



# Chairman Hal Rogers

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## House Committee on Appropriations

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

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Thank you for yielding, Mr. Chairman. Admiral, good to see you again and thank you for being here today to discuss your Fiscal Year 2017 budget request for the United States Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard has a unique and diverse mission set that is unrivaled anywhere in the world. The men and women under your service are pivotal to keeping this nation safe from a host of threats. From intercepting drugs in the Caribbean, to breaking ice in the Great Lakes' shipping channels, to heroic search and rescue operations – the Coast Guard is vital to keeping our country and our waterways safe. I'd like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to you and the men and women of the Coast Guard for your tireless service to this country. This subcommittee remains committed to providing you with the necessary resources to carry out your critical missions in the safest manner possible. We look forward to working with you on how best to accomplish that.

Because the Coast Guard has such a diverse mission, it's critical that you have the right tools in place to be successful. I'm pleased to see that the Fiscal Year 2017 budget request sustains many of the investments added last year. The modernization of the air and surface fleet are essential to carrying out your duties and I'm pleased you've prioritized them in your submission. Specifically, you request \$240 million for the production of four Fast Response Cutters; \$130 million to convert Air National Guard C27J aircraft for Coast Guard use; \$150 million to complete the design of a new polar icebreaker; and \$100 million for the Offshore Patrol Cutter program.

These proposed upgrades to your fleet come on the heels of one of your busiest years on record. In Fiscal Year 2015, the Coast Guard conducted over 20,000 waterborne patrols; confiscated almost 150 metric tons of cocaine; 35 metric tons of marijuana; detained over 500 suspected drug smugglers; interdicted over 6,000 migrants trying to enter the U.S. illegally; and responded to over 16,000 search and rescue incidents –saving over 3,500 lives.

Despite these accolades for the Coast Guard's budget submission this year, I would be remiss if I did not take the opportunity to lament that the overarching budget for the Department of Homeland Security in Fiscal Year 2017 does not reflect the same thoughtfulness. Employing gimmicks and imaginary, unauthorized fees to plug holes in the budget in an effort to skirt the Bipartisan Budget Agreement caps is not a strategy we support. That legislation was a product of compromise, and these caps, while unquestionably difficult to administer, are necessary to ensure that our nation is on sound financial footing today – and into the future. The risk to our homeland security posed by out-of-control debt is a threat we need to take seriously, and the tactics I have just described make this Committee's already difficult job even more challenging – since it's nearly impossible to determine what the Administration's priorities actually are. Time and again, the Congress has rejected this approach - and it's unfortunate that the Department and the President have chosen to go this route yet again, particularly when the security of our homeland is at stake.

Against that backdrop, I am particularly pleased that you, Admiral, have put together a budget that makes tough decisions in order to prioritize your core missions and the men and women who serve in the Coast Guard.

However, there is one notable deficiency I would like to mention before concluding, and that is your Capitol Investment Plan (CIP). Last year at this very same hearing I let you know how disappointed this committee was that we had not received it and yet, here we are again. For the last several years, Congress has directed the submission of the Capital Investment Plan with the submission of the President's budget and included a withholding from your headquarters' account until it is submitted. This plan is essential to understand the Coast Guard's acquisition roadmap and funding priorities which will enable Congress to make informed decisions with regards to your budget request. However, as we sit here today – we have yet to see the Coast Guard's investment plan. It is my hope that you will provide Congress with the plan in the very near future.

Admiral, thank you again for being here today. This Committee takes seriously our role in overseeing the budget and policies of the Coast Guard and we appreciate your continued engagement with us. I yield back.

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