



# Improving West Africa Maritime Security New Liberian Coast Guard



## U.S. Africa Command Vignette

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*"It's a good thing to be in the Liberian Coast Guard to protect against crimes and terrorism and all kinds of things on the Liberian seas. I hope I can achieve the mission for the Liberian people with the support of the international community." — Ensign Charles Blawah, Liberian Coast Guard training officer*

### Overview

After a decade's long maritime security gap, Liberia signaled its commitment to secure its seas with the activation of its new Liberian Coast Guard (LCG) at the 53rd Annual Armed Forces Day February 11, 2010.

Liberia emerged from a bloody 14-year-long civil war in 2003 and its military has been completely rebuilt via the U.S. State Department's Security Sector Reform (SSR) program, which began in 2006. The Liberian Coast Guard is the newest addition to the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL).

Since its civil war, Liberia's 360 mile coast line and 1,900 square mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) was defenseless against the abuses of illegal fishing, drug trafficking, human smuggling and other illegal activities. National losses were estimated at \$12 million USD annually.

At the request of the Government of Liberia, the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) assessed the situation in 2008 and provided recommendations for reestablishing the LCG. As part of the State Department's SSR program, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) is coordinating and funding this reestablishment project.

### The Participants

The Government of Liberia and its Ministry of Defense lead this initiative with AFRICOM coordinating support from its component commands, the USCG and State Department.



### Outcome

Liberia's new Coast Guard is key to policing Liberia's seas, protecting its valuable resources for future generations and improving regional maritime security.

Throughout the next three years the United States will provide \$5 million in training, equipment and infrastructure to the new coast guard.

The USCG assigned an officer to the Office of Security Cooperation in Monrovia, Liberia in 2009. The USCG commander serves as a maritime advisor to the LCG and oversees U.S. funding and training. USCG Mobile Training Teams have provided courses in Liberia, and many LCG members received technical training at schools in the US.

U.S. Navy Seabees are overseeing the construction of three major infrastructure projects valued at \$1.3 million - a pier, a boat ramp and perimeter wall, work being funded by AFRICOM's Counternarcotics and Law Enforcement Assistance Division. The Dutch vessel HNLMS Johan de Witt, operating as an Africa Partnership Station (APS) platform, delivered U.S. Navy Seabees heavy equipment via amphibious landing and also participated in a joint (Dutch/US) hydrographic survey of three ports in Liberia. China and Sweden have also provided training and technical assistance for the LCG.

### Objectives

The overall goal is the LCG to be part of the effort to secure West Africa's seas for legitimate maritime commerce in support of overall regional security.

AFRICOM is helping Liberia rebuild its maritime interdiction capability in order to control illegal activities, including poaching, drug trafficking and human smuggling, provide for search and rescue and disaster response, and acquire maritime domain awareness.





