

Below left: An LCM makes fast alongside the USS LCI(L)-95, off Utah Beach, June 12, 1944.

Center: The Coast Guard crew of a three-inch, 50-cal. gun loads a wooden practice round during a drill aboard the USS PC-556, Oct. 8, 1942.

Section 1 of the act to create the Coast Guard, signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson Jan. 28, 1915, stated that: "The Coast Guard ... shall constitute a part of the military forces of the United States and ... operate as a part of the Navy, subject to the orders of the secretary of the Navy, in time of war or when the president shall so direct."

The act did not specify the smaller service's duties when a part of the Navy, but during World War I, its cutters became patrol and escort vessels, six of the larger ships escorting convoys in the war zone.

Cutters in home waters became training ships for naval personnel as well, and many of their erstwhile officers and men served in small naval vessels, armed yachts and the like.

From 1924 to 1926, 25 of the Navy's older destroyers were transferred to the Coast Guard for prohibition-enforcement duties, and when a number of the oldest were returned for disposal, the Coast Guard received six flush-deckers — the Navy's most modern at the time.

All had been sent back to the Navy by early 1934, but the Coast Guard's success in operating them seemingly made manning such ships in wartime a logical Coast Guard responsibility.

THE WAR NEARS U.S.

As the United States neared involvement in World War II, however, the number of old destroyers in reserve had diminished markedly.

Many of the flush-deckers had been recommissioned by the Navy for service on neutral-

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ity patrol, and 50 steamed to Canadian ports for transfer to Britain under the destroyers-for-bases agreement of 1940.

Thus, the first Coast Guardsmen to serve aboard naval vessels were ordered to much larger ships. On June 3, 1941, almost five months before the Coast Guard was transferred to the Navy, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed an executive order that permitted some 2,100 officers and men to crew four transports and to serve in 22 similar ships with naval crews.

Most of those assigned to the latter were surfmen from lifeboat stations who were to serve in the landing craft carried by the larger vessels and to instruct others in their use.

