



Chairman John Carter

*Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Appropriations*

FY 2016 Budget Hearing – U.S. Coast Guard March 24, 2015 Opening Statement As Prepared

Subcommittee will come to order –

Admiral Zukunft, thank you for testifying before us today and congratulations on being selected as the 25th Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard. This is your first time testifying before this Subcommittee and we look forward to your perspective on the Coast Guard's budget for Fiscal Year 2016. I would like to personally thank you for your service over a long and distinguished career. We look forward to working with you.

The Coast Guard secures our borders, safeguards our maritime commerce, and combats transnational crime. To be sure, yours is a complex mission. Admiral, this mission requires a significant investment in resources, including vessels, aircraft, and personnel. In previous discussions with your predecessor, the subcommittee expressed concern over a diminished budget that did not address frontline operations and future capabilities adequately. The Fiscal Year 2016 budget does address some of these concerns, such as reduced staffing numbers. However, I am still alarmed by a continued decrease in overall discretionary funding and how that decrease will impact the timely acquisition, maintenance and readiness of your assets.

Admiral, you have a difficult job and I know that you support the President's budget. However, surely there are unmet needs within this budget request. You have a fleet of vessels that are past their useful life and replacements are years away from being commissioned. You are planning to award a contract to acquire 25 Offshore Patrol Cutters to replace a portion of the aging fleet, yet the program is stuck in the design phase. During your testimony, I'd like you to address whether the fiscal year 2016 budget begins a deliberate process to recapitalize your fleet in a timely manner. In addition, I look forward to a candid discussion about the unmet needs that are not addressed by this budget.

Admiral, we fully understand the challenge you face in balancing a shrinking budget while also trying to care for Coast Guard families, sustaining operations with aging assets, and recapitalizing for the future. This is no small task in today's fiscal environment. That is precisely why we are relying upon you to explain how this budget meets our Nation's needs for both fiscal discipline and robust security.

Before I turn to the Admiral for his statement, the text of which will be included in the record, let me first recognize the distinguished Ranking Member for any remarks she wishes to make.

#####