



THE NEW Sector Commands

BY MICHAEL SHUMAKER

After September 11, the Maritime Homeland Security mission joined Search and Rescue (SAR) as the top priorities of the United States Coast Guard. In his January 2004 Commandant's message to all Coast Guard personnel, Adm. Thomas Collins stressed that the need to strengthen unity of command necessitated the adoption of integrated, operational field commands, called Sectors. "This initiative will best position the Coast Guard to support our Secretary in achieving unity of purpose as one team for one fight."

Groups, Marine Safety Offices (MSO), and Vessel Traffic Service (VTS), are being merged into Sector Commands. Previously, a Group and its units provided SAR, maritime law enforcement, and recreational boating safety, and maintained aids to navigation. MSOs performed complementary activities, enforcing federal laws and regulations related to the safety and security of vessels, port facilities, and the marine environment, and assisting other law enforcement agencies. The new Sector organizations are based on the Activities prototype

commands established in 1996 in New York and Baltimore, and later, San Diego. The late Rear Adm. Richard E. Bennis, former Commanding Officer of Activities New York, said of the Activities model, "You know it was one-stop shopping for the community and it was one-stop shopping for the Coast Guard. Everybody knew the buck stopped here. They knew exactly where to go. ... We always have our missions and we are a multi-mission organization, and you saw that in Activities New York."

While all Coast Guard field commands performed admirably after September 11, the Activities commands in particular demonstrated the unity of effort, mission flexibility, and responsiveness required for today's Maritime Homeland Security mission. Capt. Roger Peoples, former Commanding Officer of Activities Baltimore, whose responsibilities included the maritime security of Washington, D.C., on September 11, observed, "While the Coast Guard responded well to 9/11 in all of our nation's ports, Coast Guard leadership took special notice of the efficiency and unity of effort demonstrated by Activities New York and

USCG photo by PA3 Andrew Shinn

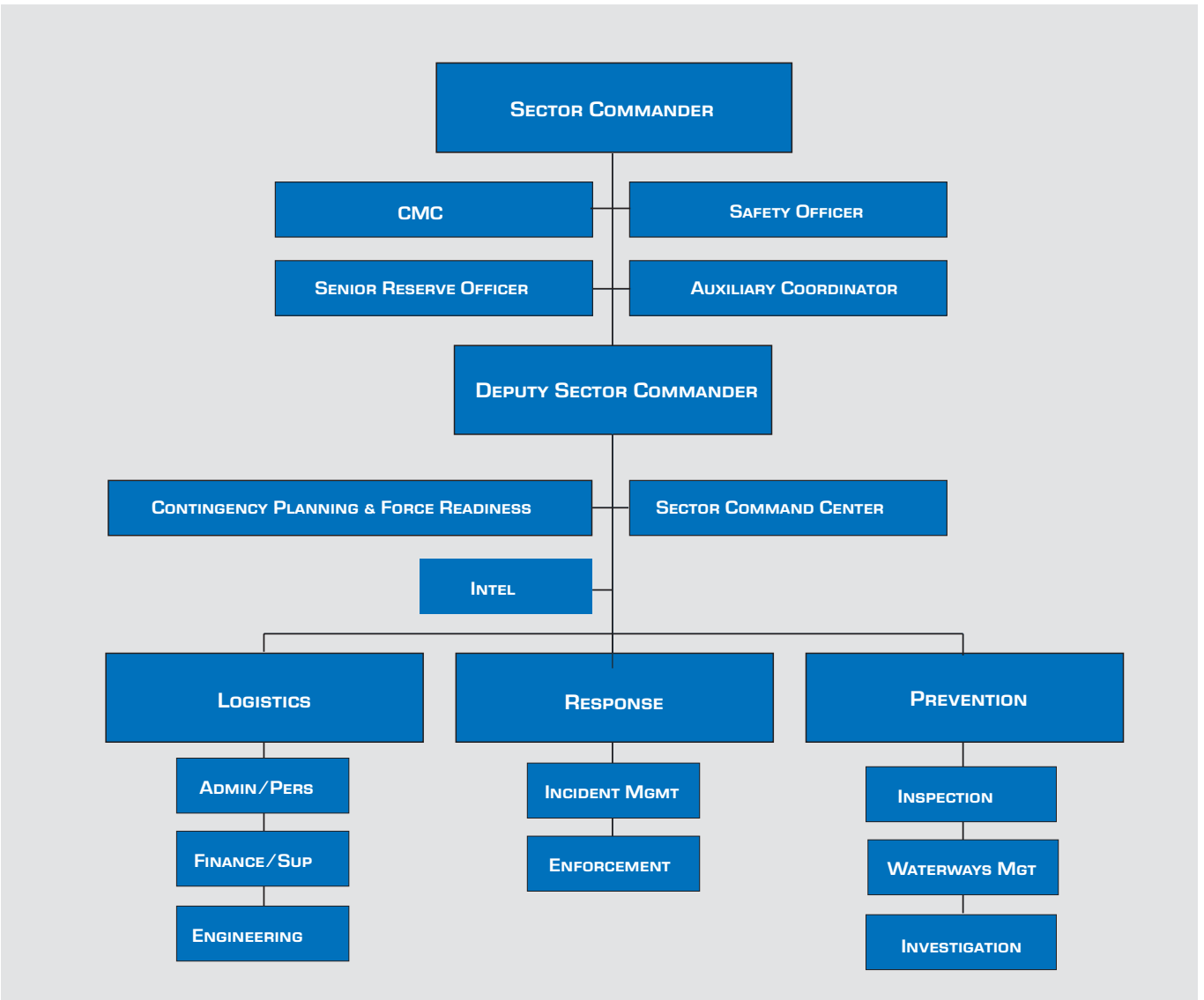


Activities Baltimore in ensuring maritime security following the attacks in New York City and near our nation's capital." Before 2004, field operations in a single port fell under multiple, mission-based commands (Group, MSO, and VTS) that were physically dispersed, had unique chains of command and different program managers at Coast Guard Headquarters, lacked a consistent voice to the public, and had some mission overlap.

The attacks of September 11 called for a new Coast Guard unity of effort that was cumbersome to achieve using the previous multiple command port-level structure. The Coast Guard's move from the Department of Transportation to the Department of Homeland Security and implementation of the Maritime Transportation Security Act provided further impetus to restructure.

COAST GUARD SECTOR ORGANIZATION

The new Sector organizational construct represents a transformation from a Coast Guard traditionally organized around its operational programs to one organized around core operational service delivery processes. It focuses the coordinated efforts of all assigned operational capabilities to accomplish Coast Guard mission objectives. It recognizes that, in a broad sense, all Coast Guard operational activities focus on prevention of an incident or illegal event, or on response to an emergency where prompt action mitigates loss of life or property, or adverse environmental impact. The command and control processes the Coast Guard uses to execute those two operational business areas are interrelated, but so sufficiently distinct that they



Opposite: Petty Officer 3rd Class Dustin Ridgeway patrols near the Leonard P. Zakim bridge in Boston. The new Sector Command organization integrates shore commands to improve unity of effort, responsiveness and mission flexibility. Above: Figure 1. Sector Organizational Construct.



Coast Guard Petty Officer Brett Patterson, crewmember of Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON), Jacksonville, Fla., mans an M 240 machine gun on board an MH-68A Stingray helicopter during a homeland security patrol around New York City. Activities Commands in New York and Baltimore performed particularly well in the wake of September 11.

can be managed as two separate but complementary processes, called Prevention and Response.

The first focuses largely on gaining private sector compliance with regulatory standards and the design and maintenance of waterway systems to prevent incidents. The second concentrates on command and control activities associated with incident response and/or security enforcement. These processes are actualized by two general operational skill sets. In his May 2004 Decision Memo, the Commandant determined that "Prevention requires expertise in the technical understanding and practical conduct of verification inspections of vessels, waterway safety and security standards, and waterway analyses. Response requires proficiency in high tempo command, control and communications processes and the exercise of response and security enforcement expertise to accomplish incident command and crisis management."

The Commandant envisions the relationship between Prevention and Response as one of collaborative interdependence to accomplish all objectives. In some circumstances, one department will be supported and the other supporting. Boats, people, and equipment are assigned to one of these two departments based on where they conduct the majority of their work, with the understanding they may support the other department in certain situations. The result is a unity of effort across all departments and new focus on multi-mission operations. For example,

intelligence regarding unlicensed operators carrying passengers may result in a combined safety (Prevention) and law enforcement (Response) boarding that may identify safety and documentation deficiencies as well as fisheries or other law enforcement violations.

The Prevention Department consists of three divisions. Inspections Division manages and oversees the regulatory and inspection aspects of the Coast Guard's safety, security, and environmental protection responsibilities for vessels and facilities. Waterways Management Division controls aids to navigation; safety and security zones; Regulated Navigation Areas; ice breaking; and VTS and AIS. Investigations Division initiates inquiries into marine casualties, pollution, boating violations, and assessment of civil penalties.

The Response Department addresses SAR, pollution, and all hazards via its Incident Management Division. Enforcement Division enforces all laws and treaties and carries out PWCS enforcement activities, such as armed boardings, vessel escorts and security zone enforcement. This division works closely with federal, state, and local law enforcement and sister agencies within the DHS to respond to and mitigate the impact of maritime threats.

One of the four essential features the Commandant required for Sectors was unit level maintenance and organic engineering, personnel, medical support, and finance/supply functions. The Logistics Department performs those functions for the entire Sector.



Sector Commands

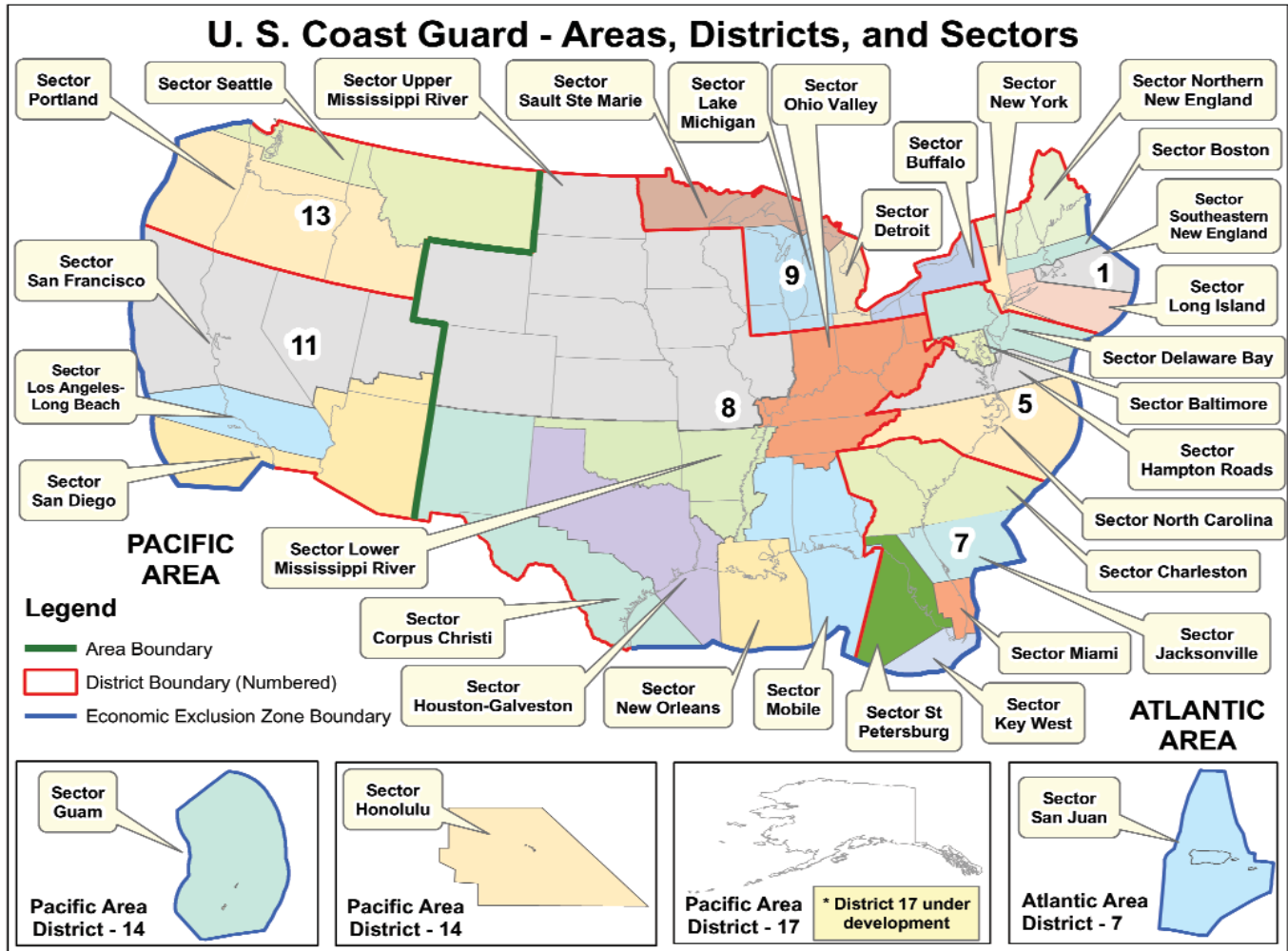


Figure 2. Coast Guard Sectors as of June 9, 2005

Engineering/Support Division administers electronics and computer system, naval, aviation, vehicle, and facilities engineering; armory and small arms qualification; and environmental compliance. The associated Integrated Support Command or Aircraft Repair and Supply Center handle intermediate and depot level maintenance. Medical, training, housing, and educational services reside in the Administrative/Personnel Division. Finance/Supply Division encompasses galley, transportation, and property and inventory management. Logistics Department Heads can aspire to command a Sector as a Captain (O-6).

Command and control will be centralized to serve all three components and field units. Those Groups that are far removed from the Sector homeport will be designated as Sector Field Offices and will support outlying field units (e.g., small boat stations). Marine Safety Offices that do not merge with a Groups to become a Sector will be renamed as Marine Safety Units (MSUs) and will report to a parent Sector.

The first Sector stood up in Miami on July 12, 2004. Approximately 35 sectors, based on Captain of the Port boundaries, will eventually cover the entire United States. Figure 2 shows Coast Guard Sectors, Districts, and Areas.

As of June 2005, 31 of the anticipated 35 total Sectors have already been approved. Full implementation of Sector Commands will be completed in 2006, although facility construction needs may take longer.

The Sector Commander (SC) reports to the District Commander for accomplishment of all Coast Guard mission objectives and serves as the single point of contact for maritime stakeholders within the Sector. In support of the Commandant's concept of providing "one team for one fight," the SC will partner with other DHS agencies in pursuit of departmental goals and objectives. The SC serves as the Captain of the Port (COTP) and Federal Maritime Security Coordinator (FMSC). Unless otherwise assigned, the SC is also the Officer in Charge Marine Inspections (OCMI), SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC), and Federal On-Scene Coordinator (FOSC). The SC ensures the conduct of operational and readiness planning to address contingencies and operational requirements. Command screening panels will select those officers best qualified for SC.

Reporting to the SC are the Deputy, acting as the SC during the absence of that officer and also serving as the Sector Safety Officer; the Command Master Chief (CMC); the Senior Reserve Officer, who is responsible for administration



Seaman Operations Specialist Jason Dailey, sector operator at the Vessel Traffic Center at Coast Guard Activities New York, Staten Island, N.Y., monitors vessel traffic in New York Harbor. In the nine ports where the Coast Guard operates VTS, the Vessel Traffic Center will be located with the Sector Command Center.

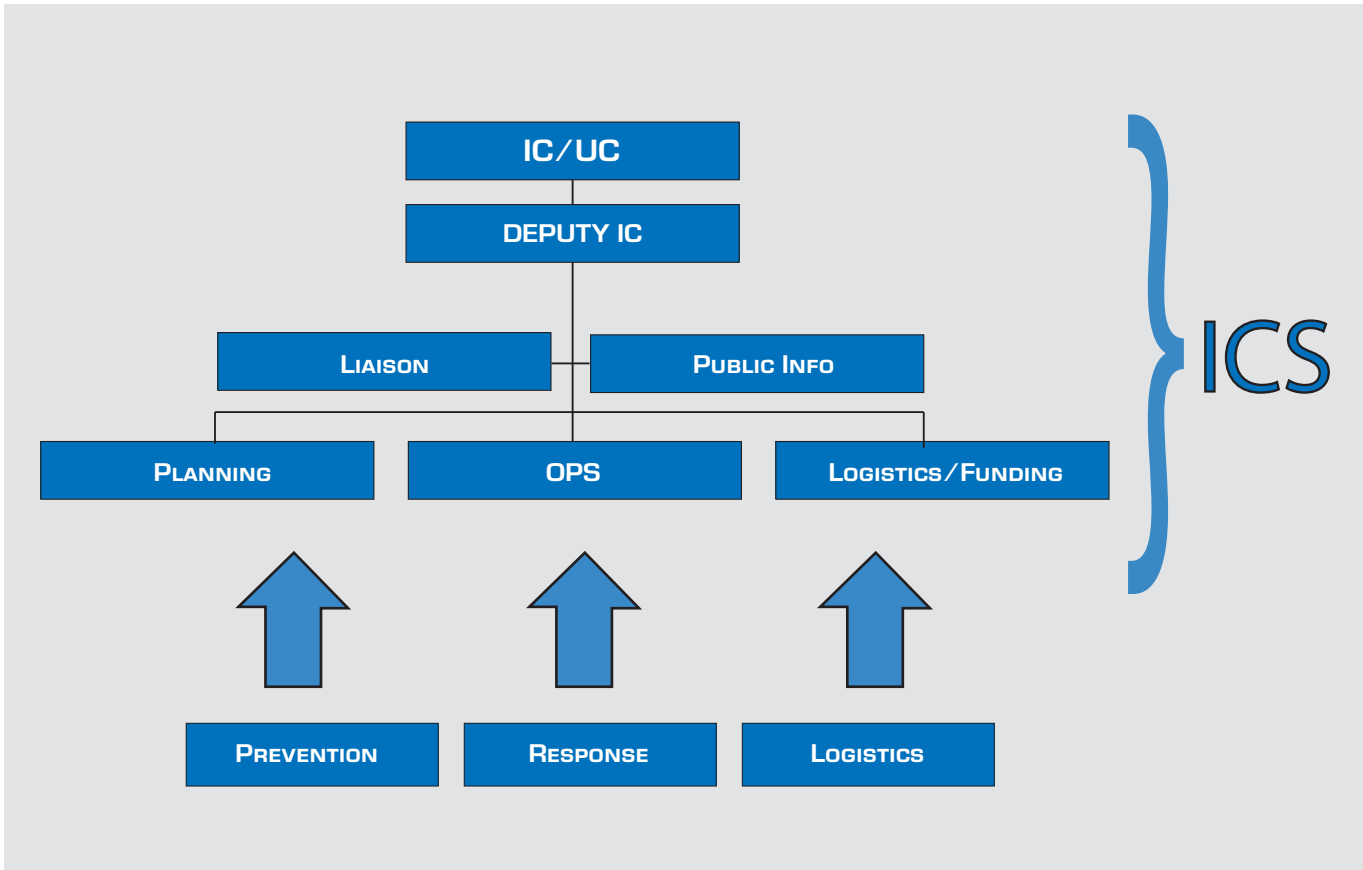
of the Sector's Reserve program, including all aspects of training and readiness; and the Sector's Auxiliary Coordinator, who will coordinate with the Prevention and Response Departments to ensure the Coast Guard Auxiliary enhances, where appropriate, prevention and response operations.

The Contingency Planning and Force Readiness Staff develops and maintains plans covering readiness, logistics, and emergency preparedness. It coordinates with the three departments in plan development and execution, and plans and executes readiness exercises to test contingency plans. The Contingency branch also monitors the training and readiness of Sector Reserve Forces and manages their mobilization and demobilization. Congress is considering an increase in Title 14 authority for the Secretary of Homeland Security to recall Reserve forces for up to 60 days to augment standing forces as a preventative measure in anticipation of a terrorist attack, thus reducing the risk of such attacks. This will make the role of the Senior Reserve Officer and the Contingency branch even more important.

The Intelligence Staff is envisioned to collect, evaluate, report, and disseminate operational intelligence within the Sector. This staff will serve as the primary intelligence support element for all operations within the Sector. This staff forwards its analysis of raw intelligence reports to the District and the Atlantic or Pacific Maritime Intelligence Fusion Center, and will be the critical link between the Sector Commander and the entire CG intelligence enterprise.

THE SECTOR COMMAND CENTER

The Sector Command Center (SCC) embodies the Commandant's goal of unity of command. It provides 24-hour command, control, coordination, communications, intelligence, sensor analysis, and data mining (C4ISM). The SCC displays the current Common Operating Picture (COP) and Common Intelligence Picture (CIP), including a presentation of all vessels, aircraft, communications equipment, and personnel belonging to the Coast Guard and supporting agencies. During a major marine event (e.g., OpSail or the Super Bowl) it supports the Prevention Department. During a PWCS or SAR incident,



Courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard

Figure 3. Rapid transition from Sector to ICS.

it focuses on assisting the Response Department. The SCC coordinates with other federal, state, and local operations centers, and issues Notices to Mariners, Situation Reports, and maritime security alerts. In the nine ports where the Coast Guard operates VTS, the Vessel Traffic Center will be located with the SCC. Responsibility for VTS operations resides in the Waterways Management Division of Prevention. A branch chief oversees the SCC. Officers serving as SCC branch chief will acquire the skills necessary to eventually serve as one of the three Department Heads.

RAPID TRANSITION TO INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

The Coast Guard contributed significantly to the National Response Plan (NRP), released in December 2004. The NRP applies to all contingencies. The Coast Guard plays a lead role in maritime contingencies and a supporting role for others. In January 2005, the Commandant wrote, "The approach taken in the NRP is consistent with my decision to consolidate to Sectors." In the event of an emergency, the Sector organization quickly shifts (Figure 3) to the Incident Command System (ICS), which the Coast Guard has employed since 1995.

CONCLUSION

Unity of command for Maritime Homeland Security is essential to defeating maritime terrorism, and Sector

Commands are the vehicle for such unity. Consolidation of the 40 MSOs, 39 Groups, three Activities, and nine VTS will yield 35 Sectors at IOC by the end of 2006. Each geographic area of the United States and its territories falls inside a Sector. A generic organizational model calls for Prevention and Response departments supported by a Logistics department. The Coast Guard expects that Sectors will create one-stop shopping for its services and improve its effectiveness. There is no anticipated significant reduction in Coast Guard presence where it already exists, and adoption of Sectors will not cause a change in billet strength. No additional funding has been requested to implement Sector Commands. The Commandant sees Sectors as a test bed for identifying and resolving organization issues, which will permit a process-based vertical alignment of the nine Districts, two Areas, and Headquarters with the Sectors.

¹ COMDT (CG-8) Decision Memo 5400 of May 2, 2004.
² COMDT COGARD Washington DC 082114Z Mar 04/ALCOAST 105, G-C, COMDTNOTE 3000
³ COMDT COGARD Washington DC 071521Z Jan 05/ALCOAST 008, G-C, COMDTNOTE 16600

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