Coast Guard Recapitalizes Command and Control Aircraft



From Headquarters, U.S. Coast Guard, Oct. 18, 2025

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard executed a planned and critical recapitalization of its long-range command and control aircraft Oct. 17.

These aircraft are required to provide official travel for the secretary of homeland security, deputy secretary homeland

security, commandant of the Coast Guard, vice commandant and Atlantic and Pacific commanders as specified by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Department of Homeland Security policy.

“The timing of this investment underscores the Coast Guard’s vital need to modernize its command and control capabilities to meet today’s rapidly evolving operational demands. As maritime activity increases and national security challenges grow more complex, maintaining reliable air mobility is essential to ensuring continuity of operations and mission success,” said Adm. Kevin Lunday, acting commandant.

This purchase replaces planes that were as much as 20 years old and experiencing several unplanned maintenance issues. Since January 2025, U.S. Coast Guard long-range command and control aircraft experienced 30 days of unplanned maintenance, with six missions requiring unplanned cancellation.

“Modernizing the Coast Guard’s aging and obsolete aviation fleet is essential to ensuring our ability to successfully conduct national security missions. The purchase of these aircraft will meet our operational requirements for safe, reliable, on-demand military transport with integrated and secure command and control capabilities,” said Lunday.

The Service has been operating command and control aircraft for over 65 years, reflecting a long-standing commitment to maintaining airborne command capability as a cornerstone of national maritime safety and security. Robust command and control capabilities, including top secret/secure compartmented information communications, are required for senior leaders to coordinate multi-agency operations across a vast international area of responsibility. The unique command and control capabilities provided by the long-range command and control aircraft enable real-time communication, situational awareness, operational continuity and the ability to direct assets to where they are needed.

In accordance with guidance from the White House and OMB, including OMB Circular A-126, all travel by agency heads qualifies as required use travel. As with the secretaries of state and war, the attorney general and directors of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Central Intelligence Agency, the White House determined in March 2004 the duties of the secretary of homeland security were such that they require instantaneous secure communications with the White House, the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies. This guidance also determined that in an emergency, the secretary of homeland security must be able to return to Washington, D.C., or proceed to other destinations on an expedited basis.

“It’s incredibly disappointing that politicians and the media are playing politics with the funding of the Coast Guard,” said Mr. Sean Plankey, senior advisor to the secretary for the Coast Guard. “This is a matter of safety and mission readiness. It’s well known that senior military officials and cabinet members need secure command and control and rapid long-range mobility. Flippant comments are great for clicks and fundraising emails, but don’t reflect the reality of protecting the American people 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.”

President Donald Trump has provided the U.S. Coast Guard unprecedented support through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act to enable the Coast Guard to be the finest maritime fighting force in service to the nation. The Coast Guard remains committed to investing in the most capable and cost-effective equipment for our service men and women. These acquisitions are in line with the policies and requirements for all military combatant commanders, department and service secretaries.