



**TESTIMONY OF
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**ON
“POLICY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION PRIORITIES”**

**BEFORE THE
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

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Introduction

Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Underwood, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify. I am grateful for your continuing support of the United States Coast Guard. It is my privilege to appear before you today to discuss the Service’s accomplishments and priorities.

The Coast Guard is part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) team protecting America and one of the six military services and part of the joint force defending it. We maintain a persistent presence in the maritime domain—from coastal ports and inland waters to the high seas—to control, secure, and defend the U.S. border and maritime approaches from maritime threats; facilitate the flow of safe and secure commerce; respond to maritime disasters; and save lives. As a maritime Nation, America’s economic prosperity and national security are inextricably linked to the sea and our ports and inland waterways. The Coast Guard is a vital instrument of national power to ensure our Nation’s maritime dominance.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, our men and women conducted maritime interdiction operations, intercepting over 5,200 aliens and seizing more than 275,000 pounds of illicit drugs. These narcotics, valued at approximately \$3.3 billion, were prevented from reaching U.S. shores. In U.S. ports, an integral part of the border and vital to the American economy, the Coast Guard ensured the safe and secure movement of over 1.6 billion tons of goods critical to U.S. national security and economic prosperity. Our crews maintained nearly 45,000 navigational aids across the Marine Transportation System (MTS), conducted more than 9,600 patrols to protect maritime critical infrastructure, and safeguarded 4.4 million square miles of Exclusive Economic Zone, boarding 180 foreign vessels to suppress illegal fishing activities. We also deployed the Nation’s only two polar icebreakers – cutters *Polar Star* and *Healy* – to assure U.S. access to the Polar regions, protect U.S. sovereignty, and advance geopolitical, security, and economic interests. Coast Guard cutters and deployable specialized forces teams interdicted smuggling vessels in the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman carrying 170 tons of pre-cursor explosive material and, in lock step with our Department of Defense (DoD) partners, deterred malign activity against commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and across the region. Your Coast Guard saved over 4,800 lives, assisted nearly 22,000 people in distress, and responded to six catastrophic weather events.

In January of this year, under the leadership of Secretary Noem, I directed our operational commanders to immediately increase Coast Guard presence along the U.S. border and maritime approaches, starting with the southern border where the President has declared a national emergency. We surged forces, tripling the number of forward-deployed air and surface assets in that area. In the last four months alone, the Service interdicted or deterred over 860 aliens from reaching the U.S. by sea in the coastal and offshore approaches between the U.S. and Mexico in the Pacific Ocean and Gulf of America, as well as along the southeast border and approaches in the Caribbean. Concurrently, the Service exceeded its entire FY 2024 cocaine maritime interdiction numbers by mid-February of this year. By surging operational forces to the region and in close coordination with the DoD, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and other interagency partners, the Coast Guard is seeking total operational control of the U.S. southern border. In addition to supporting the national emergency at the U.S. southern border, the Coast Guard moved to control, secure, and defend our ports and waterways in both the physical and cyber domains.

Our MTS powers the national economy, ensures strategic mobility, and is part of our U.S. border. The Coast Guard also continues operations to control, secure, and defend the U.S. northern border, including on the Great Lakes, and the U.S. border and maritime approaches surrounding Alaska, Hawaii, and the U.S. territories in the Pacific and Caribbean. Our highest priority remains full operational control of the U.S. borders and maritime approaches, including U.S. ports and waterways in the physical domain and cyberspace, and we are delivering results for the American people. Critically, the Coast Guard's work also supports the Trump Administration's Drug Policy Priorities, released on April 1 of this year, including Priority 2: Secure the Global Supply Chain Against Drug Trafficking, which focuses on decreasing the global movement of illicit drugs through all shipping modalities; and Priority 3: Stop the Flow of Drugs Across Our Borders and into Our Communities, which aims to decrease the domestic availability of illicit drugs and save American lives.

The U.S. Coast Guard is facing a severe readiness crisis due to decades of underinvestment. Tasked with defending the Nation's maritime borders, countering threats like illegal migration and drug trafficking, safeguarding our ports and waterways, responding to maritime disasters, and saving lives, the Service is now stretched thin, with significant workforce shortages and aging, underfunded assets and infrastructure nearing collapse. The Coast Guard's current organizational structure and reactive posture are no longer adequate to meet current and emerging challenges. To restore its strength and fulfill its mission, the Coast Guard must undergo a fundamental transformation—not just evolve but revolutionize how it operates. With President Trump's directive to rebuild the military and secure U.S. borders, the Coast Guard will implement Force Design 2028, a bold blueprint to grow its military force, drive urgent innovation, modernize its capabilities, and ensure it remains a proactive, resilient, and dominant maritime force for the future.

Additionally, the Coast Guard will leverage President Trump's Executive Order on Restoring America's Maritime Dominance to encourage the growth of the domestic maritime industry through initiatives that will facilitate the expansion of U.S. operators' fleets, foster the growth of emerging maritime technologies, and ease the entry of American workers into the maritime industry. To this end, the Coast Guard has already taken steps to reduce barriers to entry for vessels into the U.S.-flag fleet through expanding the application of Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular (NVIC) 01-13 to a broader group of vessels seeking to flag into the United States. The Coast Guard will continue to play a major role in rebuilding the domestic maritime industry.

As we await delivery of the full FY 2026 President's Budget and look toward the opportunity of substantial organizational investments via the FY 2025 budget reconciliation process, we recognize the unprecedented support from across government to address this readiness crisis and invest in the future of the Coast Guard. These parallel and complementary investments would fundamentally renew the Service, enabling the Coast Guard to modernize its assets by completing essential acquisition programs.

We must eliminate backlogs in maintenance for our cutters, boats, aircraft, and shore infrastructure, returning our assets to peak operational readiness to deliver results and guarantee the safety of our crews. We must invest in new assets across our surface, aviation, shore, and C5I programs and modernize existing platforms with advanced enabling technologies. We must also redouble efforts to recruit and retain the highly skilled workforce necessary for our complex missions.

Cutter Fleet

The Service's top surface acquisition priority remains the Polar Security Cutter (PSC) and expanding the icebreaking fleet to meet the President's direction. Continuing to invest in heavy polar icebreakers is vital to counter foreign malign influence and protect America's sovereign interests in the polar regions. We recently received permission to enter full production of the first PSC as the functional design maturity surpassed 95%.

Since the founding of the Revenue Cutter Service in 1790, our missions have revolved around executing border security and defense missions at sea, and that operational mainstay has not changed. To continue to execute those missions in the future, the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) remains one of the Coast Guard's top acquisition priorities, and is absolutely vital to replace and enhance the capability provided by our legacy fleet of 210-foot and 270-foot Medium Endurance Cutters (MEC), which first entered service in the 1960s and 1980s, respectively.

While PSC and OPC are priorities, we cannot ignore our needs across the full surface fleet. Some of our inland tenders have been in service since the 1940s, maintaining both fixed and floating aids to navigation for the MTS – the 25,000 miles of rivers and navigable channels that serve as the lifeblood of our economy. The Waterways Commerce Cutters (WCC) will replace our legacy inland tender fleet and will feature modern designs for propulsion and crew habitability to enable men and women to serve America's heartland, where they help ensure that food, energy, consumer goods, and raw materials continue to flow safely and securely through our navigable waterways despite constantly changing conditions and water levels.

Aviation Fleet

Coast Guard aviation is more essential than ever to guarantee the territorial integrity of the United States by controlling the Nation's border and maritime approaches. The recent termination of the C-27J missionization program and stalled growth in our HC-130J program place our readiness to conduct various missions in jeopardy, including long range surveillance, disaster response, and border security operations. For our rotary wing fleet, it is imperative that we continue and accelerate transition of air stations from the short-range MH-65E to the medium-range MH-60 to ensure sustainability and increase our capability to serve our national priorities. Additionally, the Service stands ready to lead counter unmanned aerial systems (UAS) operations in the maritime domain, providing protection to critical infrastructure and Coast Guard assets.

Shore Infrastructure

Coast Guard facilities must be resilient to meet mission demands and serve as sound investments for the future. Based on the nature of our missions, most Coast Guard facilities are in areas prone to hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. The Nation's reliance on the Coast Guard as a first responder after such disasters underscores the importance of our facilities being resilient to disasters and ready for operations. Budgetary constraints often force the Coast Guard to defer or scale needed shore infrastructure recapitalization, placing that strain on our front-line personnel who find ways to operate with what we can provide. We should be updating and where possible replacing legacy military housing and support facilities, modernizing shore facilities to accept new assets, and developing robust training infrastructure to prepare our workforce for their dangerous missions. Despite the best efforts of our engineers, the Service carries substantial backlogs for both the recapitalization of infrastructure and shore asset maintenance. While we are making headway on recapitalizing our cutters and aircraft, that progress requires making tough annual trade-offs that continue to impact our shore infrastructure needs, leading to increasing safety and habitability concerns.

Cybersecurity

The Coast Guard has a unique role to protect and defend the U.S. MTS in cyberspace, as well as the physical domain as a co-Sector Risk Management Agency, Intelligence Community member, and member of the Armed Forces. Maritime cybersecurity is a critical element of our national and economic security. Not only does maritime cybersecurity facilitate the flow of trillions of dollars of commerce, it also ensures strategic mobility to supply our warfighters abroad. Our cybersecurity forces are made up of Cyber Protection Teams and a Cyber Mission Team that we use to defend our Nation. We must grow our investment in the people and technology needed to ensure the Coast Guard's ability to secure and defend cyberspace.

Conclusion

Our commitments to control, secure, and defend the Nation's borders and maritime approaches, grow every day; demand for the Service has never been higher. The investments we make now will not only address immediate readiness concerns but will also rebuild a stronger, more capable and resilient Coast Guard for decades to come. Since 1790, the American people have depended on our missions and the unique value the Coast Guard provides to assure our national security and economic prosperity. If there is one thing our distinguished Service history in both peace and in war shows, it is this: with a ready Coast Guard crew there is nothing we cannot accomplish. I have certain hope for the future of our Service. We must act now to ensure the Coast Guard receives the resources necessary to fulfill our vital missions and protect the American people. Thank you for your enduring support. *Semper Paratus.*