



This year on August 4, 2018 the U.S. Coast Guard celebrates its 228 birthday.

The Coast Guard is one of America's five armed forces and traces its founding to Aug. 4, 1790, when the first Congress authorized the construction of 10 vessels to enforce tariff and trade laws, prevent smuggling, and protect the collection of federal revenue. Responsibilities added over the years included humanitarian duties such as aiding mariners in distress.

The service received its present name in 1915 when the Revenue Cutter Service merged with the U.S. Life-Saving Service to form a single maritime service dedicated to the safety of life at sea and enforcing the nation's maritime laws.

The Coast Guard is a multi-mission, maritime, military service and the smallest of the five Armed Services. Its mission is to protect the public, the environment and U.S. economic interests in the nation's waterways, along the coast, on international waters, or in any maritime region as required to support national security.

The Coast Guard has 40,992 men and women on active duty, 7,000 reservists, 31,000 [Auxiliarists](#), and 8,577 full-time civilian employees, for a total workforce of 87,569. The Coast Guard maintains an extensive fleet of 243 coastal and ocean-going patrol ships, tenders, tugs and icebreakers called "[Cutters](#)", and 1650 smaller boats, as well as an extensive aviation division consisting of 201 helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. While the U.S. Coast Guard is the smallest of the U.S. military service branches, in terms of size, the U.S. Coast Guard by itself is the world's 12th largest naval force