help shape the maritime operating environment in a subtle and less threatening manner than might be possible by the other Armed Forces—and although the primary goal lies in resource protection, fisheries enforcement also offers a mechanism to support U.S. strategic policy.

Jay Caputo’s 2017 U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* article, “A Global Fish War Is Coming,” predicts a dire situation for the world’s fisheries as a result of overharvest. Climate change, bringing increasingly arid conditions to Asia, Africa, and South America, has resulted in reduced crop yields, while fish consumption has increased from an average of 9.9 kilograms per person in the 1960s to 19.7 kilograms in 2013—and demand is projected to grow. Effective fish management will require multinational cooperation to ensure a sustainable food stock for developing, at-risk nations. This food source is particularly critical

in South China Sea nations and in Africa as these areas struggle for economic and food security.¹⁶

Due to limited worldwide resources, the USCG serves as a global fisheries enforcement integrator. The *U.S. Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Sea Power* partners the USCG with the Navy and Marine Corps to provide an enforcement presence in areas otherwise lacking this deterrence. In West Africa, for example, the USCG deploys law enforcement detachments (LEDs) and host-nation shipriders on Navy ships to conduct fishery-enforcement boardings. In 2015, an LED was deployed on two Senegalese vessels during the Africa Maritime Partnership, run by U.S. Africa Command. A similar program, though limited in scope, places LEDs on Navy ships moving through the Pacific Ocean under the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative.¹⁷

Vice Admiral Daniel B. Abel, USCG, Deputy Commandant for Operations, testified in September 2018 before the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and

the Coast Guard, affirming not only the domestic importance of effective domestic fisheries management and enforcement but also its international implications. He emphasized the need for the Coast Guard to take a leadership role with the Department of State, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, nongovernmental organizations, industry, and international partners to reduce the illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing threat. While countering this threat, “we can increase maritime domain awareness on the high seas and more effectively respond to a range of transnational threats, upholding global order in the maritime domain and asserting American influence through presence.”¹⁸

Although USCG fisheries enforcement demonstrates strong international application in partnering with at-risk African and South China Sea nations for resource protection, the value-added of building relationships, gathering intelligence, and helping shape the maritime operating environment could have a positive impact on U.S. national security

interests. And while recent trade wars may have influenced direct cooperation with China in this regard, potential exists to expand U.S. maritime influence with other South China Sea nations through global application of fisheries enforcement as well as other USCG nonmilitary and primarily domestic competencies.

Recommendation Moving Forward

Effectively combating Chinese and Russian expansionism in Africa and the South China Sea requires a globally integrated approach that could benefit from enhanced USCG involvement. The USCG offers a wide range of nonmilitary capabilities typically employed domestically, such as disaster prevention and response, marine safety, and fisheries enforcement. Coupled with the Coast Guard's strong history of interagency and private-sector collaboration, these competencies could be employed to help strengthen relationships with nations subject to Chinese and Russian influence in a less-threatening and more nuanced way than may be possible through other DOD resources alone. This expansion, however, may come at a cost to existing Coast Guard missions, given finite funding and already stretched resources. Balance is required to ensure an acceptable level of risk to existing mission sets, in what is essentially a zero-sum game.

Conclusion

Although the USCG serves as one of the Nation's five forces capable of joint interoperability, its primary role as the maritime operating arm of the Department of Homeland Security. The smallest of the Armed Forces—with approximately 41,000 Active-duty personnel, 8,000 Reservists, 8,000 civilian employees, and 30,000 volunteer auxiliaries—the Coast Guard enjoys a robust set of domestic nonmilitary missions, serving as a maritime law enforcement, regulatory, environmental, and humanitarian agency.

Providing 24/7 maritime first response, from inland navigable waters to the littoral and high seas, the Coast Guard projects presence around the globe in support of U.S. national interests. In addition to its cutter fleet, Tactical Law Enforcement Teams deployed aboard Navy or allied vessels conduct interdiction-based law enforcement operations, including vessel boardings in offshore locales, while deployable small-boat Port Security Units support combatant commander expeditionary requirements.¹⁹

The USCG develops partnerships at all levels to help ensure unity of effort, routinely interfacing with global maritime organizations and industry to advance U.S. national interests at home and abroad. The force is proud to be “Always Ready,” reflected in its motto, *Semper Paratus*.²⁰

Effectively mitigating global threats requires a globally integrated approach employing *all instruments* of national power. Containing and countering Chinese expansion and influence in the South China Sea as well as Chinese and Russian influence on the African continent, for example, could be facilitated by leveraging unique, nonmilitary USCG competencies. This asymmetric application would serve the dual purpose of improving host-nation capabilities while also subtly shaping the maritime operational environment in a less provocative manner than might be possible by DOD alone. JFQ

Notes

¹ Karl L. Schultz, “Near a ‘Tipping Point,’ Coast Guard Needs Lasting Change,” *The Hill*, May 6, 2019, available at <<https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/442064-nearing-a-tipping-point-coast-guard-needs-lasting-change>>.

² “Joint Staff History,” Joint History Office Web site, available at <www.jcs.mil/About/Joint-Staff-History/>.

³ Joseph E. Dunford, Jr., “Global Integration: Maintaining a Competitive Advantage,” speech delivered at the Pentagon, October 30, 2018, available at <www.jcs.mil/Media/News/News-Display/Article/1681761/global-integration-maintaining-a-competitive-advantage/>.

⁴ Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3050.01, *Implementing Global Integration* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, December 31, 2018), A-1–C-13.

⁵ Clayton H. Vhumbunu, “Enabling African Regional Infrastructure Renaissance Through the China-Africa Partnership: A Trans-Continental Appraisal,” *International Journal of China Studies* 7, no. 3 (December 2016).

⁶ Thomas D. Waldhauser, *United States Africa Command and United States Southern Command*, Testimony Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 116th Cong., 1st sess., February 7, 2019, available at <www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Waldhauser_02-07-19.pdf>.

⁷ Ken Bredemeier, “Obama Sternly Warns China about South China Sea Expansion,” *Voice of America News*, June 1, 2015, available at <www.voanews.com/east-asia/obama-sternly-warns-china-about-south-china-sea-expansion>.

⁸ Waldhauser, *United States Africa Command and United States Southern Command*.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Daniel E. Ward, “An Underutilized Counterinsurgency Asset: The U.S. Coast Guard,” *Military Review*, May–June 2017.

¹¹ David Callahan, *The Reserve Components as an Operational Force: Potential Legislative and Policy Changes*, Testimony Before the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee, 112th Cong., 1st sess., July 27, 2011.

¹² Melissa Renee Pegna, “U.S. Arctic Policy: The Need to Ratify a Modified UNCLOS and Secure a Military Presence in the Arctic,” *Journal of Maritime Law and Commerce* 44, no. 2 (April 2013), 169–194.

¹³ The author draws on his knowledge of Coast Guard Arctic operations and future strategies.

¹⁴ “Coast Guard Ship Visits Hong Kong,” news release, U.S. Consulate General Hong Kong and Macau, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, April 14, 2019, available at <<https://hk.usconsulate.gov/pr-2019041401/>>.

¹⁵ Mike McKinley, “Cruise of the Great White Fleet,” Naval History and Heritage Command, September 5, 2017, available at <www.history.navy.mil/research/library/online-reading-room/title-list-alphabetically/c/cruise-great-white-fleet-mckinley.html>.

¹⁶ Jay Caputo, “A Global Fish War Is Coming,” U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 143, no. 8 (August 2017).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Daniel B. Abel, *Fish Fights: An Examination of Conflicts over Ocean Resources*, Testimony Before the Senate Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and the Coast Guard Subcommittee, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., September 18, 2018.

¹⁹ U.S. Coast Guard Publication 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Coast Guard, February 2012), 1–8.

²⁰ Ibid.