

Congressman J. Luis Correa (CA-46)
Statement before the House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security Appropriation
Member Day Hearing on
Homeland Security and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for FY2021
Wednesday, February 26, 2020

Thank you, Chairwoman Roybal-Allard, Ranking Member Fleischmann, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee for the opportunity to testify about national security items that I believe the Subcommittee on Homeland Security Appropriations should address in the Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations bill.

As Chairman of the Transportation and Maritime Security Subcommittee of the Homeland Security Committee, I have led multiple hearings to discuss our homeland security priorities and interests in the Arctic. I have expressed concern about the aggressive actions of nations such as Russia, who has increased its footprint within the Arctic in recent years. Currently, Russia has a large icebreaker fleet that consists of over 50 icebreakers. In comparison, the U.S. Coast Guard currently operates two aging polar icebreakers – a heavy polar icebreaker commissioned in 1976 and a medium polar icebreaker commission in 2000. The Coast Guard’s limited number of icebreakers affects its ability to fulfill its missions in the Arctic.

According to Admiral Charles Ray, Coast Guard Vice Commandant, who testified at a Transportation and Maritime Security Subcommittee hearing earlier this month, our ability to patrol the Arctic depends on the presence of icebreakers in the region. The Coast Guard has said that it will need six polar security cutters to carry out its Arctic missions. We need to continue these investments and provide increased funding for the Coast Guard’s Procurement, Construction, and Improvement account for the construction of new, modern icebreakers.

Next, I would like to turn to an issue of importance to my district: the National Network of Fusion Centers, which serves a vital role in the information sharing of criminal and terrorist threats. The National Network consists of 79 state-owned and operated centers, including the Orange County Intelligence Assessment Center.

Established in 2007, OCIAC is nationally recognized, having been named the National Fusion Center of the Year in 2018. Led by the Orange County Sheriff’s Department, OCIAC consists of municipal police agencies, fire agencies and federal law enforcement. Each year, the

OCIAC fields over 1,000 tips or leads on potential threats, which has led to success in addressing threats posed by domestic hate groups, transnational organized crime, and cybercrime.

Funding these fusion centers is critical. Local agencies rely on Urban Area Security Initiative Funding and State Homeland Security Grant Program funding to maintain their operations. The President's proposed budget would significantly cut these programs. This is troubling, Congress must restore funding.

Madam Chairwoman, I thank you and the Ranking Member for your leadership and for extending me this opportunity to share some of my priorities with you.