Austal USA Starts Construction of Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Cutter



Representatives of Austal USA and U.S. Coast Guard gathered to celebrate the start of construction on the future USCGC Pickering. (Photo from Austal USA)

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MOBILE, Ala. – Austal USA celebrated the start of construction on the first U.S. Coast Guard Heritage-class Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) to be built at the company's Mobile, Ala. ship manufacturing facility today. Pickering (WSMM 919) is the first OPC being built under a contract that includes up to 11 cutters and has a potential value of $3.3 billion.

Austal USA was honored to have Coast Guard Rear Admiral Michael Campbell as a key speaker at today's event. The OPC program will recapitalize the Coast Guard's aging medium

endurance cutters and provide a capability bridge between the service's national security cutters, which operate in the open ocean, and the fast response cutters which operate closer to shore.

"Austal USA is excited to begin construction on the first of these high priority cutters for the U.S. Coast Guard," commented Dave Growden, vice president of new construction programs. "This contract exemplifies the flexibility of our workforce and importance of our steel panel line to Austal USA's future success. Our multi-talented shipbuilders are well prepared to demonstrate their capability to produce the same high-quality steel ship as they have been producing for our aluminum programs."

The 360-foot OPC will support the national security strategy for maintaining the nation's economic, social, environmental and military security mission areas. The OPC will typically conduct its primary missions beyond 12 nautical miles from shore and will be employed anywhere the national interests require the Coast Guard's unique blend of authorities and capabilities.

OPCs meet the service's long-term need for cutters capable of deploying independently or as part of task groups to conduct law enforcement, search and rescue, homeland security and defense missions.

OPC will provide the majority of the Coast Guard's offshore presence conducting a variety of missions including law enforcement, drug and migrant interdiction, and search and rescue. With a range of 10,200 nautical miles at 14 knots and a 60-day endurance period, each OPC will be capable of deploying independently or as part of task groups, serving as a mobile command and control platform for surge operations such as hurricane response, mass migration incidents and other events. The cutters will also support Arctic objectives by helping regulate and protect emerging commerce and energy

exploration in Alaska.

Through continual capital investments, over $500 million to date, Austal USA has expanded its capability and capacity to enable concurrent production of aluminum and steel ships. The company recently broke ground on a new assembly building which will provide 192,000 square feet of new covered manufacturing space. The building will consist of three bays, two of which will be sized specifically to erect the OPC.