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World War II*  
See Local News, page 3

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'City of Roses'



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## Decorated Veteran

PHOTO BY STAFF SGT. OPAL R. VAUGHN

Former Portland resident Michelle Watson talks with her U.S. Coast Guard Reserve security team during rehearsals for President Obama's second inauguration last January. One of the first African American women to graduate from the Coast Guard Academy, she just finished a year in which she met the President and First Lady and was promoted as the first African-American woman to take command of a Coast Guard security unit in Ft. Eustis, Va.



### Michelle Watson excels as career military leader

BY MICHAEL LEIGHTON  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

It's been a long and rewarding journey from Harriet Tubman School in Portland to a distinguished career in the U.S. Coast Guard for Michelle Watson.

The former Portland and Vancouver area resident has just finished a year in which she met President Obama and the First

Lady; was promoted as the first African-American woman commander of a Coast Guard security unit in Virginia; and served as a deputy commander in security for the president's second inauguration in Washington, D.C., last January.

Watson, 40, made Coast Guard history last month when she was put in charge of the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Port Security Unit 305 at Ft. Eustis, Va. As commander, she is the

first African-American woman to oversee the 172-member expeditionary unit which provides waterside protection to key assets and supports military and humanitarian operations worldwide.

She credited the mentorship and support she has received of her Coast Guard colleagues, along with the support of family and friends for her long record of success in the

*continued* ▼ on page 8