



**TESTIMONY OF  
VICE ADMIRAL CHARLES D. MICHEL  
DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS**

**ON  
“A COOPERATIVE STRATEGY FOR 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY SEAPOWER”**

**BEFORE THE HOUSE SEAPOWER AND FORCE PROJECTION SUBCOMMITTEE  
AND  
HOUSE COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE**

**MARCH 18, 2015**

Good afternoon Chairman Forbes, Chairman Hunter, and distinguished Members of the Committees. It is my pleasure to be here today to testify on *A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower: Forward, Engaged, Ready*. The Coast Guard stands alongside the Navy and Marine Corps, reaffirming our unified commitment to confront national security threats from and on the sea.

**Introduction**

Although the Coast Guard remains the smallest member of the Nation's Armed Services, its ability to balance its law enforcement and military authorities, capabilities, competencies, and partnerships make it a unique and indispensable instrument of national security. The Coast Guard, one of the handful of Operating Components in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is a maritime force, performing a complementary and non-redundant set of maritime missions that are critical to fulfilling the wide-ranging goals of the Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower (CS21). CS21 details many shared strategic concepts that link directly to DHS and Coast Guard strategic priorities and missions. In addition to ongoing support the Coast Guard provides the Department of Defense (DOD) at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels, the Coast Guard ensures the three maritime military services achieve strategic priorities in the critical areas of maritime security; all-domain access; and maintaining flexible, agile, and ready forces.

**An Armed Force—From the Tactical to Strategic**

The Coast Guard, under both its Title 10 and Title 14 authorities, is at all times an Armed Force and maintains a state of readiness to function as a specialized service in support of the Navy in time of war. The Coast Guard actively partners with DOD at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels as part of its Defense Operations mission. At the tactical level, Coast Guard cutters and aircraft are interoperable with the Navy, and use common communications and

weapons systems. Specific deployed forces include six cutters that make up Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia in the Persian Gulf, a port security unit guarding the harbor at Guantanamo Bay Naval Station, international training teams working with DOD around the world, and Coast Guard helicopters that conduct intercepts of low, slow-flying aircraft in the National Capital Region in support of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). In domestic and international ports, the Coast Guard conducts maritime safety and security operations in support of military outloads to ensure safe and secure DOD force projection capability. At the operational level, the Coast Guard provides liaison officers to all the Combatant Commands and Coast Guard senior officers hold key leadership positions in U.S. Northern Command and U.S. Southern Command. At the strategic level, Coast Guard personnel are assigned to Office of the Secretary of Defense, the the Navy Staff and the Joint Staff at the Pentagon, and the Commandant of the Coast Guard is invited to and participates in all meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Coast Guard also cooperates on numerous initiatives, including a Navy-Coast Guard National Fleet Policy and a Tri-Service Maritime Security Cooperation agreement with the Navy and the Marine Corps.

The Coast Guard's Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security mission is another point of frequent interface with DOD. The Maritime Security Response Team, based in Chesapeake, Virginia, gives DHS and DOD additional capability to counter terrorist threats in the maritime environment. Eleven Maritime Security and Safety Teams give the Coast Guard the capability to surge anti-terrorism and force protection to ports around the country. Two Coast Guard Maritime Force Protection Units provide dedicated and robust surface protection for the Navy's ballistic missile submarines transiting in and out of port in Kings Bay, Georgia, and Bangor, Washington. Additionally, Port Security Units represent the Coast Guard's expeditionary port security capability, able to deploy as part of a joint force in a combat environment.

## **Maritime Security**

As noted in CS21, maritime security operations protect sovereignty and maritime resources; support free and open seaborne commerce; and counter innumerable threats that seek to exploit the maritime domain, including: weapons proliferation, terrorism, transnational organized crime (TOC), piracy, and unlawful seaborne immigration. As DOD rebalances efforts to address national security imperatives in the Asia-Pacific region, the importance of Coast Guard maritime security efforts in the Western Hemisphere become more essential to countering maritime threats on the approaches to our southern border. Moreover, the Coast Guard's maritime presence, patrolling the approaches to our maritime borders and in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to protect living marine resources and the environment pays dividends beyond strictly Coast Guard missions and improves our national security through early awareness of threats to our maritime sovereignty.

As part of the President's strategy to enhance stability, prosperity, and governance in Central America, the Coast Guard is repositioning legacy forces and investing in the people and platforms necessary to carry out an offensive strategy that targets TOC networks, operating with impunity throughout the Central American region, and disrupts these criminal network operations where they are most vulnerable – at sea. The Coast Guard's Western Hemisphere Strategy, which follows the President's strategy, outlines the Service's approach to ensuring regional maritime security in our primary operating area. It follows in turn, as CS21 notes, a proper force-sizing construct is critical to ensuring the capability and capacity to meet mission

requirements in our operating area, and necessitate a fleet size of 91 National Security, Offshore Patrol, and Fast Response Cutters.

The Coast Guard enjoys strong partnerships with U.S. Southern Command, Joint Interagency Task Force South, and U.S. Northern Command; all are critical partners in achieving our national security goals in the Western Hemisphere. In response to TOC networks and instability in Central America, the Coast Guard recently surged cutter and maritime patrol aircraft forces to the Western Hemisphere Transit Zone. This allows U.S. Navy assets to rebalance to support the President's direction with their inherent capabilities. The Coast Guard is also playing a major role in DHS's Southern Border and Approaches Campaign Plan. This plan establishes three DHS Joint Task Forces that will unify DHS components' operational activities, resulting in a joint effort and a better interface with DOD commands. One of the DHS Joint Task Forces will be led by a Coast Guard Vice Admiral and the Coast Guard will support the leaders of the other two with senior officers.

### **All Domain Access**

The Coast Guard plays a unique role in achieving all domain access, as envisioned in CS21. The Coast Guard's ability to operate in the Polar regions, its unique authorities and international partnerships, and its broad roles and missions in the cyber domain directly support shared objectives to ensure all-domain access across the globe.

Diminishing ice coverage is leading to increased maritime activity in the Arctic. Ice Operations and several other Coast Guard missions, including Marine Environmental Protection, Search and Rescue, Marine Safety, Living Marine Resources, Aids-to-Navigation, Defense Readiness, and other Law Enforcement, will need to evolve as the changes occur. Tourism activity may increase demands for Coast Guard response resources. The Arctic is also extremely rich in natural resources, which adds to its geostrategic significance.

The challenges posed by Polar environments demand specialized capabilities and personnel who are trained and equipped to operate in the most unforgiving places on Earth. With reactivation of POLAR STAR, the Coast Guard has returned to breaking out a channel, and escorting petroleum and break bulk carriers, to resupply the United States base of operations in McMurdo Sound. POLAR STAR is the only ice breaker in the United States fleet capable of conducting this mission and providing assured access.

As recognized in CS21, achieving access in all domains begins in peacetime, through security cooperation engagements with the naval and maritime forces of our allies and partners. As part of the Coast Guard's International Security Sector Assistance efforts, Coast Guard personnel are engaged with partner nations across the globe. Currently serving in 29 countries, Coast Guard personnel perform a variety of duties internationally, serving as International Port Security Liaison Officers, Coast Guard Liaison Officers, Security Assistance Officers, Security Cooperation Officers, Maritime Advisors, and Coast Guard Attachés. Moreover, the Coast Guard has over 40 bilateral law enforcement agreements and arrangements, as well as numerous other instruments that support a variety of security objectives.

As part of the DOD information network, the Coast Guard coordinates network defense activities with DOD and U.S. Cyber Command. As mandated by the Maritime Transportation Security Act

of 2002, the Coast Guard is the DHS component charged with preventing and responding to Transportation Security Incidents that take place in the maritime domain. As the Sector Specific Agency for the maritime mode of the transportation systems sector, the Coast Guard plays a critical role in helping to protect public and private maritime infrastructure owners and operators from cyber threats. This year, the Coast Guard will release a Cyber Strategy that will provide greater detail on our strategic priorities in the Cyber Domain.

### **Forward, Engaged, Ready**

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. As the strategy states, the Coast Guard is forward deployed, engaged, and ready. The Coast Guard is operating in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to counter drug smuggling and criminal networks; it is forward in the Pacific and Bering Sea conducting fisheries patrols and enforcing the law in our Exclusive Economic Zone; and it is forward in the Persian Gulf working with U.S. Central Command providing maritime security. The Coast Guard also deploys mobile training teams around the world training partner nations to provide security for themselves. In addition, the Coast Guard leverages numerous bilateral agreements and arrangements to address counter-narcotics, illegal migration, fisheries enforcement, and weapons proliferation beyond the limits of our territorial sea, including in territorial seas of other nations that have given their consent.

The Coast Guard is ready and “on call 24/7”, both at home and abroad, to counter threats, and to do so with the Navy and Marine Corps in a complementary and non-redundant manner. Critical to remaining forward, engaged, and ready are investments in the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) acquisitionimproved marine and aviation capabilities, integrated command and control systems, and a proficient workforce.

In closing, the Coast Guard remains an adaptable Sea Service firmly committed to our role as an Armed Force carrying out maritime missions in service to the Nation.