

**Statement of  
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**Projecting Presence and Power in the Indo-Pacific: An  
Examination of The United States Coast Guard's  
Contributions to Maritime Security**

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Chairman Gimenez, Ranking Member Thanedar, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the U.S. Coast Guard's critical role in support of the INDOPACOM mission. On behalf of Admiral Aquilino, I would like to thank you for your continuous support to the men and women of INDOPACOM and their families. Your support is instrumental to our ability to accomplish our missions every day.

The Indo-Pacific is the most consequential region of the world, encompassing more than half the world's population, the busiest maritime trade routes, and key allies and partners. It is also the epicenter for great power competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Ensuring stability and security in the Indo-Pacific is not only vital for maintaining regional peace but also for global commerce and safeguarding American interests. The U.S. Coast Guard and INDOPACOM work together every day to prevent conflict in this region.

INDOPACOM is dedicated to preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific, where nations can thrive economically and maintain their sovereignty without external coercion. Foundational to our approach is a campaign of integrated deterrence, in which we use our military tools in concert with all instruments of national power to convince potential aggressors that they cannot achieve their objectives through force. U.S. forces must be postured and operating in the right places, with the right capabilities, at the right times, and executing the right missions alongside like-minded allies and partners to deliver integrated deterrence, and, if deterrence fails, prevail in conflict.

The Indo-Pacific region has many nations with a military that performs Coast Guard duties or law enforcement agencies in place of militaries. The U.S. Coast Guard's dual role as both a law enforcement agency and a military service makes it an ideal tool for capacity building and outreach to these nations. The Coast Guard's collaboration with these allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific fosters regional cooperation and strengthens the U.S. network of like-minded nations.

The U.S. Coast Guard's versatility, as well as unique capabilities and authorities, make it well-suited to address a wide range of challenges in the region, many of which are high priorities to our allies and partners – including maritime security, law enforcement, and environmental protection – in support of the INDOPACOM mission. Simply put, the Coast Guard is frequently

the right force, in the right place, at the right time, with the right capabilities. I have seen firsthand the utility of the Coast Guard during a recent visit to Oceania where our partners expressed an insatiable appetite for increased presence, activities, and training with the U.S. Coast Guard.

As you know, presence matters and the Coast Guard's presence in the Indo-Pacific sends a strong message that the United States is committed to upholding the rules-based international order. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated or IUU fishing is a major threat to marine resources and the economies of many of our partners in the Indo-Pacific. The Coast Guard works closely with our allies and partners to combat IUU fishing through surveillance, enforcement, and building partner capacity. This allows the Coast Guard to help enforce and maintain international law and support partner nation sovereignty. This is especially critical in the Indo-Pacific, where many distant water fishing fleets are common and the Pacific Island Countries often lack the capacity to detect and interdict these vessels on their own.

Similarly, bilateral law enforcement agreements allow for the exchange of ship riders between the United States and partner nations, permitting partner law enforcement personnel to embark on Coast Guard vessels and aircraft to enforce their laws, and vice versa. These agreements allow the Coast Guard to work more effectively with partners in the region to enforce applicable national laws, combat illegal activity on the high seas and in waters under the jurisdiction of our partners, and build maritime law enforcement capacity in those partner nations.

Additionally, the Coast Guard's capabilities and responsibility for environmental protection and disaster response aligns with ally and partner priorities. Many allies and partners in the region consider climate change to be the single greatest threat to their livelihoods, security, and well-being. By enforcing environmental regulations and responding to pollution incidents and natural disasters, the Coast Guard helps to preserve the delicate marine ecosystems of many Indo-Pacific nations and contributes to the sustainable development of the region, which is essential for long-term stability.

A whole of government strategy is essential to succeed in our Indo-Pacific Strategy, and in our competition with the PRC. The Coast Guard's contributions to the INDOPACOM are an integral part of this effort. Its versatility, cooperative relationship with allies and partners, and

ability to promote maritime security and the rules-based order make it an invaluable asset in the region. Indo-Pacific Command supports strong and robust funding and resourcing for the Coast Guard to ensure it can continue, and where possible grow, its valuable contributions to peace and security throughout the Indo-Pacific.

Finally, as we navigate the complex challenges of the Indo-Pacific, let us not forget the steadfast service of the Coast Guard personnel who work to ensure that the seas remain safe, secure, and open for all. Their dedication is a testament to the United States' enduring commitment to a prosperous and peaceful Indo-Pacific for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and I look forward to your questions.