



Chairman John Carter

*Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Appropriations*

***Coast Guard FY 2017 Budget Request
March 3, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared***

Subcommittee will come to order –

Admiral Zukunft, thank you for being here today. We look forward to getting your perspective on the Coast Guard's budget for Fiscal Year 2017.

The Coast Guard is the principal Federal agency in the maritime domain responsible for securing our borders, safeguarding our maritime commerce, ensuring environmental stewardship of our ports and waterways, interdicting illegal immigration, and combating transnational crime. To be sure, Coast Guard has a complex and diverse mission requiring significant resources, including vessels, aircraft, and, especially, personnel.

To that end, Congress provided substantial funding in the FY 2016 omnibus appropriation to improve the readiness, recapitalize vessels and aircraft, modernize shore facilities, and recruit and retain a quality force. From my assessment, the Coast Guard's FY 2017 budget request appears to largely sustain these efforts, along with some limited, though important, recapitalization efforts to continue to address the Coast Guard's aging fleet of vessels and aircraft.

Admiral, I know you support the President's budget but I am concerned there are unmet needs within this budget request. That said, as I told the Secretary, the FY 2017 DHS budget submission is a disappointment – given the budget gimmicks and large gaps in funding throughout the request. Tough decisions are necessary to ensure critical priority programs are adequately funded, and that all funding appropriated is, in fact, executable.

While you have two vessel modernization programs underway (the NSC and the FRC) and are moving toward a third with the award of a detailed design contract on the OPC, many of the remaining vessels in your fleet are past their useful life and replacements are years away from being replaced. The planned acceleration of the development and production of a new Polar Ice Breaker will further strain modernization efforts. And, I understand, in your recent "State of the Coast Guard" address you stated a bigger force is needed, which will require even more resources. I look forward to hearing from you on what you see as your staffing requirements and what your strategy will be to fund this growth, especially in light of the recapitalization efforts that the Coast Guard will no doubt need to continue to address in future budget submissions.

Admiral, we fully understand the challenge you face recruiting and retaining a quality force, sustaining operations with aging assets, recapitalizing for the future, and taking care of Coast Guard families. No easy task in today's constrained fiscal environment, so I look forward to a candid discussion about unmet needs that are not addressed in this budget. We are relying upon

you to explain how the request balances the 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.

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