



**TESTIMONY OF
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DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS**

**ON
“COAST GUARD MISSIONS”**

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

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Introduction

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. It is a pleasure to be here today to discuss Coast Guard Missions.

The primary mission of the United States Coast Guard is to ensure the safety, security, and stewardship of the Nation’s waters. The Coast Guard protects those on the sea, protects the Nation from threats delivered by the sea, and protects the sea itself. The Coast Guard is a global maritime service, and it is recognized for its agility in performing a broad and complementary set of maritime missions across vast geographic areas. The Coast Guard is present on all seven continents and safeguards over 3.4 million square nautical miles of ocean; 95,000 miles of coastline; 12,000 miles of navigable waterways; 1,500 miles of international maritime border with Canada; and 361 ports that make up our Western Hemisphere area of operations.

The Coast Guard performs its diverse set of maritime missions by leveraging a broad array of authorities, capabilities, competencies, and partnerships. At all times an armed service, a federal law enforcement agency, a regulatory agency, a humanitarian service, and a member of the U.S. Intelligence Community, the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to confront the complex and evolving maritime risks of the 21st Century. As such, the Coast Guard remains an indispensable instrument of national security.

The Coast Guard safeguards the Nation’s maritime interests through the performance of all its missions. This past year, the Coast Guard responded to more than 17,500 search-and-rescue cases, saving more than 3,400 lives; seized over 91 metric tons of cocaine and 49 metric tons of marijuana destined for the United States, worth an estimated \$3 billion (wholesale); detained over 340 suspected drug smugglers; interdicted more than 3,500 undocumented maritime migrants; conducted more than 4,000 risk-based vessel escorts to ensure the security of high capacity passenger ferries, cruise ships, vessels carrying dangerous cargoes, as well as United States Navy combatants; conducted more than

25,000 container inspections; completed more than 9,600 Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) safety exams on foreign vessels; completed over 12,500 U.S. flagged vessel inspections; issued 82,294 merchant mariner credentials and 128,663 merchant mariner medical certificates; and responded to approximately 8,000 reports of pollution.

Modern Risks Transcend Any One Mission

All Coast Guard missions are impacted as we confront modern challenges. Increasing risks are rapidly changing the maritime domain, creating new efficiencies in some areas and additional mission demands in others. Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) networks, technological advancements in maritime industries, increasing maritime activity and reliance on the Maritime Transportation System (MTS), rapidly changing energy markets, cyber risks, diminishing ice coverage in the Arctic, shifting human migration patterns, and limited foreign government capacity all pose significant challenges in the Coast Guard's operating environment. These challenges coincide with austere fiscal realities that demand optimal effectiveness and efficiency in the performance of all Coast Guard missions, at a time when the Coast Guard must recapitalize critical operational assets in our aging fleet.

The prosperity and security of the Nation depend upon a safe, secure, and responsibly managed maritime domain, which in turn relies on the optimal performance of all Coast Guard missions and effective relationships with our maritime partners. The interrelated nature of the Coast Guard's 11 missions¹, coupled with the Coast Guard's broad array of authorities and culture of adaptability, provide the Service with the ability to rapidly shift from one mission to another as national priorities demand. The true value of the Coast Guard to the Nation is not in its ability to perform any single mission, but in its highly adaptive, multi-mission character, which can be applied across broad national maritime interests.

Globally, the Coast Guard is fully engaged with the Department of Defense (DOD) at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels as part of our Defense Operations mission. At the tactical level, our cutters and deployed forces include six cutters as part of Coast Guard Patrol Forces Southwest Asia in the Persian Gulf, a port security unit guarding the harbor in Guantanamo Bay, and training teams working with DOD around the world. At the operational level, the Coast Guard provides liaison officers at all the Combatant Commands, and fills important senior leadership positions in Northern Command and Southern Command. At the Strategic level, the Coast Guard has personnel assigned to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Navy Staff, and the Joint Staff at the Pentagon. As a service chief, the Commandant of the Coast Guard is invited and participates in all meetings of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Coast Guard cooperates on numerous initiatives including a Navy-Coast Guard National Fleet Policy.

¹ The Coast Guard's eleven statutory missions are: (1) Ports, waterways, and coastal security; (2) Drug interdiction; (3) Aids to Navigation; (4) Search and rescue (5) Living marine resources; (6) Marine safety; (7) Defense readiness; (8) Migrant interdiction (9) Marine environmental protection; (10) Ice operations; (11) Other law enforcement. Homeland Security Act (HSA) of 2002, (Pub.L. 107-296, 116 Stat. 2135, enacted November 25, 2002).

The Coast Guard is also party to the Cooperative Maritime Strategy with the Navy and the Marine Corps, a strategy that has just been revised to reflect emerging opportunities and challenges.

Emerging Frontiers: Energy, Cyber, and the Arctic

In America in 2013, each and every day a new tank barge entered the stream of commerce, moving product on our maritime highways to fuel the United States economy. There has been a significant increase in barge transits carrying oil and natural gas on the Mississippi River in the last five years. The Coast Guard plays an important role in ensuring the safe and secure movement of commerce on the Nation's waterways. To keep pace with the maritime industry we regulate, the Coast Guard will continue ongoing initiatives to improve our marine safety workforce, and support innovative technologies to improve waterways management and the aids to navigation system.

As a regulatory agency for the maritime industry, the Coast Guard is responsible for: (1) setting standards for commercial vessels, facilities, and mariners; (2) ensuring compliance with those standards; and (3) conducting investigations of violations and incidents involving safety, security, and environmental stewardship standards. In these three roles, the Coast Guard distinguishes itself as the only agency in the world responsible for all three aspects of these regulatory efforts. Additionally, the Coast Guard operationally responds to incidents that occur when vessels and facilities do not follow regulations.

Changes in U.S. energy production have increased the traffic levels at some of our ports. Larger tanker vessels, greater complexity of port operations, and expanded movement of energy and hazardous materials increase the overall risk of an incident that could have severe environmental consequences.

Cyber technologies will help the Coast Guard realize new efficiencies in a variety of missions, but will continue to pose significant demands in others. E-Navigation technologies are transforming the way users transit the MTS, but a growing array of cyber threats to maritime critical infrastructure will require significant planning with our port partners to ensure the Nation's MTS remains safe and efficient. As the Sector Specific Agency (SSA) for the maritime mode of the transportation systems sector, the Coast Guard plays a critical role in helping maritime infrastructure stakeholders secure their cyberspace, as outlined in the National Infrastructure Protection Plan. We will remain in lockstep with other components of DHS and Department of Defense (DOD) efforts to enhance cyber security to defend our own network and work with port partners to protect maritime critical infrastructure and operators.

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. Faced with limited infrastructure, extreme weather, and science gaps, emergency response to incidents like oil spills are even more challenging in the Arctic.

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.

Emerging Threats: Transnational Organized Crime, Violence, and Instability

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 Transnational Organized Crime networks, which operate with impunity throughout the Central American region, and disrupt their operations where they are most vulnerable, at sea.

Combating Networks

The increase in illicit trafficking of humans, drugs, and weapons into our transit zones and southern approaches is the direct result of Transnational Organized Crime networks operating with impunity throughout the Central American region. These organizations are vying for power through drug-fueled violence, the effects of which are destabilizing governments, undermining the rule of law, terrorizing citizens, and driving illegal migration from Central America to the United States, including the inhumane and perilous migration of unaccompanied children.

The Coast Guard is a well-positioned resource in the coordinated fight against TOC networks in the Western Hemisphere, as a result of its capabilities and legal authorities to perform a variety of interdiction missions. The Coast Guard disrupts those smuggling operations that support TOC networks in the transit zone where they are largely unchallenged by regional partners, and where they are most vulnerable to disruption of their illicit activities. Over the last five years, Coast Guard cutters and aircraft have removed over 450 metric tons of pure uncut cocaine, with a wholesale value of nearly \$15 billion.

The Coast Guard is a major asset provider to Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S) and deploys a variety of offshore assets to combat drug traffickers in the Western Hemisphere Transit Zone. Assets include flight deck-equipped major cutters, long and medium range fixed-wing aircraft, Airborne Use of Force (AUF) capable helicopters, and Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments embarked on U.S. Navy ships and Allied Nation vessels. Major cutters and surface combatants, combined with AUF capable aircraft and supported by long-range search aircraft have continuously proven to be an extremely effective interdiction system, especially for cocaine trafficking.

Maritime interdictions capture over three times the total amount of cocaine seized at our borders and domestically. Additionally, these interdiction operations significantly reduce the flow of illicit narcotics across the U.S. southern border and their destabilizing influence within the Central American countries. Network-targeted interdiction operations support the goal of dismantling TOC networks; 23 of 31 (74 percent) of Colombian Consolidated Priority Organizational Targets (CPOTs) extradited to the United States from 2002 to 2011 were linked to Coast Guard interdictions.

Securing Borders

U.S. maritime interests encompass the expanse of the Nation's territorial sea, the contiguous zone, and the exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Effective maritime border security relies on adaptable and coordinated approaches which utilize capable sensors and assets that can project well beyond the homeland to identify and interdict threats as far from the Nation's shores as possible. In its work to provide maritime security, the Coast Guard executes a strategic approach based upon maritime domain awareness, prioritizing threats, and an adaptable, defense-in-depth posture. The Coast Guard leverages partnerships with federal, state, local, and tribal stakeholders, as well as our international partners.

In addition to the interdiction operations detailed above, Coast Guard resources protect our national fisheries and fish stocks, particularly in the expansive areas of the EEZ off of Alaska and New England. Beyond the limits of our EEZ, the Coast Guard must also enforce the High Seas Drift Net Act across the vast distances in the North Pacific, which protects migratory fish stocks of significant economic interest to the U.S. commercial fishing industry.

The Coast Guard's Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security mission is another important tool in securing our maritime interests. The Maritime Security Response Team, based in Chesapeake, Virginia, gives the U.S. additional capability to counter terrorist threats in the maritime environment. Maritime Security and Safety Teams give the Coast Guard the capability to surge antiterrorism and force protection to ports around the country. Two Coast Guard Maritime Force Protection Units provide dedicated and robust surface protection for U.S. Navy ballistic missile submarines transiting in and out of port in Kings Bay, Georgia and Bangor, Washington. Port Security Units represent the Coast Guard's expeditionary port security capability, able to deploy as part of a Joint Force in an opposed combat environment.

In January, Secretary Jeh Johnson issued the Department's Campaign Plan for the U.S. Southern Border and Approaches, formalizing this unified department-wide approach to protecting the homeland. This Campaign Plan addresses threat vectors not only at the border, but also extending out through the maritime region to Central and South America where these threats originate. The overarching goals of this campaign are to enforce our immigration laws and interdict threats to our land, maritime areas, and airspace; degrade transnational criminal organizations involved in the illicit market-driven flows of illegal drugs, migrant smuggling, human trafficking, and black-market export of arms and bulk cash; and decrease the terrorism threat to the Nation, all while facilitating the flow of lawful commerce and travel.

Safeguarding Commerce

U.S. trade relationships with Western Hemisphere nations has increased. Of the 20 nations with which the U.S. has established free trade agreements (FTAs), more than half are in the Western Hemisphere.² Direct U.S. investment within the hemisphere exceeds U.S. investment in Asia and is second only to Europe.³ As trade relationships continue to link our economies, these trends, as well as potential threats, will likely have a much greater impact on our future security and prosperity. The Coast Guard strives to assure the safe flow of commerce through security activities in foreign ports. The Coast Guard's International Port Security (IPS) Program was established in 2003 to reinforce implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code. Partnering with 154 nations, including all but two nations in the Western Hemisphere, the program seeks to standardize maritime security practices globally. Through the assessment of ISPS Code implementation and other anti-terrorism security measures in foreign ports, the Coast Guard IPS Program seeks to reduce risks to U.S. ports and ships, and to the entire MTS.

Conclusion

The Coast Guard's primary mission is to ensure the safety, security, and stewardship of the Nation's waters. The Coast Guard accomplishes this goal through the balanced performance of 11 statutory missions, which support several vital national interests. These extremely diverse missions require the Coast Guard to manage risks as they evolve, and strategically position the Coast Guard to maintain the capability and capacity to prevent and respond to the continually emerging maritime threats and challenges facing the Nation.

² <http://export.gov/fta/>

³ <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RS21118.pdf>.