



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Peter A. DeFazio  
Chair  
Katherine W. Dedrick  
Staff Director

Sam Graves  
Ranking Member  
Paul J. Sass  
Republican Staff Director

October 15, 2021

**SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER**

**TO:** Members, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation  
**FROM:** Staff, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation  
**RE:** Hearing on “Achieving Mission Balance: Positioning the Coast Guard for the Future”

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**PURPOSE**

The Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation will hold a hearing on Wednesday, October 20, 2021, at 10:00 a.m. EDT in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building and via Zoom to examine how the U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard or Service) allocates hours and resources among its multiple statutory missions, as well as how the Service measures mission performance. The Subcommittee will hear testimony from the U.S. Coast Guard.

**BACKGROUND**

**Coast Guard**

The Coast Guard was established on January 28, 1915, through the consolidation of the Revenue Cutter Service (established in 1790) and the Lifesaving Service (established in 1848). The Coast Guard later assumed the duties of three other agencies: the Lighthouse Service (established in 1789), the Steamboat Inspection Service (established in 1838), and the Bureau of Navigation (established in 1884).

Under Section 102 of Title 14, United States Code, the Coast Guard has primary responsibility to enforce or assist in the enforcement of all applicable federal laws on, under, and over the high seas and waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States; to ensure the safety of life and property at sea; to carry out domestic and international icebreaking activities; and, as one of the six armed forces of the United States, to maintain defense readiness to operate as a specialized service in the Navy upon the declaration of war or upon the president’s direction.

The Coast Guard operates a fleet of diverse assets. Vessels under 65 feet in length are classified as boats or small boats and usually operate near shore and on inland waterways. The Coast

Guard operates roughly 1,602 boats, ranging from 12 to 64 feet in length.<sup>1</sup> A “cutter” is any Coast Guard vessel 65 feet in length or greater. The Coast Guard has 259 cutters, including harbor tugs, icebreakers, buoy tenders, construction tenders, and patrol cutters.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the Coast Guard maintains an inventory of roughly 200 fixed and rotary wing aircraft.<sup>3</sup> The Service includes over 40,000 active-duty military members, 6,200 reservists, and 8,700 civilian employees who support air/surface fleets and landside operations.<sup>4</sup>

The Coast Guard is organized geographically into districts and sectors, and divided into two areas (i.e., Atlantic and Pacific), each of which is commanded by a vice admiral. There are a total of nine districts under these two areas. The Coast Guard has 24 air stations and 37 sectors that operate under the districts, each of which is typically commanded by a captain. Attached to sectors are small boat stations, of which the Coast Guard has 280.

### *Missions*

Pursuant to section 102 of title 14, United States Code, the Coast Guard is responsible for carrying out seven primary duties, which the Service divides into 11 missions:

- 1) **Marine Safety:** Enforce laws that prevent death, injury, and property loss in the marine environment.
- 2) **Marine Environmental Protection:** Enforce laws which deter the introduction of invasive species into the maritime environment, stop unauthorized ocean dumping, and prevent oil and chemical spills.
- 3) **Search and Rescue:** Search for, and provide aid to, individuals in distress or imminent danger. In 2020, the Coast Guard responded to over 16,845 search and rescue cases and saved over 4,286 lives.<sup>5</sup>
- 4) **Aids to Navigation:** Mitigate the risk to sea navigation by providing and maintaining more than 45,288 buoys, beacons, lights, and other aids to mark channels and denote hazards.<sup>6</sup>
- 5) **Living Marine Resources:** Enforce laws governing the conservation, management, and recovery of living marine resources, marine protected species, and national marine sanctuaries and monuments.
- 6) **Ice Operations:** The Coast Guard is the only Federal agency directed to operate and maintain icebreaking resources for the United States. This includes establishing and

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Coast Guard. *Coast Guard Operational Assets*. <https://www.uscg.mil/About/Assets/> Accessed on October 8, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Coast Guard. *Workforce*. <https://www.uscg.mil/About/Workforce/> Accessed October 13, 2021.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Coast Guard. *Posture Statement 2022 Budget Overview*. <https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/2022/FY22-USCG-Posture-Statement-and-Budget-Overview.pdf?ver=oJCABY5X54a2xhDoxM6UOg%3d%3d> Accessed on October 8, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

maintaining tracks for critical waterways, assisting and escorting vessels beset or stranded in ice, and removing navigational hazards created by ice in navigable waterways.

- 7) **Ports, Waterway, and Coastal Security (PWCS):** Ensure the security of waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States and the waterways, ports, along with intermodal landside connections that comprise the Marine Transportation System (MTS) and protect those who live or work on the water, or who use the maritime environment for recreation.
- 8) **Drug Interdiction:** Stem the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. In 2020, the Coast Guard interdicted over 318,340 pounds of cocaine and 70,371 pounds of marijuana, with an approximate wholesale value of \$5.6 billion.<sup>7</sup>
- 9) **Migrant Interdiction:** Stem the flow via maritime routes of undocumented migration and human smuggling activities.
- 10) **Defense Readiness:** The Coast Guard maintains the training and capability necessary to immediately integrate with Department of Defense forces in both peacetime operations and during times of war.
- 11) **Other Law Enforcement:** Enforcement of international treaties, including the prevention of illegal fishing in international waters and the dumping of plastics and other marine debris.

Section 888 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 468) groups the Coast Guard’s 11 missions into “Non-Homeland Security” and “Homeland Security” missions and requires the Service to maintain all of its authorities, functions, and capabilities. It also prohibits the Secretary of Homeland Security from reducing “substantially or significantly... the missions of the Coast Guard or the Coast Guard’s capability to perform these missions.”

<b>Non-Homeland Security Missions</b>	<b>Homeland Security Missions</b>
Marine Safety	Ports, Waterways, and Coastal Security
Marine Environmental Protection	Drug Interdiction
Search and Rescue	Migrant Interdiction
Aids-to-Navigation	Defense Readiness
Living Marine Resources	Other Law Enforcement
Ice Operations	

*Table 1: Non-Homeland Security Missions vs. Homeland Security Missions. Taken from Section 888 of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (6 U.S.C. 468).*

These missions are managed within six mission programs comprising the Coast Guard’s strategic mission management construct, which is based on the prevention and response architecture. The six Coast Guard mission programs and their Homeland Security Act mission responsibilities are listed in the table below.

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

U.S. COAST GUARD MISSION PROGRAMS	HOMELAND SECURITY ACT MISSIONS
Maritime Prevention	Ports, Waterways & Coastal Security — <i>Prevention Activities</i> (PWCS-P)
	Marine Safety (MS)
	Marine Environmental Protection — <i>Prevention Activities</i> (MEP)
Marine Transportation System Management	Aids to Navigation (ATON)
	Ice Operations (ICE)
Maritime Security Operations	Ports, Waterways & Coastal Security — <i>Response Activities</i> (PWCS-R)
Maritime Law Enforcement	Migrant Interdiction (MIGRANT)
	Drug Interdiction (DRUG)
	Living Marine Resources (LMR)
	Other Law Enforcement (OLE)
Maritime Response	Search and Rescue (SAR)
	Marine Environmental Protection — <i>Response Activities</i> (MER)
Defense Operations	Defense Readiness (DR)

Table 2: Coast Guard Mission programs. [https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/FY\\_2020\\_USCG\\_APR\\_Final-V3-dtd-3-16-2021.pdf?ver=2021-03-15-113137-970](https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/FY_2020_USCG_APR_Final-V3-dtd-3-16-2021.pdf?ver=2021-03-15-113137-970) page 1

## Tracking Mission Balance and Performance

To track Coast Guard mission balance and performance in each fiscal year (FY), three metrics are primarily used: funding per mission, resource hours per mission, and a set of performance measures developed by the Coast Guard pursuant to Section 1115 of the title 31, United States Code, federal government and agency performance plans.

### *Funding per Mission*

The Coast Guard reports funds spent on each of its statutory missions in its annual budget request to Congress. In FY 2021, the Service spent approximately the same percentage of its funding for non-homeland security missions (48.9 percent) as homeland security missions (51.1 percent).<sup>8</sup> From 2001 to 2011, the largest percentage of funding has been dedicated to the ports, waterways, and coastal security (PWCS) mission but in recent years, the funding for the drug interdiction mission has garnered more funding. In FY 2021, 19.2 percent of funds were spent on the drug interdiction mission.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

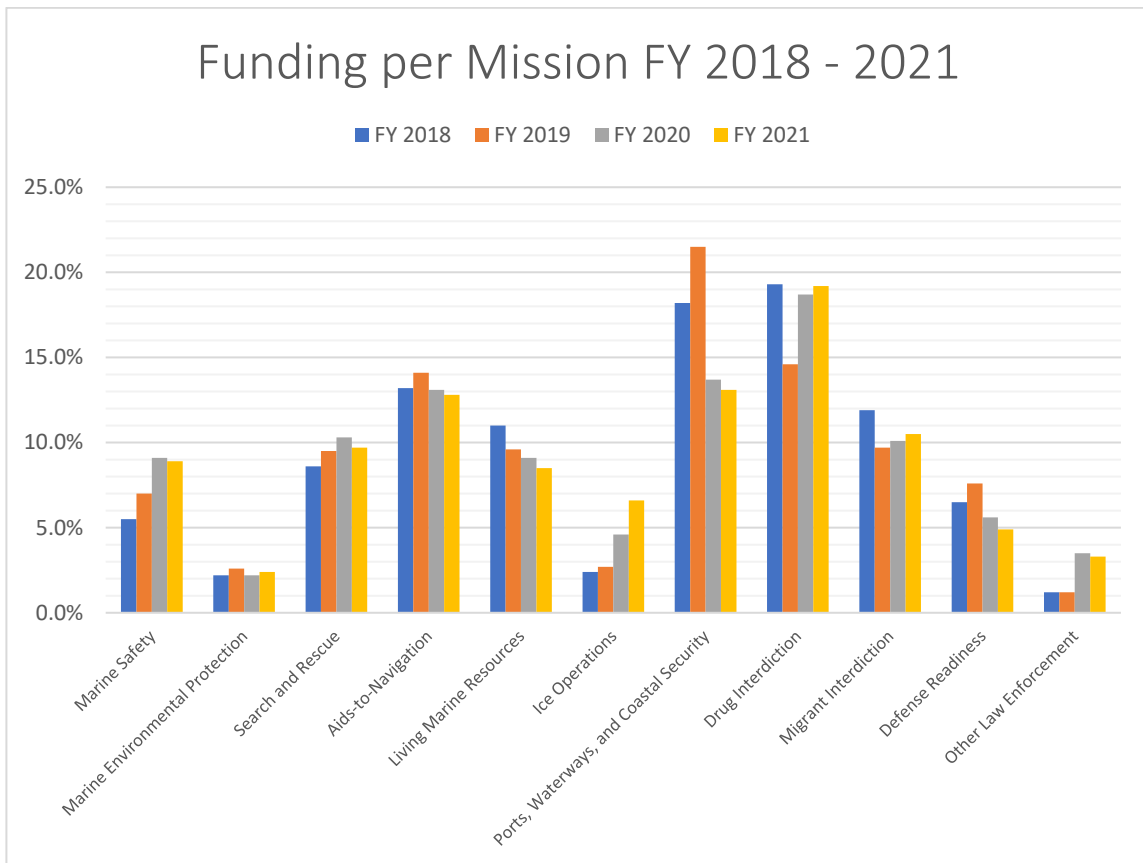


Figure 1: Funding Per Mission FY 2018 – 2021. Data from the Coast Guard Posture Statement Budget Overview FY 2019, Coast Guard Posture Statement Budget Overview FY 2020, Coast Guard Posture Statement Budget Overview FY 2021, and Coast Guard Posture Statement Budget Overview FY 2022. <https://www.uscg.mil/Budget/Archive/>

### Resource Hours Per Mission

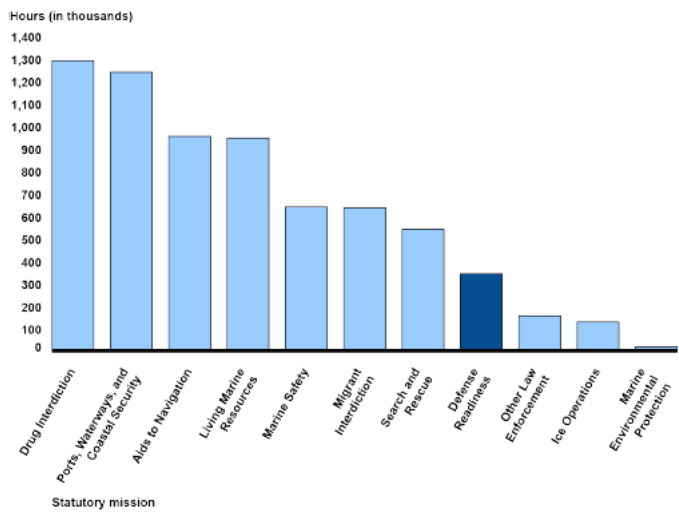
Resource hours are the number of flight hours (for aircraft) and underway hours (for boats and cutters) used to carry out a specific mission. These resource hours are tracked internally by the Coast Guard. In FY 2020, the Coast Guard spent 51.5 percent of resource hours on homeland security missions, versus 48.5 percent for non-homeland security missions.<sup>10</sup> Since FY 2011, the largest percentage of resource hours has been dedicated to the drug interdiction mission.<sup>11</sup> Numerical targets such as resource hours and funding for a particular mission are not adequate tools to make conclusions concerning mission balance given that multiple missions are often performed during a single operation or use of an asset.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Data provided by the U.S. Government Accountability Office that was obtained from the Coast Guard for use in the report “Coast Guard: Information on Defense Readiness Mission Deployments, Expenses, and Funding”

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Coast Guard: Information on Defense Readiness Mission Deployments, Expenses, and Funding*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-104741.pdf> September 15, 2021

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Coast Guard: Actions Needed to Improve Strategic Allocation of Assets and Determine Workforce Requirements* <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-16-379> May 2016.

**Figure 2: Coast Guard Vessel and Aircraft Operational Hours Expended by Statutory Mission, Fiscal Years 2011 through 2020**



Source: GAO analysis of Coast Guard data. | GAO-21-104741

*Figure 1: Coast Guard Vessel and Operations Hours Expended by Statutory Mission, Fiscal Years 2011 through 2020.*  
<https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-104741.pdf>

### Performance Measures

Each year, the Coast Guard undertakes a Standard Operational Planning Process (SOPP). As part of the SOPP, Coast Guard headquarters issues an annual Strategic Planning Direction (SPD), which is the primary mechanism for allocating resources and providing strategic direction to operational commanders at the area, district, and sector levels. To determine and plan for how assets are allocated, Coast Guard headquarters relies on mission priorities, data on historical and current-year mission performance, and operational and intelligence assessments. As part of the planning process, field commands are allocated resource hours by asset type to be used for meeting strategic commitments and executing the 11 statutory missions.

The SPD is annually disseminated to the two Area Commands that distribute their own Operational Planning Directions (OPD) through their command levels, with each district command developing its own plan to cover its area of responsibility (AOR). Area commanders develop a plan known as the Area Operational Planning Direction and district commanders develop a district-level OPD. After assets are deployed, personnel at the field units enter the assets’ actual resource hours used by mission into data systems. The asset resource hour data are consolidated on a quarterly basis as part of Operational Performance Assessment Reports. The historical and current-year operational data from these reports, as well as Planning Assessments, are communicated back to Coast Guard headquarters as part of the information used to develop the SPD for the following year.

The Coast Guard maintains the SPD, and the Performance Measure Summary is the best method it currently has to properly assign and balance resources by mission and measure mission performance. In a 2016 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report titled *Coast Guard: Actions Needed to Improve Strategic Allocation of Assets and Determine Workforce Requirements*,<sup>13</sup> GAO found the Coast Guard SPD often allocates more mission hours to assets than are actually used. They also found that the Coast Guard does not have a systematic process for prioritizing the most important

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

manpower requirements analyses, which results in a lack of assurances that the highest priority missions are fully supported with the appropriate number of qualified personnel. As a result, the GAO provided three recommendations to the Service with which DHS has agreed. As of October 2021, the Coast Guard has failed to act on all three recommendations.<sup>14</sup>

These recommendations were:

- *To improve transparency in allocating its limited resources, and to help ensure that its resource allocation decisions are the most effective ones for fulfilling its missions given existing risks, the Commandant of the Coast Guard should document how the risk assessments conducted were used to inform and support its annual asset allocation decisions.*
- *To ensure that high priority mission activities are fully supported with the appropriate number of staff possessing the requisite mix of skills and abilities, the Commandant of the Coast Guard should develop a systematic process that prioritizes manpower requirements analyses for units that are the most critical for achieving mission needs.*
- *To improve the strategic allocation of assets, the Commandant of the Coast Guard should incorporate field unit input, such as information on assets' actual performance from Operational Performance Assessment Reports and Planning Assessments, to inform more realistic asset allocation decisions—in addition to asset performance capacities currently used—in the annual Strategic Planning Directions to more effectively communicate strategic intent to field units.*

## **Variables Impacting Mission Balance and Performance**

Beyond allocation of resources and strategic planning, many variables can impact Coast Guard mission balance and performance.

### *Asset Availability*

The age of Coast Guard vessels and aircraft coupled with an increased tempo of operations has led to increased rates of failure among the assets' parts and major systems. These factors, in turn, led to increased scheduled and unscheduled maintenance costs and reduced patrol hours which have negatively impacted operational readiness and mission performance. In 2004, the Coast Guard began its current fleet recapitalization.<sup>15</sup> As of October 2021, the Coast Guard is set to deliver the 45<sup>th</sup> Fast Response Cutter; deliver the ninth National Security Cutter, continue construction of the first Offshore Patrol Cutter and the first Polar Security Cutter; and set up the acquisition program office for the Great Lakes Icebreaker.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> Congressional Research Service. *Coast Guard Cutter Procurement: Background and Issues for Congress*. <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/weapons/R42567.pdf> Updated September 15, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Department of Homeland Security. *Coast Guard Fiscal Year 2022 Congressional Justification*. [https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/2022/FY2022\\_Congressional\\_Justification.pdf?ver=YXeBcfwpAI AE7RuU94zRJg%3d%3d](https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/2022/FY2022_Congressional_Justification.pdf?ver=YXeBcfwpAI AE7RuU94zRJg%3d%3d)

Despite this recapitalization, the Service operates a fleet of aging aircraft and vessels of which the oldest is the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter (USCGC) Smilax at 77 years old.<sup>17</sup> The GAO reported that the total number of resource hours in FY 2020 dropped to 623,557 from 771,821 hours in FY 2012, a decline of approximately eight percent.<sup>18</sup> The Coast Guard attributes some of this decline to the decreased availability of cutters and aircraft due to increased rates of asset failures, an example of which being an engine fire onboard the USCGC Healy, the only medium icebreaker the Coast Guard operates in the Arctic, which took the vessel out of commission for much of 2020.<sup>19</sup>

### *Emergencies*

The Coast Guard responds to a wide range of natural and man-made disasters in the United States and abroad. On several occasions over the last decade, the Service surged its personnel and assets from locations all over the United States to respond to national and international emergencies. From 2007-2020, the U.S. Coast Guard conducted 23 major surge operations—high-intensity, short-notice emergency responses to catastrophic events, like hurricanes or oil spills. During these surges, the Coast Guard deployed varying numbers and types of personnel, aircraft, and vessels based on event severity and duration.<sup>20</sup>

Each time the Coast Guard surges assets and personnel to respond to an emergency, it takes those resources away from a programmed mission. As a result, funding and resource hours are potentially reduced and performance suffers for certain missions. In September of 2021, the GAO completed a study on Coast Guard surge operation’s impacts to mission performance.<sup>21</sup> Overall the GAO was not able to determine impacts to mission performance as a result of surge operations due to multiple factors beyond surge operations, such as personnel transfers, that can also affect mission activities but recommended the Coast Guard establish a more systematic process for ensuring that recommended actions are tracked, updated, and resolved in line with Coast Guard goals to assist in monitoring mission performance and effects of surge operations.<sup>22</sup>

### *Workforce Needs*

The Coast Guard relies on its service members, reservists, and civilian workforce to carry out each of its 11 missions. In April 2018, the Coast Guard reported to Congress that it was operating below the workforce necessary to meet its mission needs.<sup>23</sup> In a follow up report to these findings, the GAO found that the Service does not have a complete picture of the workforce needed for meeting its mission demands and lacks proper analyses capabilities for most of its unit types.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Coast Guard News. *Coast Guard holds commemoration ceremony for Queen of the Fleet*. <https://coastguardnews.com/coast-guard-holds-commemoration-ceremony-for-queen-of-the-fleet/2019/11/01/> November 1, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Data provided by GAO that was obtained from the Coast Guard for use in the report “*Coast Guard: Information on Defense Readiness Mission Deployments, Expenses, and Funding*”

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Coast Guard. *Heavy metal: It took a crane, a barge and a 23-year-old motor, but Healy will return to the Arctic*. <https://www.mycg.uscg.mil/News/Article/2437415/heavy-metal-it-took-a-crane-a-barge-and-a-23-year-old-motor-but-healy-will-retu/> December 7, 2020.

<sup>20</sup> GAO. *COAST GUARD A More Systematic Process to Resolve Recommended Actions Could Enhance Future Surge Operations*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-584.pdf> September 2021.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Coast Guard. *A Coast Guard for the Twenty-First Century: The Past, Present, and Future of Coast Guard Modernization*. September 18, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> GAO. *Coast Guard: Actions Needed to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Organizational Changes and Determine Workforce Needs*. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-223.pdf> February 2020.



Although the Coast Guard has informed Congress that it needs to increase its workforce, it has only assessed a small portion of its workforce needs. Its preferred tool for assessing workforce needs is its manpower requirements determination process, which includes manpower requirements analyses (MRA) and is completed with a manpower requirements determination (MRD). Coast Guard guidance states that MRAs are to be updated every five years, and according to its April 2018 Manpower Requirements Plan, the Coast Guard's goal is to complete MRDs for all of its 58,000 personnel and 158 unit types. However, the Coast Guard had completed MRAs for 13 percent of its workforce and MRDs for two percent over the past five calendar years.<sup>25</sup>

The Coast Guard is dependent upon its workforce and assets to complete its duties and missions. As a small service, the Coast Guard stretches its available resources in order to perform the responsibilities given to them by Congress and keep the waterways and nation secure. Without proper strategic planning and analysis, true mission balance cannot be achieved.

#### **WITNESS LIST**

Vice Admiral Scott A. Buschman  
*Deputy Commandant for Operations*  
*United States Coast Guard*

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<sup>25</sup> *Id.*