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# FDR puts Coast Guard under control of the Navy

On this day in 1941, President Roosevelt announces that the U.S. Coast Guard will now be under the direction of the U.S. Navy, a transition of authority usually reserved only for wartime.

The Coast Guard was established as the Revenue Marine Service by Alexander Hamilton, secretary of the treasury, in 1790. In 1915, the U.S. Lifesaving Service, formed in 1878, and the RMS combined to become the Coast Guard. During peacetime, the Guard was under the direction of the Department of Treasury until 1967, when the Department of Transportation took control. But during war, it was under the control of the U.S. Navy. What made FDR's November 1 announcement significant was that the United States was not yet at war—but more and more American ships were nevertheless becoming casualties of the European war.

The Coast Guard's mission is to enforce all laws applicable to the waters within U.S. territory, including laws and regulations promoting personal safety and protection of property. It provides support and aid to all vessels within U.S. territorial waters. It is charged with inspecting sailing vessels and their equipment for violations of safety regulations, as well as lighthouses, buoys, navigation equipment, and radio beacons. The Guard operates and maintains a network of lifeboat and search-and-rescue stations, which also employs aircraft.

The Guard's wartime duties include escorting ships, providing port security, and inspecting ships for everything from illegal drugs to munitions. They also have powers of interdiction—the right to stop, board, and inspect any vessel suspected of threatening U.S. security. In fact, Coast Guard ranks are analogous to those of the U.S. Navy; even the uniforms are similar. The Guard is headed by an admiral appointed by the president. Women have served in the Guard since 1973.