2021 Coast Guard Budget Seeks Second Polar Security Cutter



U.S. Coast Guard heavy icebreaker Polar Star sits on blocks in a Vallejo, California, dry dock undergoing maintenance. The sea service's proposed 2021 budget seeks $15 million for a multiyear service-life extension for the Polar Star while it awaits new polar security cutters. The budget also seeks to fully fund the second PSC. U.S. Coast Guard/Petty Officer 1st Class Matthew S. Masaschi

ARLINGTON, Va. — The U.S. Coast Guard plans to fully fund the second polar security cutter (PSC) and the third offshore patrol cutter (OPC), according to the proposed fiscal year 2021 U.S. Department of Homeland Security budget.

The Coast Guard overall is seeking $12.3 billion for fiscal 2021, $77 million more than the $12.2 billion in the enacted 2020 budget.

The 2021 budget requests $555 million to fully fund the second PSC. The Coast Guard plans to procure a total of six polar security cutters to support growing national security interests and to replace the service's only operating heavy icebreaker, the Polar Star. The first PSC is being built by VT Halter Marine in Pascagoula, Mississippi. The budget also requests $15 million for a multiyear service-life extension for the Polar Star.



A U.S. Coast Guard HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter lands on board HMS Queen Elizabeth off the East Coast of the United States. The 2021 budget also provides $65 million to modernize the HH-65D helicopter fleet to HH-65Es. U.K. Royal Navy

The $546 million to construct the third OPC also provides for long-lead materials for a fourth. The 25 OPPCs planned will

replace the service’s medium-endurance cutters. Eastern Shipbuilding Group in Panama City, Florida, is building the first OPC with options for three more, down from eight more because of the damage to the company’s yard from a hurricane. A competition will be opened for construction of more OPCs.

The Coast Guard plans a gap in procurement of the Sentinel-class fast-response cutters (FRCs), with 37 delivered so far of a planned purchase of 58 FRCs. However, the service is proposing $15 million in 2021 for program support and sustainment of the Sentinel class. The FRCs are replacing Island-class patrol boats.

The sea service is planning no purchases of new aircraft in 2021 but wants to allocate $78 million to missionize the C-27J aircraft fleet into HC-27Js and continue retrofit of the HC-144A aircraft fleet with the Minotaur mission system into HC-144B versions.

The budget also provides $65 million to modernize the HH-65D helicopter fleet to HH-65Es and to extend the service life of MH-60T helicopters so that they can serve into the mid-2030s, enabling the Coast Guard to align its helicopter requirements with the Defense Department’s Future Vertical Lift program.

The 2021 budget also proposes $35.5 million to manage retirements of old assets, including the decommissioning of two Secretary-class high-endurance cutters, two Island-class patrol boats and eight Marine Protector-class patrol boats.