



**TESTIMONY OF  
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**ON  
“MARITIME SUPPORT TO BORDER SECURITY”**

**BEFORE THE  
SENATE HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

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**Introduction**

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished Members of the committee. I am honored to be here today to discuss the Coast Guard’s role in maritime support to border security.

The U.S. maritime domain is vast and challenging in its scope and diversity and is not limited to the nation’s shorelines. It encompasses the expanse of our ports and coastal waters, our Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, and our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), out to 200 nautical miles from shore. Coast Guard law enforcement authority reaches even farther when you consider the extended continental shelf, partner nation agreements, and the Coast Guard’s authorities on the high seas. A component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Coast Guard is at all times an armed force, a Federal law enforcement agency, a humanitarian service, a regulatory agency, and a member of the Intelligence Community. Over 75 percent of U.S. international trade by weight travels through maritime conveyance, making the safety and security of our maritime borders an economic and national security imperative. Each day we respond to a growing list of maritime border security issues, including the trafficking of narcotics, people, and other illicit goods by Transnational Organized Crime networks (TOCs), undocumented migration, illegal exploitation of our natural resources, potential terrorist activities, and the disruption of maritime commerce. Securing our maritime borders requires a layered, multi-faceted approach of authorities, capabilities, competencies and partnerships; the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to cover this broad range of maritime border security requirements. The Coast Guard provides maritime support to border security by confronting threats in a layered approach, as far from our borders as possible.

**Layered Security**

Through a layered approach, the Coast Guard effectively pushes our border security measures well beyond our shoreline and EEZ by fostering strategic relationships with partner nations to detect, deter, and counter threats as early and as far from U.S. shores as possible. The Coast Guard enforces U.S. immigration laws and international conventions against human smuggling through at-sea interdiction and rapid repatriation of undocumented migrants attempting to reach

the United States unlawfully. The Coast Guard maintains a constant law enforcement presence at-sea to deter undocumented migrants and transnational human smugglers and to detect and interdict them far from the U.S. border. The Coast Guard accomplishes this mission in conjunction with other Federal, state and local agencies, including Customs and Border Protection (CBP), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Departments of State and Justice. Between October 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015, the Coast Guard interdicted 2,259 illegal migrants attempting to enter the United States. While the Coast Guard leads the interdiction mission on the high seas, partnerships with CBP and ICE are critical for successful shore-side interdiction operations.

In September 2014, the Coast Guard released its Western Hemisphere Strategy that identifies three priorities for the maritime domain: Combating Networks, Securing Borders, and Safeguarding Commerce. To meet these priorities, the Strategy emphasizes the importance of a robust offshore cutter presence, which is supported by fixed wing maritime patrol aircraft, Airborne Use of Force (AUF) helicopters, and sophisticated intelligence and communications capabilities; an ideal maritime interdiction capability. To implement the Strategy, the Coast Guard has dedicated additional assets to Transit Zone interdiction operations, and invested in the people and platforms necessary to effectively target TOC networks.

With broad authorities and an extensive array of agreements and arrangements with nearly every coastal state in the Western Hemisphere, the Coast Guard leads maritime interdiction efforts against TOC networks. Our major cutters, AUF-equipped helicopters, and maritime patrol aircraft possess the offshore capabilities necessary to operate on the high seas where TOC networks are largely unchallenged by regional partners, and where those networks are most vulnerable to enforcement action by the United States. Over the last five years, Coast Guard cutters and aircraft have removed from the high seas more than 450 metric tons of cocaine, with a wholesale value of nearly \$15 billion. Our annual seizures at sea amount to more than three times the quantity of cocaine seized at our borders and within the United States combined. These interdictions, removals and seizures, combined with timely investigation and prosecution efforts, drive the interdiction continuum known as “The Cycle of Success.”

In the cycle of success, maritime interdictions, often cued by intelligence from ongoing investigations, lead to a deeper understanding of the organizational aspects of illicit activity. As evidence is collected and case packages developed, information is shared and analyzed, new intelligence leads are pursued, and linkages within the criminal networks are discovered. When done well, this process will result in tactically actionable intelligence that can be exploited to disrupt criminal networks and further propel the cycle of success. From 2002 to 2011, intelligence gained from Coast Guard interdictions contributed to the arrest and extradition of nearly 75 percent of all Colombian Consolidated Priority Organizational Targets, or drug kingpins. Just last month, one of our new National Security Cutters, USCGC STRATTON, using a robust on board sensor package and intelligence gained from other interdictions, located and seized a semi-submersible vessel with 2.8 metric tons of cocaine. Intelligence cueing is often very successful - for instance, 90 percent of the Coast Guard’s interdictions in 2014 were cued by intelligence. However, current surface and aviation fleet capacity only allows the Coast Guard to respond to approximately one-third of actionable intelligence.

To sustain and improve on these operational successes, the Coast Guard needs to re-capitalize its patrol boats and major cutters. The Coast Guard continues to replace legacy 110-ft Patrol Boats with more capable Fast Response Cutters. Additionally, as steady progress continues on the acquisition of eight National Security Cutters, the Coast Guard's highest priority is now acquisition of 25 Offshore Patrol Cutters (OPCs). The OPC will be the backbone of Coast Guard offshore presence and the manifestation of Coast Guard authorities, and will replace 30-50 year old Medium Endurance Cutters that are operating well beyond their service lives. These assets are essential to interdicting drug smugglers and undocumented migrants at sea, as well as rescuing mariners, enforcing fisheries laws, responding to disasters, and protecting our ports.

## **International Partnerships**

The Coast Guard's success in maritime border security relies on robust joint, interagency, and international partnerships to conduct drug interdiction throughout the Western Hemisphere. To more effectively counter maritime threats in the offshore region and throughout the Western Hemisphere, the Coast Guard maintains more than 40 maritime bilateral law enforcement agreements and arrangements with partner nations. These agreements and arrangements facilitate coordination of operations and the forward deployment of boats, cutters, aircraft, and personnel to deter and counter threats as close to their origin as possible, and enable real time communications between Coast Guard and Partner Nation operations centers.

In coordination with Joint Interagency Task Force South (JIATF-S), the Coast Guard works closely with partner nations in Central and South America, taking full advantage of their capabilities and local knowledge to improve maritime governance in littoral regions that are being exploited by TOC networks. As part of this effort, we leverage the availability of U.S. Navy and Allied Nation vessels to enhance presence and expand interdiction opportunities by embarking specially trained Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments (LEDETs) with the requisite law enforcement authority; we currently have these agreements and arrangements with the U.S. Navy, Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Belgium. Recently, we began negotiations with Spain to reach a similar arrangement.

To foster international cooperation and build partner capacity, Coast Guard personnel are posted at several embassies throughout the world. These individuals develop strategic relationships with partner nation maritime forces that facilitate real-time operations coordination, maritime security cooperation, confirmation of vessel registry, waivers of jurisdiction, repatriation of undocumented migrants, and disposition of seized vessels, contraband, and detained crews. Equally important, they provide subject matter expertise and advice for the Country Team to assist the Ambassador in carrying out a comprehensive and coherent U.S. Government foreign policy, and to address maritime threats at their source.

Since 2007, the Coast Guard has sponsored semi-annual Multilateral Maritime Counter Drug Summits for Central and South America countries, and in 2014 initiated an annual Multilateral Maritime Interdiction and Prosecution Summit for Central and Eastern Caribbean countries. Combined, these summits involve more than 300 maritime law enforcement and prosecutorial officials in over 60 international agencies from some 35 countries. Topics range from maritime interdiction to prosecution and criminal investigations, the combination of which is improving regional success in all aspects of the interdiction continuum.

In February 2015, the Coast Guard launched its first ever Support to Interdiction and Prosecution (CG-SIP) Team in Panama. This initiative involves a three person team consisting of one Coast Guard Interdiction Specialist and two Coast Guard Investigative Service Special Agents. These personnel work alongside their Panamanian counterparts, filling critical gaps in our interdiction and engagement activities in the Central American drug transit zone, and bolstering awareness and information sharing well beyond our physical borders.

### **International Port Assessments and Vessel Screening**

The Coast Guard conducts foreign port assessments and leverages the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code to assess effectiveness of security and antiterrorism measures in foreign ports. Through the International Port Security Program, the Coast Guard performs overseas port assessments to determine the effectiveness of security and antiterrorism measures exhibited by foreign trading partners.

Since the inception of the ISPS Program in 2004, Coast Guard personnel have visited more than 150 countries and approximately 1,200 port facilities. These countries generally receive biennial assessments to verify compliance with the ISPS Code and U.S. maritime security regulations, as appropriate. Vessels arriving in foreign ports that are not compliant with ISPS Code standards are required to take additional security precautions while in those ports. They may also be boarded by the Coast Guard before being allowed entry to U.S. ports, and in some cases may be refused entry to the United States.

In U.S. ports, the Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP) is designated as the Federal Maritime Security Coordinator (FMSC). In this role, COTPs lead the nation's 43 Area Maritime Security Committees (AMSC) and oversee the development, regular review, and annual exercise of their respective Area Maritime Security Plans. AMSCs assist and advise the FMSC in the development, review, and implementation of a coordination and communication framework to identify risks and vulnerabilities in and around ports. Additionally, AMSCs coordinate resources to prevent, protect against, respond to, and recover from Transportation Security Incidents. AMSCs have developed strong working partnerships between all levels of government and private industry stakeholders.

The Coast Guard screens ships, crews, and passengers for all vessels required to submit an Advance Notice of Arrival (ANOA) prior to entering a U.S. port. Complementary screening efforts occur at the national and tactical levels. At the tactical level, each of the Coast Guard's Area Commanders receives support from a Maritime Intelligence Fusion Center (MIFC), which screens the commercial vessels operating within their areas of responsibility for unique indicators, as well as providing additional screening for vessels that submit an ANOA. The MIFCs focus on screening characteristics associated with the vessels itself, such as ownership, ownership associations, cargo, and previous activity. Coast Guard vessel screening results are disseminated to the appropriate DHS Maritime Interagency Operations Center, Coast Guard Sector Command Centers, local intelligence staffs, CBP, and other interagency partners through Regional Coordinating Mechanisms to evaluate and take action on any potential risks.

At the national level, the Intelligence Coordination Center's Coastwatch Branch, which is co-located with CBP at the National Targeting Center, screens crew and passenger information. Additionally, through the Coast Guard's partnership with CBP, we have expanded access to counter-terrorism, law enforcement, and immigration databases and this integration has led to greater information sharing and more effective security operations. In 2014, Coastwatch screened approximately 124,000 ANOAs and 32.7 million crew and passenger records. The Coast Guard also supports the CBP Container Security Initiative to ensure that all United States-bound maritime shipping containers posing a potential risk are identified and inspected prior to being placed on vessels. This initiative encourages better interagency cooperation and risk management through information sharing.

The Coast Guard has already established several Interagency Operations Centers (IOCs) to provide a capability that enhances the ability of multi-agency operational coalitions to better plan, coordinate and execute missions to support and enhance maritime safety, security, and economic resilience. Today, the Coast Guard, CBP and other agencies share workspace and coordinate operations directly at IOCs in the ports of Charleston, Puget Sound, San Diego, and Jacksonville, which have improved the efficiency and effectiveness of maritime security operations.

### **Southern Border**

Along the Southwest Border, DHS partners work together to keep communities safe from border-related violence and crime, and to weaken TOC Networks. The DHS Southern Border and Approaches Campaign Plan (SBACP) enhances Departmental flexibility by enabling the shifting and massing of DHS assets as needed along the southern border. The SBACP provides for unified operations across air, land, and maritime domains to better counter threats in the source zone, along legal and illegal pathways, and through networks, to the United States. The most significant new element of the Campaign Plan is the establishment of three new DHS Joint Task Forces: Joint Task Force East (JTF-E) (mainly maritime with land responsibilities in the U.S. Southeast); Joint Task Force West (JTF-W) (mainly land in the U.S. Southwest with maritime responsibilities close off the coasts of Texas and Southern California), and Joint Task Force-Investigations (JTF-I) (to coordinate the DHS investigations capabilities to support the Campaign Objectives). These three task forces operate cooperatively to maintain effective border security. To address the myriad maritime border security challenges DHS faces extending from our shores to the source of the threats, the Coast Guard, with strong support of our CBP and ICE partners, leads JTF-E. We are also an integral part of JTF-W and JTF-I, providing some 50 personnel for their support, intelligence, operations, planning, and special programs sections.

To further address maritime threats and to improve security along the Southwest Border of the United States, the Coast Guard and U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) work with the Mexican Navy (SEMAR) and the Mexican Secretariat for Communications and Transportation (SCT). In particular, SEMAR and SCT are increasing their engagement with the Coast Guard through training, exercises, coordinated operations, and intelligence and information sharing. Furthermore, the North American Maritime Security Initiative provides an operational relationship between SEMAR, NORTHCOM, Canadian Forces, and the Coast Guard built upon standard procedures for communications, training, and operations.

A recent example of strong interagency cooperation is the effort to counter drug and migrant smuggling threats in the waters off Southern California. The Coast Guard, in partnership with other Federal, state and local agencies, has increased our levels of effort for the standing Operation BAJA TEMPESTAD. This joint operation brings additional resources to the fight against TOCs, including flight deck-equipped cutters with airborne and surface use-of-force capability; increased Coast Guard and CBP maritime patrol aircraft flights; additional non-compliant vessel use-of-force endgame capabilities from our shore based boats; and enhanced intelligence collection, analysis and dissemination. Through this operation, our joint forces have been responsible for the seizure of 125,292 pounds of marijuana and 259 kilograms of methamphetamines in Fiscal Year 2014.

### **Northern Border**

The Coast Guard has joined with CBP/USBP, ICE/Homeland Security Investigations, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and the Canada Border Security Agency to strengthen border security between Canada and the United States through a variety of operational programs based upon the U.S.-Canada Beyond the Border Initiative. One of the most visible cooperative initiatives is the Integrated Cross Border Maritime Law Enforcement Ship Rider Program.

This Agreement provides a legal mechanism for the cross-designation of United States and Canadian law enforcement officers, who are empowered to enforce the laws of both countries along the shared maritime border. There are 207 Shiprider-trained and cross-designated officers available to conduct operations (101 U.S. Coast Guard and 106 Canadian officers from RCMP, Windsor Police Service, Niagara Regional Police Service, and Ontario Provincial Police). Since its inception in 2012, Coast Guard and RCMP officers have conducted more than 3,000 hours of regular patrols and over 600 boardings on U.S. and Canadian vessels; an effort that previously could not be undertaken due to lack of jurisdictional authorities.

### **Conclusion**

The Coast Guard's layered maritime border security strategy addresses the broad range of offshore and coastal threats that have the potential to impact our national security and economic prosperity. From our efforts to push out our maritime border and strengthen our international and domestic partnerships, to our investments in cutter, boat and aircraft recapitalization, the Coast Guard continues to improve maritime border security while facilitating the safe flow of legitimate commerce.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and thank you for your continued support of the U.S. Coast Guard. I would be pleased to answer your questions.