

What a Boarding Officer Can Actually Do

The legal basis for every Coast Guard boarding, inspection, search, and seizure at sea — corrected to the citation that's actually current.

~~14 U.S.C. § 89~~ → **14 U.S.C. § 522**

Renumbered by the Frank LoBiondo Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2018 (Pub. L. 115-282, § 105(b)) as part of a full Title 14 recodification. Most study guides online still cite § 89 — that's the old number.

WHERE IT APPLIES

"Upon the high seas and waters over which the United States has jurisdiction" — § 522(a).

WHAT IT AUTHORIZES

Inquiries, examinations, inspections, searches, seizures, and arrests "for the prevention, detection, and suppression of violations of laws of the United States."

WHAT OFFICERS MAY DO

Board vessels, question persons aboard, examine documents, use "all necessary force to compel compliance," arrest, pursue fleeing vessels to shore, and seize vessels or merchandise.

WHOSE AUTHORITY THEY BORROW

§ 522(b) — officers act as agents of whichever federal department administers the law actually being enforced (e.g., Customs, fisheries, drug law).

HOW IT STACKS WITH OTHER LAW

§ 522(c) — these powers are additive, not a ceiling. They don't replace or limit authority granted elsewhere (e.g., 46 U.S.C. § 70502, the Maritime Drug Law Enforcement Act).

Qualification Pathway

How a Coast Guardsman actually becomes a Boarding Officer or Boarding Team Member.

1 Personnel Qualification Standard

Boarding Officer / Boarding Team Member PQS governs the qualification itself.

COMDTINST M16247.3(B)

2 Schoolhouse

Maritime Law Enforcement Academy (MLEA), FLETC — Charleston, SC. Separate Boarding Officer and Boarding Team Member course tracks.

forcecom.uscg.mil

3 Course length UNCONFIRMED

Reported as ~5 weeks (Boarding Officer) and ~2 weeks (Boarding Team Member) in secondary sources — could not confirm against a primary MLEA syllabus.

unconfirmed

4 Alternate certification path

2 years as a qualified Boarding Team Member + a POST/FLETA-approved law enforcement academy (Course Code 100537) + 3 years of law enforcement employment outside the Coast Guard.

ALCOAST 116/23

5 Deployable specialized forces

LEDETs (Tactical Law Enforcement Teams) and MSST/MSRT units require Boarding Officer or Boarding Team Member qualification as a prerequisite.

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Governing Manuals & Forms

What actually governs a boarding, and what a boarding officer files afterward.

Manuals

- COMDTINST M16247.1(G)**

Maritime Law Enforcement Manual (MLEM)

FOUO — not public. Confirmed section topics only: risk assessment (§4.10.1), team/coxswain briefings (§4.11.1–.3), approach procedures (§4.5), Boarding Officer/Assistant Boarding Officer roles (§5.3.1–.2), documentation (App. F), Use of Force Continuum (§4.8, App. O).
- COMDTINST M16247.4A**

Maritime Counterdrug & Alien Migrant Interdiction Ops (CDAMIO) Manual

Also published as NTPP 3–07.4M. FOUO — table of contents confirmed, full text not public.

Forms & Systems

CG-4100S	Supplemental Boarding Report
CG-4100F UNCONFIRMED	Commercial Fishing Vessel Boarding Report
CG-16247 / -16247A / -16247B	Boarding Officer / Boarding Team Member / Boarding Officer (Certified Ashore) qualification certificates
MISLE	Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement — system of record for boarding and LE data entry

The Maritime Law Enforcement Manual and CDAMIO Manual are For Official Use Only — their line-by-line boarding checklist isn't public, and HonestMOS isn't going to invent one. What's on this card is the confirmed structure (the manual numbers, the section topics, the forms) — not a fabricated step-by-step. If you're studying for a real qualification, that checklist comes from your command, not a printout.