

Keel-Laying of Coast Guard's First OPC Set for April



An artist rendering of the offshore patrol cutter. Eastern Shipbuilding Group Inc.

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Coast Guard plans to celebrate the keel-laying of the first Heritage-class offshore patrol cutter (OPC) next month in Panama City, Florida.

Testifying March 10 before the House Homeland Security Committee, Coast Guard Commandant Adm. Karl L. Schultz said the keel of the Argus, the first OPC hull, would be laid in April at the Eastern Shipbuilding Group Inc. shipyard.

The OPC is designed to replace the current fleet of medium-endurance cutters, which are between 30 and 50 years old. OPCs will provide a capability bridge between the national security cutter and the fast-response cutter. Each OPC will feature a flight deck and advanced C4ISR (command, control, computers, communications, intelligence and reconnaissance) capabilities.

Delivery of the first OPC is expected in fiscal 2022. The Coast Guard plans to acquire 25 OPCs. The damage inflicted on the Eastern Shipbuilding facilities by Hurricane Michael in October 2018 resulted in the sea service granting relief to the shipbuilder, reducing its planned construction to four OPCs instead of nine and deciding to re compete the remainder of the OPC program.