

Oral Statement
Director Holly Haverstick
3/23/2023
“United States Engagement in the Indo-Pacific” Hearing
Before House Foreign Affairs Committee Indo-Pacific (H.FAC-IP) Subcommittee
The following may not reflect the precise opening statement.

Good morning Madam Chairwoman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. I am honored to appear before you today to discuss the Coast Guard’s enduring efforts to promote a free, open, and resilient Indo-Pacific in support of the United States’ National Indo-Pacific Strategy.

The Coast Guard is a multi-mission, maritime service responsible for the safety, security, and stewardship on waters and vessels subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. At all times, a branch of the Armed Forces and a law enforcement agency, the Coast Guard operates on all seven continents and throughout the homeland, serving a nation whose economic prosperity and national security are inextricably linked to vast maritime interests. The Coast Guard protects, defends, and regulates more than 100,000 miles of U.S. coastline and inland waterways and safeguards the world’s largest Exclusive Economic Zone, encompassing 4.5 million square miles of ocean - which includes 1.3 million square miles within the Indo-Pacific.

Strong global maritime governance includes both defense and law enforcement missions - and is closely connected with the capabilities, actions, and intentions of other nations further from our shores, on the High Seas, and within the waters of our partners. This is especially true in the Indo-Pacific region where the Coast Guard plays a unique role. In the Indo-Pacific, Coast Guard missions focus on issues that directly support and advance our regional partners’ efforts to protect fish stocks, ensure safety of life at sea, support environmental response, and provide disaster relief.

The Coast Guard has operated in the Indo-Pacific for over 150 years; an enduring role that is complementary to Department of Defense missions. The Service’s unique authorities and capabilities bridge gaps and create opportunities to enhance partner nations while ensuring prosperity for our nation. Specifically, the Coast Guard is focused on three lines of effort in the Indo-Pacific: promoting maritime governance; establishing persistent U.S. presence; and conducting meaningful engagements in the region.

To accomplish these goals, the Coast Guard employs a modest expeditionary footprint, and closely partners with the Department of State and Department of Defense. Around the globe, Coast Guard operations protect our maritime borders and sovereignty, and strengthen partner nations’ ability to protect their own sovereign rights and support universal rules based maritime governance. The Coast Guard’s regional activities bolster partner operational capabilities and strengthen legal foundations that underpin many multi-lateral regional coordinating mechanisms among the Pacific Island nations for fisheries management, search and rescue, and fisheries law enforcement. These important activities

promote a free and open Indo-Pacific at a time when the region is experiencing increased coercive activities including illegal overfishing, transnational organized crime, and corruption which result in economic, governance, and subsistence impacts.

The Coast Guard values strong partnerships with Pacific Island Nations. The Service works closely to help assess their needs and develop tailored strategies that avoid a “one size fits all” approach to engagement. For example, a nation may be ready for advanced law enforcement training, another may benefit more from outboard engine maintenance training. The Coast Guard adapts efforts to meet individual needs, establishing strong foundations on which to build lasting relationships - solidifying the United States as a trusted partner.

The result of the Service’s positive, global engagements are demonstrated through more than 60 multi and bi-lateral agreements that the Coast Guard, combined with partner agencies, have worked hard both establish and maintain. These agreements establish the framework for mutual cooperation and provide key insight into widespread geo-strategic issues affecting our partner’s national security and U.S. national security.

Within the spectrum of Strategic Power competition below the level of armed conflict, the Coast Guard offers specialized operational capabilities and unique authorities to support U.S. national security objectives. The Coast Guard succeeds in the space between the Department of State’s diplomacy and Department of Defense force. The Service is well-positioned working with partners to establish capabilities, presence, and maritime governance. These strong international efforts contribute to promote peace, security, and prosperity within the Indo-Pacific region.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and for the continued support for your Coast Guard. I look forward to answering your questions.