

most of the 11 high-endurance vessels in the Western Area was substantially below the standard of 180 days established by the Coast Guard as a maximum for the annual operation of the vessels.

The Vessel Report indicates that the three additional high-endurance vessels are needed primarily to provide long-range search and rescue assistance from continental bases and Hawaii. Coast Guard operational data analyzed by us showed, however, that very little search and rescue work of any type, with only a negligible amount of long-range search and rescue work, was performed by the high-endurance vessels during the 3-year period covered by our review. Furthermore, on the basis of Coast Guard criteria relating to vessel capabilities, most of the search and rescue missions performed by the high-endurance vessels deployed from continental bases and Hawaii were of a type which could apparently be carried out as effectively by the smaller and less costly medium-endurance vessels which the Coast Guard plans to acquire.

In view of the past workload and search and rescue demands in the Western Area and in view of the search and rescue coverage which the Coast Guard specifies is within the capabilities of the new medium-endurance vessels, we believe that the Coast Guard's stated requirement for 14 high-endurance vessels in the Western Area is excessive. We believe further that the Coast Guard needs to relate current operations and expected workload changes to the planning elements used in developing its replacement program so that substantial expenditures are not incurred for facilities not needed to carry out assigned missions.

We proposed that the Coast Guard reexamine the planned replacement and augmentation program for high-endurance vessels in the Western Area and consider revising the program so that the proposed acquisitions conform more closely to needs, as indicated by actual utilization data and current operating standards. By letter dated November 1, 1965, the Commandant of the Coast Guard advised us that he completely concurred with our proposal that the Coast Guard reexamine the planned replacement and augmentation program for high-endurance vessels in the Western Area and that he had taken the necessary action to provide for a critical and continuing review of vessel requirements. The Commandant stated that several actions had been taken or were in process which would improve the Coast Guard's techniques for analyzing its requirements and would enable the Coast Guard to make valid amendments to its vessel procurement plans.

In a report submitted to the Congress on January 29, 1965, we recommended that the Commandant of the Coast Guard reexamine the planned replacement program for high-endurance vessels in the Eastern Area and consider reducing the proposed acquisitions so that they conform more closely to needs. The Commandant advised us that our previous report and our finding relating to the requirements for high-endurance vessels in the Western Area would be used as guidelines in the Coast Guard's planning and analytical efforts.

In view of the Commandant's statements, we are not making a recommendation at this time, but, during future reviews, we plan to evaluate the actions taken by the Coast Guard.