



**TESTIMONY OF
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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
ON**

“AMERICA BUILDS: COAST GUARD ASSETS & INFRASTRUCTURE”

**BEFORE THE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION**

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INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Chairman Ezell, Ranking Member Carbajal, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for your continued oversight and strong support of the Coast Guard. I am honored to appear before you today to update you on the Coast Guard’s ongoing efforts to recapitalize our aging surface and aviation fleets; Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C5ISR) systems; and shore infrastructure.

The Coast Guard is supporting national priorities and implementing orders from the President and senior civilian leadership in service to the American people at speed. This includes surging assets to increase presence in key areas to protect America’s maritime borders, maritime approaches, and national sovereignty. To continue meeting changing mission needs, the Service needs the right assets, systems, and infrastructure to support mission execution properly. That can only be accomplished with continued Congressional support and investment in a multibillion-dollar portfolio of acquisition programs that will deliver the right capabilities for the Coast Guard. Maximizing those capabilities requires us also to prioritize investments in shore infrastructure – the facilities, piers, runways, and buildings that are as necessary for operations as our ships, boats, aircraft, and C5ISR systems.

This Subcommittee’s continued support has helped the Service make tremendous progress, and it is critical that we continue to deliver assets to the fleet that improve mission execution and provide the capabilities the Nation needs. We must act today to be prepared for tomorrow.

THE COAST GUARD ACQUISITION ENTERPRISE

The Coast Guard has a talented team of professionals dedicated to building and maintaining a modern force of assets, infrastructure, and systems that meet the needs of the Service. To meet those needs most effectively, we follow executable strategies that plan and scope acquisitions before work begins to avoid future changes and cost overruns; oversee the design and production processes; and prepare future crews and the maintenance community for the delivery and future operation of new capabilities.

The Coast Guard continuously monitors our performance to ensure the highest levels of acquisition oversight and effectiveness, and is therefore refining our acquisition governance structure to strengthen and streamline processes, institutionalize the roles of our technical authorities, and recruit and retain the most highly-capable acquisition workforce. We continue to implement initiatives to minimize risks and maximize affordability across our complex acquisition programs. We leverage the experience and expertise of our Federal, State, and Local partners to perform key functions and provide Coast Guard decision-makers with essential information throughout the acquisition life cycle.

STATUS OF KEY ACQUISITION EFFORTS

The Coast Guard continues to make progress in our efforts to recapitalize the operational fleet and mission support systems. The Service is taking delivery of new cutters, aviation assets, boats, C5ISR capabilities, and upgraded shore infrastructure, and investing in critical mission-enabling service life extensions, major maintenance, and key upgrades of the legacy surface and aviation fleet to enhance mission readiness and performance.

Surface Programs:

Thanks to the strong support of this Subcommittee, we are moving forward with the acquisition of the Nation's first new heavy polar icebreakers in half a century. This past December, the Coast Guard received authorization from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to begin the lead Polar Security Cutter (PSC), the vessel program intended to recapitalize the Service's heavy icebreaking capability. This approach will enable us to finalize the design ahead of full-rate production, planned to commence later this year.

The President and the National Security Advisor have placed clear priority on the national security mission in the Arctic. Coast Guard polar icebreakers are the foundation of U.S. operational presence and influence in the Arctic. The Coast Guard's icebreakers operate throughout the Arctic, beyond the U. S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and up to Russia's, conducting science missions and assuring freedom of movement for American-flagged ships. It is clear we must counter threats in the Arctic with U.S. presence, and multi-mission cutters will provide assured, year-round access not only for Coast Guard missions, but also in support of critical activities that protect key U.S. interests in the high latitudes. The United States is an Arctic nation, and we have both sovereign rights and responsibilities to safeguard our interests in the Arctic. These cutters are critical to ensuring those rights, responsibilities, and interests are preserved, and the Coast Guard is committed to building out a fleet consisting of heavy and medium icebreakers capable of carrying out this mission.

With heightened strategic-power competition and an increasingly complex environment in the Arctic, our Nation must maintain a persistent presence and robust domain awareness in the region. To this end, in December 2024, the Coast Guard acquired a commercially available polar icebreaker to maintain Arctic mission readiness. The new cutter, which will be commissioned as Coast Guard Cutter (CGC) *Storis*, will be the second Coast Guard Cutter to bear that name. *CGC Storis* will provide much-needed Arctic capabilities and immediate presence to temporarily address the national security risks, as defined by the President, in the Arctic.

The Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) also remains a top acquisition priority for the Service. It is vital to recapitalizing the capability provided by our legacy fleet of Vietnam War and Cold War era 210-foot and 270-foot Medium Endurance Cutters (MEC). The program is progressing, with production of five OPCs underway; four under the Stage 1 contract and one under the Stage 2 contract. The lead OPC, future *CGC Argus*, was launched and christened on October 27, 2023; production activities continue with delivery scheduled for the first quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2026.

To maintain mission capabilities and commitments until the OPCs are delivered, the Coast Guard has begun 270-foot MEC service life extension program (SLEP) activities to address key systems and component obsolescence onboard the MECs, the first of which just exceeded 40 years in service. The first full 270-foot MEC SLEP was recently completed at the Coast Guard Yard, and a second cutter was inducted into the SLEP process, with completion scheduled for early in Calendar Year (CY) 2026.

CGC Healy, the Service's medium polar icebreaker, will begin its SLEP in the near future. This SLEP will be modeled on the phased approach the Service used for our only heavy polar icebreaker, *CGC Polar Star*. Like *CGC Polar Star*'s SLEP, *Healy*'s SLEP will include five phased availabilities planned around the cutter's annual operations to ensure we maintain presence in the Arctic.

Investment in our inland fleet is critical to the continued function and operation of the Nation's maritime approaches, ports and inland waterways. This Marine Transportation System (MTS) facilitates more than \$5.4 trillion in annual economic activity. Our legacy inland fleet dates back to World War II, however, and is well past obsolescence. To address this, the Coast Guard established the Waterways Commerce Cutter (WCC) program, which is acquiring three cutter variants to meet the mission demands of our domestic waterways. The new WCCs will provide improved endurance, speed, and deck load capacity over their predecessors and feature improved habitability. Continued progress toward delivering these new assets and replacing a 55 year old legacy fleet is critical to maintaining the Coast Guard's capability to execute this important mission.

The Service also continues to deliver Fast Response Cutters (FRC) to the fleet. These cutters continue to build superlative operational records and demonstrate the capability and versatility demanded by today's changing maritime environment. The FRCs performance proves its unmatched capacity to support engagements with partners throughout the Indo-Pacific, and are an integral part of the additional investments being made to increase meaningful presence in the region. These investments are absolutely essential to support the rules-based international system, enhance partner capabilities, deter malign actors, and combat the illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing carried out by long distance foreign fishing fleets that threatens economies throughout the Indo-Pacific.

The Coast Guard is also making investments across the boat fleet, producing the next generation of cutter boats to enhance interdiction capabilities of parent cutters. Additionally, the Coast Guard continues to perform SLEP activities to extend the useful service life of the Service's 47-foot motor lifeboats by replacing obsolete, unsupportable, or maintenance-intensive equipment, and standardizing configuration across the fleet.

Aviation Programs:

The Coast Guard formally established a program baseline to govern SLEP activities on the existing MH-60T fleet and to continue the transition of air stations to the MH-60T through new fleet growth increments. These efforts will be accomplished using a combination of converted low-time U.S. Navy helicopters and newly manufactured hull components. When combined with structural fitting and dynamic component replacements through the SLEP, the new hulls will extend the service life of the Coast Guard's vertical lift capability into the 2040s. Service life extension work on the H-65 fleet, including critical avionics upgrades, was completed in August 2024 and extended the service life of that platform into the mid-2030s.

Acquisition of new HC-130J airframes significantly enhanced the Coast Guard's capabilities to conduct airborne surveillance, detection, classification, and identification of vessels and other aircraft missions in coordination with the surface fleet and shoreside facilities. With a program of record of 22 aircraft, the Service has 14 mission-ready aircraft in the fleet, with three aircraft in depot maintenance, and two others in different stages of production.

In 2024, we completed a program of Minotaur missionization and Ocean Sentry Refresh activities on 18 HC-144s. In our transition away from the HC-27J, we are in the final stages of disposal of the four HC-27J aircraft undergoing missionization, and developing our plans for future retirement of un-missionized HC-27J aircraft over the next several years.

The Coast Guard is delivering standardized missionization packages, based on the U.S. Navy's Minotaur Mission System Suite. These missionization packages improve system performance, address obsolescence concerns, improve cyber security of the mission system, and increase compatibility with Department of Defense (DoD) and DHS assets and systems.

Additionally, the Coast Guard continues to leverage the use of unmanned aircraft system (UAS) capabilities to support the surveillance and maritime domain awareness capabilities of the National Security Cutter (NSC) fleet. Nine NSCs are equipped with UAS infrastructure and equipment and routinely deploy with UAS capabilities as part of the cutter's total force package that dramatically enhances their ability to gain maritime domain awareness and interdict smugglers. Our follow-on contract for UAS capability uses a Vertical Take-Off and Landing (VTOL) asset; the first deployment onboard an NSC is expected this summer. This contract can also be used to support additional cutter classes in the future.

C5ISR and Information Technology Programs:

The Coast Guard continues to acquire information technology (IT) and C5ISR systems that enhance mission capabilities of new and recapitalized Coast Guard assets to operate in challenging environments. The systems provide standardized capability to major cutters and aircraft, enabling assets to receive, evaluate and act upon information, and facilitate interoperability and information sharing inside and outside the Coast Guard. The Cyber and Enterprise Mission Platform program is just one IT effort that addresses the need to replace and modernize obsolete support systems to improve mission readiness and operational effectiveness. Additionally, the U.S. Coast Guard Cyber Command conducts full spectrum cyberspace operations in support of Coast Guard, DHS, and DoD mission objectives. Continued investment in this force and its capabilities is viewed as critical to preserving unique talent and vital contributions to ensure a secure and stable cyberspace domain.

Shore Infrastructure:

The Coast Guard has repeatedly emphasized the need for comprehensive, sustained maintenance and recapitalization of funding for our shore facilities; it is imperative for mission success. New, more capable assets must be paired with correlating investments in our infrastructure. The Coast Guard is committed to taking a leading-edge approach to project planning to ensure the Service can effectively execute and deliver the modern and resilient infrastructure required to meet the operational demands of today and tomorrow. Unfortunately, the condition of a significant number of the Coast Guard's existing facilities is steadily declining due to a lack of maintenance funding, increasing the need for even greater recapitalization.

As the demand for Coast Guard capabilities and presence grows, so does the need for continued investment in the Coast Guard's property and infrastructure to ensure that future and existing assets are fully supported. Some of our major efforts include OPC, FRC, WCC, and *CGC Storis* homeports, maintenance facilities, air station upgrades for H-60s, and personnel housing. Without support infrastructure, the Coast Guard's ability to successfully answer the Nation's call is jeopardized.

CONCLUSION

For over 234 years, the American people have depended on our missions and the unique value the Coast Guard provides. Each day, the Coast Guard controls the borders and maritime approaches of the United States, controls the Nation's ports and waterways, and conducts military operations to defend the Nation. Our mission support and acquisition enterprises are, likewise, working each day to plan and deliver the assets and capabilities needed to support these critical missions. We must acquire today the cutters, boats, aircraft, C5ISR systems, and shoreside infrastructure needed to provide vital capability for decades to come. We are committed to maximizing the Nation's return on these important investments. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and for all you do for the women and men of the U.S. Coast Guard. I look forward to answering your questions.