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TESTIMONY OF VICE ADMIRAL PETER V. NEFFENGER DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS

ON "U.S. COAST GUARD MISSION BALANCE"

BEFORE THE HOUSE COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE

FEBRUARY 26, 2013

Introduction

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on U.S. Coast Guard mission balance and allocation of operational resources. The primary mission of the United States Coast Guard is to ensure the safety, security and environmental stewardship of our Nation's waters: we protect those on the sea, we protect the Nation from threats delivered by the sea, and we protect the sea itself. The world today is globalized and dynamic characterized by rapid advances in technology, more efficient markets, and increasing information-sharing. The Coast Guard's strategic approach balances the execution of our eleven missions to maintain our focus on the Nation's highest risks in the maritime domain.

The United States faces a challenging array of possible maritime risks to people, cargo, conveyances and the environment. The ports, coastal areas and waterways of the United States are vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters in addition to other more common hazards. Transnational criminal organizations use maritime means for illicit movements of people and contraband such as cocaine and marijuana. We remain watchful for signs of terrorist interest in exploiting the maritime domain to attack our homeland. U.S. maritime regions continue to experience competition for a host of uses including, but not limited to, offshore energy production, fisheries, recreation, and transportation. Looking ahead, the U.S. Arctic will open up to similar human activity. These challenges demand effective maritime governance: The Coast Guard's authorities, capabilities, partnerships and competencies are important components of America's "whole of government" approach to maritime governance and national security.

Authority and Responsibility to Safeguard U.S. Maritime Interests

The Coast Guard is at all times an armed service, a federal law enforcement agency and a member of the Intelligence Community charged with significant responsibilities in U.S. waters. Our complementary and extensive suite of authorities enables the Coast Guard to effectively and efficiently govern U.S. waters through regulation, monitoring, enforcement and operations. Coast Guard authorities enable and shape our efforts to enforce U.S. law in the maritime domain, facilitate safe commerce and promote

environmental stewardship. Day to day, Coast Guard operations include not only search and rescue, but also escorting vessels carrying dangerous cargoes, interdicting drug and migrant smugglers, patrolling ports and waterways, enforcing fisheries laws, responding to oil and hazardous material spills, maintaining aids to navigation, screening commercial ships and crews entering U.S. ports, inspecting U.S. flagged vessels, examining cargo containers, investigating marine accidents, training international partners, credentialing merchant mariners, and supporting Overseas Contingency Operations.

Safeguarding U.S. Maritime Interests

Prevention, Response and Partnership

The Coast Guard exercises authorities strategically through a core concept of "Prevent" and "Respond." Through this approach, the Coast Guard seeks to deter and interdict potentially dangerous or illicit maritime activities. If undesirable or unlawful events do happen – whether deliberate or accidental – our forces respond rapidly and effectively mitigate the incident and minimize impacts. Across the nation, the Coast Guard is on watch in our ports, along our coasts and far offshore with an agile mix of aircraft, cutters and small boats crewed by highly trained, proficient, and motivated Coast Guard men and women.

Partnerships complement the Prevent-Respond concept of operations. We leverage federal, state, local, tribal and non-governmental partnerships to improve operational effectiveness. As an example, the Coast Guard recently joined other DHS components (U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement) as well as state and local entities in an intensive, multi-faceted effort to reduce the level of drug-related violence that is plaguing Puerto Rico. This initiative will substantially increase the number of DHS-led operations to interdict illicit drugs in and around Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This alliance of federal, state and local partners has also expanded efforts to curb the flow of firearms from the United States mainland to Puerto Rico.

To improve Search and Rescue response, the Coast Guard leverages extensive partnerships with state and local government emergency service agencies, and international agreements, such as the Arctic SAR Agreement, to organize and dispatch front-line assets in U.S and international waters spanning the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans as well as the Gulf of Mexico. As part of the Joint Force, the Coast Guard partners with the Department of Defense to support the National Military Strategy and other over-arching guidance. Supporting activities include National Capitol Region Air Defense, Rotary-Wing-Air Intercept, Maritime Operational Threat Response, and theater security cooperation among others.

Integrated, Layered Operations

The Coast Guard implements the Prevent-Respond strategic concept in an integrated and layered manner throughout U.S. waters. Much of this work is accomplished by Coast Guard Sectors which administer our capabilities, authorities and partnerships on the front lines in our ports and along our coasts. For example, Coast Guard Sector Commanders have Captain of the Port authority to enforce port safety, security and marine environmental protection regulations; Officer-in-Charge of Marine Inspection authority for regulation of commercial ships and mariners; Federal On-Scene Coordinator authority over oil and hazardous material spill response; Search and Rescue Mission Coordinator authority over search and rescue operations; and Federal Maritime Security Coordinator authority to coordinate Area Maritime Security Committees.

Coast Guard shore-based, maritime patrol and deployable specialized forces are positioned in the offshore, coastal and inland maritime environments. These forces reduce the risk of security incidents by identifying and addressing vulnerabilities; and then detecting, interdicting and preventing threats before they reach U.S. coasts. Coast Guard forces are also positioned to respond and assist with recovery operations for any incidents that may occur.

The framework of prevention, response, partnership and integrated, layered operations helps to effectively govern the U.S. maritime domain and reduce risk. Each region and force structure requires appropriate authorities, capabilities, competencies and partnerships for mission success.

Focusing Presence

U.S. sovereign maritime territory covers over 3.4 million nautical square miles, 95,000 miles of coastline, 12,000 miles of navigable waters, 1,500 miles of international maritime border with Canada, and 361 ports. The Coast Guard focuses capability and capacity to support national priorities within this domain. Front-line forces can be postured to surge or provide persistent presence as necessary. Coast Guard forces provide persistent presence in the transit zones in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific to prevent narcotics smuggling and trafficking in persons; in selected Exclusive Economic Zones to protect fish stocks; and in our Nation's ports to help ensure the safety and security of the global supply chain. We also surge our capability and capacity to respond to major disasters. Recent examples include Hurricane Sandy, the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and dangerously low water on the inland rivers.

Strategic allocation of resources, including specific asset capabilities and capacities, is central to the Coast Guard's ability to operate in dynamic, vast and diverse areas of responsibility. Through the support of the Administration and the Congress, the Coast Guard is making important strides toward recapitalizing air and surface capability and capacity essential to safeguarding U.S. security and prosperity. Our new assets, including National Security Cutters, Response Boats-Medium, Fast Response Cutters, Ocean Sentry maritime patrol aircraft and the Rescue 21 communications system, are replacing legacy assets and improving the Coast Guard's ability to operate in the offshore, coastal and inland domains with improved speed, coverage, reliability, and safety.

The following diagram illustrates how Prevent-Respond is administered from its highest level as a strategic construct; through our core functions of "regulate," "monitor," "enforce" and "operate;"

enabled by "authorities," "partnerships" and "presence;" and administered on the front lines through an array of people and assets:

Mission Execution

Front-line operations are guided by the Prevent-Respond concept of maritime governance, as well as the formal "Principles of Coast Guard Operations." These principles include: Clear Objective; Effective Presence; Unity of Effort; On-Scene Initiative and Authority; Flexibility; Managed Risk and Restraint. These principles guide all Coast Guard men and women in the administration of diverse mission requirements and allocation of resources.

At all times the Coast Guard is an armed service that leverages its command authority and military discipline to successfully organize and conduct operations. Commanders, Commanding Officers and Officers-in-Charge must demonstrate courage, ethics, leadership, judgment and situational awareness to meet their many responsibilities. Biased towards action and equipped with the Prevent-Respond concept of operations, our field commanders apply their resources to the highest risks and we hold them accountable to the highest standards.

Conclusion

In conclusion, mission balance is not an end state in and of itself. It emerges from a strategy that leverages Coast Guard authorities, capabilities and competencies to safeguard national security, economic growth and the environment. The Coast Guard's longstanding multi-mission approach delivers the most responsive, cost-effective services to the American public.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and for your continued support of the U.S. Coast Guard. I look forward to your questions.