

# Kodiak Guardsman Assumes USCG Middle East Command

Monday, 16 June 2008

Capt. Matthew Bell, the new commanding officer of Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia, addresses the audience at a change of command ceremony for Coast Guard forces in the Middle East today (Monday). Bell is a former commanding officer of the USCG Cutter Alex Haley, homeported in Kodiak, where his family still lives. He takes over as commanding officer for Coast Guard forces in the Middle East, relieving Capt. Glenn Grahl. Coast Guard photo by ETC Christopher Smith, Patrol Forces Southwest Asia.

Casey Kelly/KMXT

The former commanding officer of the Kodiak-based Coast Guard cutter Alex Haley is now the commander of U.S. Coast Guard forces in the Middle East supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Captain Matthew Bell, who still lives in Kodiak, took over at a ceremony in Bahrain today (Monday). He takes control of six Coast Guard patrol boats, five U.S. Navy coastal patrol boats, a large support unit in Bahrain, a training team in Umm Qasr, Iraq, and a Coast Guard forward operating base at the Kuwait Naval Base. Coast Guard crews in the region are tasked with protecting two Iraqi oil platforms.

Bell's most recent job in the Coast Guard was chief of cutter forces for the Pacific Area. He has held numerous positions during his 22 years of service in the Coast Guard, including commanding officer of the Alex Haley in Kodiak. As part of his new job he will receive the title of commodore because of the numerous ships under his command.

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