

CAPTAIN JAMES W. SPITLER

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD



Captain Spitler assumed command of Coast Guard Sector San Diego in July 2022. As Sector Commander and Captain of the Port of San Diego, California, he is the senior Coast Guard Officer in the Southwest region of the United States. He is responsible for leading maritime operations to ensure the safety, security, law enforcement, and environmental protection from the U.S. – Mexico Maritime Border northward to Dana Point, CA, and east to the Colorado River, and inland navigable lakes of Arizona and southern areas of Utah and Nevada.

Prior to Sector San Diego, he served as the Chief, Domestic Operations Division, Directorate of Operations, United States Northern Command, Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. In this role, he was responsible for the Defense Support of Civil Authorities and Personnel Recovery (PR)/SAR programs from strategic to tactical across the USNORTHCOM area of responsibility.

Graduating from the Academy in 1997 with a degree in Civil Engineering, he was assigned as the Operations Officer aboard the USCGC PLANETREE (WLB-307), a 180-foot seagoing buoy tender home-ported in Ketchikan, AK. Captain Spitler received orders to Navy Flight School in Pensacola, FL, earning his wings in 2000. He then transitioned to the HU-25 Falcon jet and was stationed in Miami, FL, and achieved the designation of Instructor Pilot (IP) while conducting Coast Guard statutory missions throughout the Southeast United States and the Caribbean.

Designated as an Aeronautical Engineer in 2005, Captain Spitler served as the Assistant Engineering Officer and an IP at the Coast Guard's Aviation Training Center in Mobile, AL. Captain Spitler also led the Medium Range Surveillance Engineering Branch Chief at the Coast Guard's Aviation Logistic Center (ALC) in Elizabeth City, NC, where he was responsible for the airworthiness, engineering, technical, and maintenance/overhaul support for the fleet of HC-144 and legacy HU-25 aircraft. After ALC, he was Sector Corpus Christi's Engineering Officer and responsible for the maintenance and operations of six aircraft, four cutters, and 26 small boats.

Following Sector Corpus Christi, he transitioned from fixed to rotary wing and assumed command of Air Station Houston, Texas from 2017-2019. As the Commanding Officer, he was responsible for the Coast Guard's aviation response during Hurricane Harvey, resulting in over 1,700 lives saved.

Advanced degrees include a Masters of Arts degree in National Security and Strategic Studies with distinction from the Naval War College, a Master of Science degree in Aeronautics and Astronautics from Purdue University, and a Master of Business Administration degree from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He is also designated as a Professional Engineer in Texas and North Carolina.

Captain Spitler achieved pilot designations in the HU-25A/C/D, HC-144A, MH-65D and MH-60T airframes, and FAA certifications as an Airline Transport Pilot (FW/RW), Certified Flight Instrument Instructor (FW), Airframe & Powerplant mechanic and others. His awards include the Defense Superior Service Medal, Coast Guard Meritorious Service Medals and an Air Medal, as well as various other military decorations.

(Current as of Jul 2022)