

"Newseyletter" Decatur Chapter No. 4, USCS

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Richard F. Hoffner, USCS # H-4456, Chapter Cachet Director
415 Moyer Road, Souderton, PA 18964-2319

Phone: 215-721-8606

e-mail: pauscg@gmail.com

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Aggressive Coast Guard push to build FRCs was rushed, say auditors

Fierce Homeland Security April 11, 2012 | By David Perera



The USCGC Richard Etheridge, the second Fast Response Cutter, after its Aug. 18, 2011 launch in Bollinger Shipyards in Lockport, La. Image: USCG

An aggressive push by the Coast Guard to push its Fast Response Cutters into construction resulted in the initial run having to undergo significant rework for structural reasons at an additional cost of \$6.9 million, says the Homeland Security Department office of inspector general. The Coast Guard plans to acquire 58 FRCs as part of its ongoing recapitalization effort. The ships, like their name implies, are meant for quick action missions such as drug interdiction and search and rescue. Among their features is a stern launching ramp that will allow a small boat to get in and out of the water without the FRC having to come to a halt. The FRCs are the first major acquisition the service brought under its direct management after dismissing the joint-venture formed by Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman it hired in 2002 to act as a recapitalization lead system integrator.

A new battle looms for battleship New Jersey

By Edward Colmore - The Philadelphia Inquirer



CAMDEN, N.J. — The USS New Jersey BB-62, the most decorated battleship in U.S. history, is facing

its biggest fight outside war: to pay its bills and fend off attempts to move it from Camden to North Jersey. State officials are reviewing the finances of the museum ship's operator, the Home Port Alliance, as it struggles to repay \$900,000 remaining on a \$1 million bank loan from 2003. The alliance is also battling efforts by the USS New Jersey Battleship Foundation to move the ship to Liberty State Park, with the Statue of Liberty, Manhattan skyline, and Ellis Island as the backdrop. "She's not going anywhere," said Philip Rowan, who took over last month from Jim Schuck as CEO of the Home Port Alliance. "I'll use the line that Charlton Heston used: 'They'll take it from my cold, dead hands.'" "We have a contract with the Navy, and they're happy with what we're doing here," the Camden native said. But Christopher von Zwehl, president of the USS New Jersey Battleship Foundation, said his nonprofit was working to raise \$15 million from donors to dredge a site at Liberty State Park and move the ship there. A park friends group opposes the plan, citing tourist overcrowding — the same reason the foundation cites in choosing the location. The Home Port Alliance "has had the ship in the best of times and worst of times and couldn't make it work," said von Zwehl, a member of the USS New Jersey Battleship Commission that helped bring the vessel to the state in 1999. "The amount of money needed is way over their heads." Home Port Alliance had received \$1.7 million from the state in 2010 and \$32,500 last year — "not even one month's electric bill," Schuck said at the time. In January, the Delaware River Port Authority balked at renewing its guarantee of the historic site's loan for another three years, extending it instead to mid-April. The DRPA's inspector general is now performing an internal investigation "to make sure we did what we were supposed to do when we guaranteed the loan," agency spokesman Tim Ireland said. "If the guarantee was not extended, there was the likelihood that the bank would call in the loan

and we'd have to pay," he said. "We're not there yet. ... On Wednesday, Rodney Sadler, who runs the Wiggins Park Marina and who has long been involved in economic-development efforts in Camden, was named chairman of the board of trustees of the Home Port Alliance, replacing John Matheussen, who will remain on the board while continuing as DRPA chief executive officer. The Home Port Alliance hasn't registered as a charity with the New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs in recent years, and its status is being reviewed for compliance by the state Office of Consumer Protection enforcement section. "We have the authority to investigate the charity's activities thoroughly and are currently doing just that," Catherine McLaughlin, supervising investigator in the agency's charities registration section, said in a February letter. The N.J. Attorney General's Office also is reviewing concerns about the financial ties between the ship and DRPA that von Zwehl raised in letters late last year to Gov. Christie and others. "Please be advised that since taking office, this administration has been closely monitoring the minutes of all authorities, including the DRPA, and their actions regarding the use of taxpayer dollars and revenue expenditures," Richard Bagger, Christie's chief of staff, responded to von Zwehl, referring the issue to then-state Attorney General Paula Dow. "I can confirm that the concerns raised by Mr. von Zwehl were referred to us and directed to the appropriate people here for review," said Peter Aseltine, a spokesman for the Attorney General's Office. "It will cost \$8 million for redecking with teak," Rowan said. "Teak is expensive and hard to get. We would also like to paint the hull," he said.

Editors note: The real battle is money. Home Port Alliance is reported to be in debt for electricity alone in the area of \$500,000. These are hard times for any group raising funds for a historic ship. Makes one wonder if the efforts to save SS United States will be successful. Also, consider the plight of the USS Olympia across the river from BBNJ, the Seaport Museum there is trying to cut her loose due to the expenses of upkeep.

Check out the naval items on eBay. Proceeds go to Decatur Chapter. Seller: CGCOVERGUY

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