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Coast Guard eager for Papp's orders

By [Jennifer Grogan](#) Day Staff Writer

Service awaits Senate OK of commandant nominee, who grew up in Norwich

New London - Adm. Thad W. Allen said there "should be cheers going up" in New London because Vice Adm. Robert J. Papp Jr. was nominated to be the next commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard.

"He has a great affinity for this part of the world, being from Norwich and a former commanding officer of the Eagle, and formerly being assigned to the Coast Guard Academy," Allen, the current commandant, said during a recent visit to the academy.

Papp currently commands the Coast Guard's Atlantic Area, making him responsible for all of the Coast Guard's missions from the Rocky Mountains to the Arabian Gulf. President Barack Obama nominated him, but he still needs Senate confirmation to become the next head of the Coast Guard.

Papp, who grew up in Norwich, graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1975 and later served on the academy's staff. He commanded the Coast Guard's training barque, the Eagle, from 1996 to 1999, an assignment he often describes as the best in the Coast Guard.

"He loves the academy, loves the Coast Guard, and loves anything that has to do with going to sea," Rear Adm. J. Scott Burhoe, academy superintendent, said.

Papp will help ensure that the academy remains connected to the operational Coast Guard if he becomes the commandant, Burhoe said.

"I'm excited about him being the commandant," Burhoe said. "He's a straight shooter, tough but fair."

Capt. Eric C. Jones, commanding officer of the Eagle, served as the executive officer on the barque when Papp was in command. He said Papp "brings a very, very personable leadership style, with an incredible passion for the organization and its long history and traditions."

"It is an exciting time for the service," Jones said. "There's some anticipation and a little apprehension about what changes does this mean. But the good news is that the way the Coast Guard is organized, Coast Guard operations will continue smoothly throughout."

Cmdr. Scott Rogerson, commanding officer of the New London-based International Ice Patrol, called Papp a "logical and excellent choice," given his career history and leadership experience.

"My perception is that he has a very detailed understanding of the importance of the Ice Patrol's mission based on his experience as commanding officer of the Eagle," Rogerson said, since Papp used the unit's iceberg warnings when he sailed to Europe on the Eagle. "We're pleased that he'll bring that to Washington, D.C., with him."

U.S. Rep. Joe Courtney, D-2nd District, said Papp will be a role model for cadets at the academy. Anne Brengle, Coast Guard Foundation president, said it will be great to have someone so familiar with the area as commandant.

"It's a terrific fit and I think he's very much the right man at the right time, because of his experience in many different roles within the Coast Guard," she said.

Papp became a rear admiral in 2002, and the director of reserve and training, making him responsible for managing 13,000 Coast Guard reservists and all of the training centers.

He then commanded the Ninth Coast Guard District and later became the Coast Guard's chief of staff, with responsibility for all management functions.

As commandant, Papp would lead about 42,000 active-duty men and women and 7,000 civilian employees, and oversee all Coast Guard functions.

Papp is not talking about his potential new role yet because he still has to be confirmed by the Senate. But shortly after the nomination was announced, he did say that he was "thrilled and

excited" and "looking forward to the process toward confirmation."

Allen finishes his four-year tour as commandant on May 25. Papp and Allen have known each other since they played football together at the academy.

"He has extraordinary operational experience in the Coast Guard," Allen said. "He holds a very large senior field command conducting Coast Guard operations. He also has responsibility for operations that are going on in the Persian Gulf, so it's a complete set of operational skills and experiences that are going to serve him very, very well."

Allen said he plans to take some time off this summer to be with his family and travel.

"Toward the fall I'll start thinking about what I'm going to do in the next stage of my life," he said. "I still have a lot of energy, a lot of passion and I'm sure there will be a good link up somewhere."
