

Transcript of House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security Hearing on Port and Maritime Border Security

Hearing Held on June 14, 2011

MILLER:

The committee on Homeland Security -- subcommittee on border and maritime security will come to order.

The subcommittee is meeting today to hear testimony from Admiral Robert Papp who is the commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, to review the Coast Guard's post-9/11 homeland security mission and I will introduce the admiral after the closing statements. But I certainly want to tell him how honored we are that he is here at our subcommittee today. We are just delighted that he is here, not only representing himself, of course, but all the brave men and women of the Coast Guard in the United States. And we will make a more formal introduction shortly.

For most of this year, this subcommittee has appropriately focused on securing the nation's borders, both at and between the ports of entry. But the border isn't just the desert or along the Mexican border or even along the northern border. Our border is also liquid. It is in the Great Lakes between the U.S. and Canada. It is along the Pacific. It is along the Atlantic. And the U.S. Coast Guard is missioned with securing those borders.

I want to focus on a very often overlooked, but just as vital issue and that is port and maritime security and the changing role of the U.S. Coast Guard since September 11th.

As a lifetime voter, I have a very deep affinity for the Coast Guard and the fantastic work that they do each and every day, 24/7. Whether it is just routing boating safety missions, search and rescue or keeping our vital shipping lanes clear of ice in the winter and helping commerce flow to our lakes.

I often say that if it is wet, cold and impossible, send in the Coast Guard. They will get it done.

So, again, let me thank you and the men and women of the Coast Guard for their service to this nation.

The Coast Guard's motto is Semper Paratus, Latin for always ready. And since 1798, the Coast Guard has lived up to its motto, fighting alongside the other branches of the military in this nation's conflicts, even today.

Men and women of the Coast Guard serve off the coast of Iraq and help to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden.

Even before 9/11, the Coast Guard had its hands full with its 11 statutory missions like marine safety, ice breaking, search and rescue and aids to navigation.

But since September 11th, we have loaded up the Coast Guard with additional responsibility and asked them specifically to focus resources on port and maritime security.

This committee has jurisdiction of the Coast Guard as it relates to port and maritime security and today we will conduct our oversight on how the Coast Guard has been additionally missioned and if they have been adequately and appropriately funded and resourced.

In fact, the number of hours spent on ports, waterways and coastal security has increased by more than 900 percent since 9/11.

Admiral Papp has taken a look at these figures and earlier this year he reported that the service may need, as he said, to reduce the number and range of capabilities added since 9/11 until properly resourced.

This Congress must appreciate the candor in which the admiral made these comments and we want to hear from him today, his thoughts on the resources and how we are doing. And I know that this nation has given the Coast Guard a tremendously difficult job. And this Congress understands that you can't be everywhere at once.

The Coast Guard must find ways to balance its security role, without subtracting from its core competencies.

However, at the same time, this committee is laser focused on securing the nation and our borders and the Coast Guard's role in securing the maritime environment is absolutely critical. And we are very interested to hear comments and -- from the admiral and providing us with your comprehensive vision for the security missions of the Coast Guard.

And as I mentioned in the letter the Chairman and I sent earlier, we are also concerned about the status of the national security cutters, which will be the bulwarks of our homeland defense on the waters.

And in a time of budget constraints, we have to be mindful, of course, of the cost to acquire these advanced cutters, but we also cannot sacrifice tomorrow's needed capabilities due to short-term thinking.

I know that the older cutters are costing us far too much, both in terms of less mission readiness, lost operational hours and higher maintenance costs and we have to take those costs into account when making long-term acquisition decisions.

Further, if I could be blunt, I find it, probably unacceptable would be the word, that major Coast Guard law enforcement cutters have an average age of more than 40 years, while Navy ships have an average age of only 14. Not to pick on the Navy. We want to make sure they are resourced, but we need to be cognizant of this fact.

And we ask the Coast Guard to many of the same missions as the Navy, in many of the same waters. And thus, we in Congress need to ensure that the Coast Guard, again, has the resources and assets it needs to safely carry out its operations.

Investments need to be made in the aging cutter fleet and this committee is especially interested in hearing on the trade-offs required to ensure that the Coast Guard has the capabilities required to secure our maritime borders, interdict drugs and perform other statutory missions of the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard's deployable operations group is a key example of the heightened role that maritime and port security and specialized maritime security teams play in the Coast Guard's post-9/11 mission set. And as you know, this committee strongly supports the maritime safety and security team, who deploy to provide security and protection in a maritime environment and the advanced maritime security and response team that specializes in counterterrorist tactics and is designed as a first-responder to marine terrorist situations.

The Coast Guard has recently begun a stem to stern review of the needed capabilities from both of these teams and other deployable teams. And this review passes the common sense test.

One of the more interesting and valuable programs that leverages their partnership, I think, is the Ship Rider Program. That is something that I follow very closely in terms of the beginning of this integrated law enforcement program, with first pilot in 2006. And I think it is just a very valuable tool to make our border more secure between the United States and our Canadian partners. It has worked very, very well in the Great Lakes region.

Again, we want to thank the commandant for agreeing to appear today. We certainly look forward to hearing your thoughts on all of this and how we can assist the Coast Guard to better secure our nation's ports and maritime border.

And the Chair now recognizes the ranking minority member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Cuellar, for any statements he may have.

CUELLAR:

Thank you, Madam Chairman. I am pleased that the subcommittee on border, maritime security is meeting today to discuss the Coast Guard's homeland security missions in the post-911 era.

A little over a year ago, I visited the Coast Guard headquarters and met with the previous commandant, Admiral Allen.

We had a good discussion about the role of the Coast Guard in securing our nation, both the northern, the southern and the coast area, also. I appreciate Admiral Papp joining us today to update the subcommittee on the Coast Guard's efforts in support of the Department of Homeland Security.

As a member of Congress representing a district along the southern border, I am particularly interested in the Coast Guard's work on three matters related to that region of the country.

First, I have been working to support the U.S. customs border protection office of air, marine's efforts to deploy unmanned aerial systems, UASs, along our land and coastal borders.

It is my understanding the Coast Guard is working with CBP on the maritime barrier (ph) of the UAS. I hope to hear from Admiral Papp about the Coast Guard's work with the CBP air and marine on this program, as well as what work it may be doing along with their colleagues in the U.S. Navy.

Given limited federal resources, agencies across the government should do everything possible to share information, technology, as appropriate, and avoid the duplication of efforts to secure our country as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Second, as many of you know, there has been several incidents of violence on the Mexican side of Falcon Lake, the U.S. portion, which is located in my Congressional district.

The fiscal year 2012 DHS appropriation bill recently passed by the House of Representatives last week, recommends that the Coast Guard have an enhanced presence on Falcon Lake and Lake Amistad in order to counter border incursions at that time. And I believe, as a witness testified, you also testified, Admiral, that you also feel that there should be an increased presence on that and we will follow-up on some questions on that.

It is my understanding that this area is currently patrolled only by CBP, which is also stretched thin with its border security responsibilities. I am interested in knowing from the commandant what presence beyond, "post operations," which we know is just a low touch, our Coast Guard currently has along the southern border of the U.S. and how it would intend to fulfill the language in the appropriations bill, should it become law.

Third, last week, the Texas Rangers U.S. border patrol, Texas fish and wildlife, were involved in a shoot-out across the Rio Grande and O'Brand (ph) Texas. Suspected drug runners shot across the river from Mexico at U.S. law enforcement officials.

Last year, the Coast Guard Authorizations Act of 2012 -- 2010, now which is public I (ph) 111 281 (ph), included a provision that I authored with the Coast Guard, should prepare a mission requirement analysis for the navigable portions of the Rio Grande.

This analysis was due to Congress no later than 90 days after the date of enactment, which was October 15th of 2010 and out of courtesy to the commandant, we contacted your congressional affairs person, just to give you a

head's up, that I was going to be asking you, why you all missed this particular deadline, which is statute and it was specifically directed at your office.

Specifically, this provision calls that the mission requirement analysis is meant to assess Coast Guard's mission, assets, personnel assigned to the Rio Grande River. As you know, the Rio Grande is international waters. It might not be blue waters, as I think some of you folks call it the bond (ph) waters, but nevertheless, international -- it is in international waters.

Included with the analysis or requirements to identify what will be needed for the Coast Guard to increase the operations, migrant interdiction operations, drug interdiction operations, everything within your 11 points of your mission itself, I hope to hear from Admiral Papp about the status of this analysis. Or if you haven't gotten started, just tell us that you are going to get started on it. And ultimately, we are talking about narcotics, undocumented agents and those who might wish to do us harm.

We know that people will take the route that they perceive to offer the best opportunity to enter the country. If we secure the land borders, people will try to come across maritime borders and vice versa.

We are only as strong as our weakest link, which is why it is imperative that we support the work of the Coast Guard and sister agencies within DHS.

In closing, I would like to note that more than 40,000 active duty members of the Coast Guard, supported by thousands more reservists and civilians, do our country proud every day. We thank you for that work that you all do, Commandant.

We thank them, their families, for their service to our country and I appreciate Admiral Papp for joining us here today. I look forward to your testimony and thank you, Madam Chairwoman. I yield back the balance of my time.

MILLER:

I thank the gentleman.

And the Chair will now recognize the ranking member of the full committee, the gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. Thompson, for his opening statement.

THOMPSON:

Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I appreciate you calling this hearing. I also appreciate getting the chance to chat in the rear with Admiral Papp.

It has been about a year, a little bit more than a year, since we chatted. But welcome.

This year, we will mark the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attack of September 11th, 2001. That event changed our nation and, in the process, changed the shape of the federal government.

With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, numerous disparate agencies, including the Coast Guard, were brought together to help secure the country.

In my Congressional district alone, the Mississippi River, people think of the Coast Guard for its safety and security and search and rescue missions, particularly during terrible flooding, like what we have experienced this year.

But in the wake of 9/11, the Coast Guard's homeland security missions have become more important than ever.

The Coast Guard's work, securing our ports, waterways and coast is an integral part of America's homeland security. With that in mind, I am concerned about the lack of adequate funding for several vital Coast Guard programs and initiatives in the recently passed DHS appropriations deal.

For example, the deal cuts funding for Coast Guard acquisition and construction by \$270 million below the president's request.

This is unacceptable.

The Coast Guard prides itself as being always ready. For all hazards and threats and carrying out its 11 statutory missions.

However, without adequate resources, it will be hard pressed to meet that enormous challenge.

Congress must ensure that the Coast Guard has the funding necessary to fulfill its responsibilities on behalf of the American people.

Also, I would be remiss if I did not touch on the Coast Guard's role in the transportation worker identification credentials, or TWIC, program. Along with the Transportation Security Agency, the Coast Guard is responsible for implementing the TWIC program.

The program has been plagued with problems from its inception.

It is my hope that the long overdue TWIC readers will be deployed as quickly and efficiently as possible, so that full security benefits of this program can soon be realized.

America's maritime workers have done their part by obtaining TWICs. It is now time for DHS to deliver as well.

I have had an opportunity, as I have said, to meet with Admiral Papp at the Coast Guard headquarters and have seen the good work of the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard first hand.

Today, I hope to hear about the commandant's commitment to ensuring the Coast Guard fulfills its homeland security missions with support from Congress.

Again, I thank you, Admiral Papp, for joining us today. And I look forward to a robust dialogue about the Coast Guard's role in the security of our nation.

Thank you, and I yield back, Madam Chair.

MILLER:

I thank the gentleman for his comments, and other members of the committee are reminded that any opening statements they have can be submitted for the record.

Our witness today, our only witness today, which I think is very appropriate, is Admiral Papp, who is, of course, the commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard, which is the nation's oldest continuous seagoing service and one of the nation's five armed services.

As a flag officer, Admiral Papp served as commander, Coast Guard Atlantic Area, where he was operational commander for all U.S. Coast Guard missions within the eastern half of the world and provided support to the Department of Defense.

Admiral Papp has served in six Coast Guard cutters, commanding four of them, including the Eagle. He also previously served as the commander of the ninth Coast Guard district, with responsibilities for Coast Guard missions on the Great Lakes and the northern border.

Again, we want to thank the commandant for joining us today and the floor is yours, sir. We certainly look forward to your testimony and the opportunity to question you.

PAPP:

Well, thank you Chairman Miller. Good morning, once again, Ranking Member Cuellar and full committee ranking member, Mr. Thompson, good to see you, sir, and all the members of the subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear here today and for your unwavering support for our Coast Guard.

It has always been a pleasure for me to come up here to talk about the many great things our service is doing and it is my great honor and privilege to lead and represent the great men and women of the Coast Guard.

But it is also my responsibility and an obligation to my people to inform you of those things that we are unable to do or lack the resources to do and to candidly inform you of the challenges that we face in order to secure your support.

America is a maritime nation. Ninety percent of our goods arrive by or are shipped by sea. These same waters that facilitate commerce and stimulate the economy also offer routes to our country for illegal activities, such as drugs and illegal migrants or security threats.

Additionally, the activities of man, oil spills, dumping, overfishing, pose threats to the seas themselves.

The safety and security of our maritime environment impacts the daily lives of every American, regardless of whether they live on or near the water. Maritime security is not a new mission for the Coast Guard. When our fledgling nation first confronted these challenges in the 18th century, the first secretary of the Treasury, the father of the Coast Guard, Alexander Hamilton, called for the construction of ten small armed cutters to serve as, as he said, useful sentinels of the law.

Now, 220 years later, the men and women of today's Coast Guard still work determinedly to safeguard our nation's maritime interests overseas, on the high seas, along our coasts and our ports.

They will use our expertise to improve practices, develop and leverage partnerships and to use risk-based decision making to apply the full spectrum of Coast Guard resources and capabilities.

Just as my predecessors have done for over 220 years, I am strongly committed to the nation's maritime security.

For the Coast Guard, it is job number one.

But I now lead a service that is stressed by increased activities and responsibilities during a period of constrained budgets, combined with aging ships, aircraft, boats and infrastructure. The Coast Guard cannot be all things to all people, nor can it be everywhere, all the time.

Now, in order to carry out our strategy, we apply a layered security system that leverages our unique maritime security authorities, capabilities and partnerships to mitigate risk and maintain security in our domestic ports, on the high seas and in the ports abroad. This begins in foreign ports, where Coast Guard conducts assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of port security and antiterrorism measures. Since its establishment in 2004, the International Port Security Program has assessed ports in 153 countries, visiting over 900 individual ports and facilities.

In cases where effective antiterrorism measures are not in place, conditions of entry are placed on vessels, requiring them to implement additional security measures before they arrive in our ports.

Offshore, a capable major cutter fleet provides a persistent presence that can respond to potential threats, enforce international domestic laws, launch boats and aircraft in adverse sea conditions and maintain a presence throughout all weather conditions.

This is the layer of security that causes me the greatest concern. Our fleet of major cutters has reached block obsolescence and is increasingly expensive to maintain. They are unreliable and less effective.

But there is encouraging news.

The first two national security cutters are operational. The third will be delivered this year. A fourth has been awarded and the fifth has been funded.

We must expedite the funding of the remaining three national security cutters for a minimum of eight total.

The recent operations of the cutter *Bertholf*, our first national security cutter, highlights the exceptional capabilities of our newest class of major cutters. During *Bertholf's* recent patrol, near Alaska, they encountered 20-foot seas and wind in excess of 60 knots, with temperatures below freezing.

Yet the crew was still able to launch and recover their helicopter and small boats.

Cutter *Bertholf* previously conducted patrols in the eastern Pacific, where they successfully engaged the full spectrum of illicit trafficking threats. Self-propelled semi-submersible and semi-submersible vessels and fully submersible vessels, small boats, high speed multi-engine go-fast vessels and fishing vessels.

In one instance, the *Bertholf* was able to use both their small boats and the deployed helicopter and the maritime patrol aircraft to successfully disrupt three small high-speed boats detected simultaneously in the dark of night.

And well before ships arrive in our ports, screening and targeting operations provide critical information regarding these vessels and embarked crews, passengers and cargo.

As a member of the intelligence committee, the Coast Guard collects, analyzes, fuses and disseminates intelligence information from our maritime intelligence fusion centers, to provide direct intelligence support to our Coast Guard operators in the field and the ports and offshore.

As vessels arrive closer to the U.S., they must submit a notice of arrival. The intelligence coordination center evaluates the information for potential threats.

If vessels pose a risk, the maritime operational threat response plan is activated and the interagency informed.

To engage potential threats approaching our coast, the Coast Guard helicopters and coastal patrol boats provide the ability to monitor, track, interdict and board vessels.

While maritime security is a shared responsibility, requiring international and domestic coordination throughout all stages of the supply chain, it is most evident to the public when you look at our ports. In our ports, the Coast Guard, along with federal, state and local and tribal partners, working in concert with port stakeholders, patrol our waters and critical infrastructure, conduct vessel escorts and inspect vessels and facilities.

The Coast Guard's approach to liquefied natural gas shipments that arrive from Yemen highlights the concept of layered security and risk informed decision making.

The Coast Guard collaborates with stakeholders to implement enhanced security measures that are placed upon each LNG vessel overseas, transiting to the U.S.

Progress of these ships is monitored as they transit. Furthermore, enhanced security measures are applied, including monitoring of crews, using biometric identity verification.

Working in close partnership with a number of key partner agencies, the Coast Guard conducts in-depth biometric and biographic screening of each crew member.

As the vessels approach the United States, additional monitoring is performed and boardings are conducted.

The Coast Guard meets with federal, state and local partners as well area maritime security committees to ensure risks are fully identified and mitigated before these vessels are escorted into port by the Coast Guard and state and local partners.

The Coast Guard's maritime security authorities, capabilities and partnerships, coupled with capable cutters, aircraft and boats, all operated by highly proficient personnel, allow us to maximize those authorities and partnerships to execute layered and effective security throughout the entire maritime continuum from overseas to the critical ports within our homeland.

We protect the country against threats from the sea. We protect people who use the sea and we protect the sea itself.

Once again, thank you for this opportunity to testify and I look forward to answering your questions.

MILLER:

Thank you very much, Admiral Papp. I was -- I guess I am going to start my questions by focusing on the cutters. And I will start there because you always have -- you have made it very clear that that really is your priority. So I appreciate you talking about where you are status-wise with the cutters that are currently deployed and being built and those that you are looking forward to; hopefully, if we can get them to the Congress here.

And I do note that the cyst -- excuse me, sixth one was not requested by the president, although we didn't fund it either, in the appropriations. So perhaps that is something, as this committee becomes convinced, that we really need to focus on that. We are going to be doing an authorizing bill here in this committee and I would suggest to the committee it is something we may want to press.

I was interested to hear you talking about the -- your group in Alaska. I can't even imagine being in those kinds of conditions, with the temperatures and the seas and everything else, while they were rescuing one of their helicopters. So that it really is --speaks to the capability of the cutter that you are so actively seeking for the Coast Guard.

I don't know if we want to add anything to that, just other than the fact that we need to be helping you to make sure that we continue along that path to authorize and appropriate funds as we can.

And, I guess, before I have you answer that, obviously the federal government is having some terrible fiscal constraints. And I don't, but I am suggesting this, is there anything else, other -- short of these cutters that would satisfy your need? Is there any other kind of vessel that we might think about? Or we shouldn't even be going down that road?

PAPP:

Well, ma'am, the challenge, of course, is that it takes a long time to design a ship, to get an acquisition baseline and then sustain it.

Right now, we have the acquisition project in -- going in motion and what we need is the predictable funding stream in order to gain the efficiencies of the acquisition process and to work with the shipyards.

The Coast Guard owns part of this issue because we went through rather significant acquisition reform, trying to get our act in order.

I feel we are there now.

We have successfully negotiated a fixed price contract. We took out the lead systems integrator and we have been dealing directly with the shipyard and now we have a fixed-price contract, it was awarded number four, and I expect that we will award number five in the near future.

These ships cannot come soon enough.

The major cutters that we have there right now, trying to get the job done. I think trying because we have lost effectiveness and they are unreliable. We are losing ship days because of their mechanical condition.

As you rightly identified, they were built, for the most part, in the 1960s, into the early 1970s. They were designed for a quarter century of use, hard use, and they have got that, but they are rapidly approaching a half century of use now and probably most of them, by the time they are decommissioned and replaced, will be older than a half century.

We just cannot go on any longer and we need to get the new ships built as quickly as possible.

To answer your question on number six, originally, because of working this fixed price contract, when we finally nailed the price down, we found that we did not have enough money appropriated for hull number five. We needed to ask for \$77 million more in the fiscal year 2012 budget, which is under consideration right now, in order to give us the remainder of the money to complete number five.

Because of that, we didn't have enough room within our acquisition top=line to put the full price of NSC number six in there. So even though it was my final decision, it was a tough decision to make because I needed to keep five moving along.

However, thanks to the Congress, the full funding for NSC number five was ultimately put in the 2011 budget, so that we are able to award the contract this year and move ahead.

MILLER:

Can you -- not to interrupt, could you just tell me, just so I understand, how long does it take? What is the time frame we are looking at from, let us say, from the money is authorized, appropriated. How long does it actually take to build the ship and get it launched and get it going?

PAPP:

Yes, ma'am.

By the time it is appropriated, it would generally take us about three years from starting, so ordering long-lead parts, getting it constructed, getting it in the water, going through operational evaluation and then fully operational.

So it is -- time is wasting. We need to move forward on this and that is why I am delighted that we got the funding for number five, because in reality, that saves us about \$50 million per ship if we can keep the flow of the money going. Because the yard then has a predictable funding stream and they can order long-lead materials and other things that keep the production line going.

MILLER:

Admiral, I wonder if you could sort of flesh out for me, a little bit. I mentioned in my opening statement two of these teams that have come online, really, to the Coast Guard since 9/11, the maritime safety and security team and also this maritime security and response team, both of which have been incredibly successful, I think, by looking through all the briefing memos that I have had on it. But if you could just sort of flesh that out a little bit, of what you think -- how you think those teams are operating? With how you have missioned them? And appropriations, I guess, that are following as well, to resource these teams adequately?

Because looking at -- I know, for instance, I just know in the Detroit area, one of these teams was used when we had the Super Bowl and everybody was raving about it. So I am sure they are being utilized with various kinds of infrastructure targets or what have you around the country.

But maybe you could tell us a little bit about how those teams are working, in your opinion?

PAPP:

Well, magnificent. And we are lucky to have them. And I am grateful that the Congress provided us the support to give us those teams. And I -- granted, I need to balance a lot of things across the Coast Guard, but if I had more, I would make good use of them as well. But there are a lot of needs for our Coast Guard right now.

So let me tell you what we are doing with those teams.

They were initial reaction to post-9/11, throughout the 1990s, most of our, what I would call, our conventional stations, Coast Guard stations, had been depleted. They were down to the bare minimum in terms of people and boats, just to carry out the search and rescue mission.

Of course, immediately, our thoughts turned to providing security in our ports, post-9/11. The MSS teams, the maritime safety and security teams, were immediate response to get what we referred to at the time as waterborne SWAT teams that we could deploy within the ports to provide that extra measure of security.

What we have done over time is we use them for national security events, presidential protection and other events that occur in the ports, to supplement our conventional forces.

What has happened over time, though, is that unlike my immediate two predecessors, as the budget was growing significantly over the last 10 years, I am confronted with a completely different landscape in terms of the budget. It is going to be constrained, probably, throughout the -- my term.

Because we had increasing budgets, we kept pushing new missions at these units, trying to add new capabilities on top of the things they were doing already, with the promise of potentially new resources coming as the budget continued to increase.

We are on that right now. It is doing a full review of these teams to make sure we are doing the absolute right things, to make sure we have got the right capabilities, that the training is in place to make sure they can do their missions effectively and safely, and that we are fully utilizing them.

Now the MSRC is a different thing. That was one of the original MSSTs, Chesapeake. And what we did within the Coast Guard was we saw the need for an enhanced team and what we did was we told the Congress and the administration that we could do it resource neutral and what we did was we did away with our tactical law enforcement team, north (ph), and combined that with the Chesapeake MSST and brought in some other billets from other places. These were not add-ons, they were reprogramming within the Coast Guard and they are a higher level tactical team for interdiction of vessels approaching the coast or higher level security needs.

And we are doing a full assessment of all their capabilities as well.

Frankly, to make full utilization of this team, they need organic air delivery system or cooperation from partners to provide air delivery. We do not have it at this time.

MILLER:

OK. I appreciate those comments.

And the chair would recognize the ranking member, Mr. Cuellar.

CUELLAR:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

On January 15th is the day that this mission requirement analysis was supposed to be turned in to us. That was, as I mentioned a few minutes ago, last year's Coast Guard authorization act of 2010. There was a provision that we added that a mission requirement analysis for the navigable part of the Rio Grande, and it was due on January the 15th.

Any particular reason why this has not been turned in?

PAPP:

No reason at all, sir. That is my fault. I regret that it was not turned in.

The report has been turned in to the department and it is under review right now. And frankly, knowing of your concern, I went back and took a look at the report. I would like to take a further look at the report because I don't think it fully answers the mail (ph).

Now it is with the department right now and it is probably an adequate response. I would like to take one more look at it myself after the department does, but it is on the way, sir, and it is my fault it was not done on time.

CUELLAR:

And I appreciate that.

No excuses.

I thank you for that.

Also the -- there is some reported language that I added to this appropriation bill that we just passed last week, where the committee also notes that when you testified before the house homeland appropriations committee, you also had mentioned, "that some level of persistent presence is required on Falcon Lake." As you know, there has been some incidents.

There is some language there also where the House appropriations on homeland also recommends that the Coast Guard adhere to your testimony that you provided the committee and also report to the House whether you will be having some sort of persistent border presence down there. And I would ask you -- there is statutes and now, at least from the House version, so far, we have got to wait for the homeland appropriation bill to pass. But ask you would do the same thing, to have some sort of presence there.

And I would ask you to go ahead and just take a look at that language, which we provided your congressional service folk -- office.

I look forward, if you don't mind, I will call you up at a later time, when you have some time. I would love to follow-up on these two languages provisions.

The other thing I would ask you, you had mentioned the Coast Guard has strengthened mutual relationships with the Mexican Navy, semite (ph) -- and the Mexican Fed (ph) Sheriff for Communications, Transportation, the SCT, and that you all have been increasing the engagement with them, working with them to make sure that we work with them on education, training, participation and exercise coordinated operations along with intelligence information sharing.

How is that coming along, your relationship? Because as you know, we -- the chairwoman represents the northern border, I represent the southern border and because of what has been happening with the Mexican drug cartels, it is an interest to me, especially when I live right at the border.

And so, could you tell us how that is coming along?

PAPP:

It is coming along very well, sir.

It is two different partners that we deal with, Canada and Mexico. I have got extensive experience dealing with Canada, because I was the ninth district commander along the northern border for a couple of years.

I looked forward, with anticipation, to getting down to Mexico for the first time, which I did last summer. And I had a long meeting with Admiral Sinez (ph), their chief of -- basically their chief of naval operations.

And I would characterize our relationship with the Mexican Navy, I think I can say, with great pride, probably better than our U.S. Navy gets along with them. Because they are more like a Coast Guard than they are like our Navy.

They have search and rescue, law enforcement, pollution response, many of the same things that we do. So we have a lot of similarities.

Culturally, it is a little different than dealing with the Canadians as well. The Mexicans value their independence, their sovereignty. So we work that a little bit different. We do some coincidental operations with them. But our cooperation as continued to improve. We have actually had drug interdiction cases that we have been able to hand off to the Mexicans and they prosecute them very well. Even as semi-submersible.

So we are sharing information, we are sharing best practices, we share training and, more importantly, we are talking to each other. Not only at the highest level, but also our district support in Mexico, the 11th Coast Guard district out of Alameda and the eighth Coast Guard district, out of New Orleans.

And they work with their local partners as well.

CUELLAR:

And I thank you for that, that cooperation with them.

I would ask you, also, on this analysis, mission analysis, I would ask you to also see if you can encourage our Mexican friends to also do a little bit more on the Rio Grande, on this international waters -- the brown waters, as they are called.

And I would ask you to take a look at it and see if you can encourage them to work with you on that particular area.

I know you have done a lot of work on the Gulf, and which I appreciate, but it is that area, though, that I would ask you to spend a little bit of time, as you do your mission analysis, it -- to tell us what sort of personnel or equipment or air boats that you might need, or whatever it might be, whatever assets you are talking about.

But I would ask you to look at that because the rigor -- we have done a job with the border patrol on the river banks and beyond that. But I think the water should sell (ph) by the ones that we have neglected and if you can encourage our Mexican friends to work with you, I would appreciate it.

PAPP:

Absolutely sir. But it was also cooperation within the Department of Homeland Security. And I can assure you, in that regard, that Commissioner Bursin and I meet regularly, we have senior leadership groups that work together.

Both of us carry individual authorities within our organizations, our resources are distributed a little bit differently, but we are constantly sharing resources back and forth, leveraging off each other's authorities because we have to have a coordinated response from our side as well.

CUELLAR:

And coordinated in any way you want to, I just want to see the results.

PAPP:

Yes, sir.

CUELLAR:

And the results are just the more presence on the international waters called the Rio Grande.

PAPP:

Yes.

CUELLAR:

Thank you so much. And I appreciate all the work you have done.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

MILLER:

I thank the gentleman.

And the chair would like to recognize the ranking member of the full committee, Chairman King from New York.

And before I do so, I would just mention to the admiral that it is not every day at our subcommittee we have both the chairman and the ranking member at the subcommittee and I think it is indicative of the respect that all of us feel towards you and your service to the nation, certainly, sir, but all of the brave men and women of the United States Coast Guard.

The gentleman from New York.

KING:

Thank you, Ms. Miller.

Thank you very much for the leadership you are providing on this subcommittee and also my good friend, Mr. Cuellar, who demonstrates true bipartisanship, working with you, as your ranking member.

And, Admiral, I am sorry I was not here for your opening statement. And I will have to be leaving in a few moments.

I just wanted to, at the outset, commend you for the outstanding job you have done. You and I have had the opportunity to meet several times and I realize just how immense the responsibility is that you have.

As you mentioned, during the time of your most recent predecessors, the responsibilities of the Coast Guard were expanding, but also so was the budget and the resources.

Now you still have the expanded responsibility, but obviously resources being cut, these are tough budget times, so you really have a very, very difficult job. And I commend you for what you are doing.

I also commend the Coast Guard.

As a New York resident, I know firsthand, the outstanding job the Coast Guard does in providing homeland security and working closely with the local police, the state police and just the outstanding job it has done in the New York harbor, Long Island Sound. I remember, during a Republican convention in 2004, the Coast Guard was absolutely essential to the security operation that is in place.

So it is not just New York. It is the Super Bowl. It is Guantanamo. Basically the Coast Guard has been omnipresent since September 11th and has really stepped up to the plate and done an outstanding job.

I just want to assure you, and I think I can speak for both sides of the aisle, is that we appreciate what you are doing. We also realize how tough the days and weeks and months and years are going to be, as you continue these responsibilities, but with limited resources.

And we want to work with you. We want to do whatever we can to be an advocate for you. We intend to do an authorization bill this year and we want to work closely with you as we go forward with the authorization bill, as we try to project toward the future, about what is reasonable and what is essential for you. And you should know that we are always available to you and -- as you have been to us.

And I want to thank Ms. Miller for the job she is doing and thank you for your testimony today, that I had the opportunity to read. Your testimony, your statement and, again, it is the type of leadership that our country needs and the Coast Guard needs and why you are such an integral part of the Department of Homeland Security and why I believe that the Coast Guard is such a good partner, both within the department and also at the state and local level.

I get nothing but rave reviews for your job.

And as I said, when we met in your office and some of us in Congress, we complain about the tough job we have. It is nothing compared to what you have. It really is front line with limited resources.

So thank you for your service to our country, for these many years, and the very, very best of luck in the years ahead. And, again, I believe I can speak for the ranking member and certainly the chair of the subcommittee, in saying we want to work with you and do what we can to facilitate your job and enable you to carry out your responsibilities.

Thank you, Admiral.

PAPP:

Thank you.

KING:

Thank you very much.

PAPP:

Mr. Chairman. I am honored you took the time to come here this morning.

KING:

Thank you.

MILLER:

I thank the gentleman from New York.

The chair recognizes the gentleman from Mississippi, the ranking member.

THOMPSON:

Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

And let me say from the outset that Chairman King and I have been on this committee from day one. I have never heard him say any more flattering words to anybody before this committee, other than what you just received, Admiral. So you obviously are the man.

And -- but -- and rightfully so. You have done a good job. You represent a good organization.

Taking off from what Ranking Member Cuellar said, the -- you handled 11 statutory missions of the Coast Guard and sometimes it appears that you are going to have to seriously look at all these missions and see whether or not you can really accomplish them.

And there have been some hit and misses in terms of that discussion. So I am going to give you a softball to kind of say whether or not the missions, the homeland security missions, of the Coast Guard are something that you are absolutely comfortable with?

PAPP:

Sir, I am never comfortable with anything.

We have finite resources. And we have that broad mission set.

Now, the good news is, those finite resources that we have, the ships, aircraft and boats, are all versatile and adaptable. You can use them across all those mission sets at various times.

And more importantly, the people who crew those ships, boats and aircraft are versatile and adaptable too. They understand how to do multiple missions.

What we do is we pay our leaders, people like me, to make decisions on a daily basis, to use risk-based determinations on where our highest priority missions are on any given day and then allocate those finite resources across those mission sets.

A good example is last year with the Haitian earthquake. Now we don't have Haitian earthquake Coast Guard cutters sitting around on standby, ready to go and provide humanitarian response. But we had cutters that were deployed in

the Windward Passage and the Florida straits doing migrant patrols and we had drug interdiction vessels that were in the Caribbean.

Overnight, we changed their mission and sent them to Haiti, because it was a higher priority. We needed to respond to that, to provide relief to the people of Haiti.

When Deepwater Horizon came up, we didn't have oil spill vessels on standby. What we did was we had to redirect our fleet, our -- seven of our 16 seagoing buoy tenders, that have oil skimming capability. We took them off their normal eight (ph) navigation missions and sent them to the Gulf and then they worked there for five months.

So what we do is we take acceptable risks across all those missions and we continually evaluate that risk and then reallocate the ships, aircraft, boats and people to the -- what we perceive to be the highest threat at any given time.

Part of our -- in terms of homeland security, that is job number one, as I said. And we are constantly evaluating that. Intelligence, cooperation with partners, cooperation with other countries informs that risk-based decision making process and there are times when we will devote everything that we have to security.

THOMPSON:

Right.

PAPP:

But on day-to-day basis, we are doing adequately.

THOMPSON:

And I appreciate and compliment the leadership that you offer in addressing that.

I think one of the questions for a lot of us is we have looked at the resources that you have been provided to do that. And a term that we have in the south is called getting blood from a turnip.

And so it is obvious, you are able to work wonders with few resources. This last appropriation that this body voted on cut you substantially in critical areas.

If those cuts go forward, what will that do for the Coast Guard in addressing those critical missions?

PAPP:

Well, the -- I think you are talking about the House appropriation... ?

THOMPSON:

Yes.

PAPP:

Marked for the 2012 budget.

When we developed that budget, I had two critical priorities. One is sustaining our operations. I didn't want to cut a single person or diminish our service to the people. We are already at pretty much bare minimum across all the mission areas, so I wanted to sustain our operational level.

At the same time, we need to rebuild the Coast Guard. That is our acquisition money.

Where I am concerned on that mark is that it took out two of our six patrol boats, and desperately need to recapitalize our patrol boats. Ten of our medium response boats and probably one of my pet projects is to try and do better for our Coast Guard families and it cuts some of our housing money for our families as well.

So primarily, the cuts were on the acquisition side. It keeps the money in there just to sustain current operations, but it slows down the recapitalization of those old ships and the infrastructure that we so desperately need to do.

Which then, in turn, as it slows it down, it increases my operating costs because we are constantly operating older and older equipment that costs more each year to maintain and at some point, I am going to have cut all the fat in our operating budget and what we are going to be left with is a situation where we are going to have to cut people and units. Because we won't have any more administrative costs that we can cut.

THOMPSON:

Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, I have a couple of other questions I will submit for the record.

Now the question relative to the dredging of the Mississippi, I know that is primarily the coolest (ph) function, but there are some issues that have come up recently that if the dredging is not maintained in an organized fashion, it puts river traffic at risk.

Congressman Richmond wanted me to provide that question to you and we chatted a little bit. But I have a formal question that I will submit for your response.

PAPP:

Yes, sir. And we will be happy to respond.

THOMPSON:

Thank you, sir.

PAPP:

Thank you.

MILLER:

I thank the ranking member and I would also mention that dredging is a huge issue in the Great Lakes region as well as the Mississippi and this is why I am looking forward to working with him and other members on the -- how the maintenance trust fund, making sure that we spend all the dollars that go into the harbor maintenance trust fund, re on dredging rather than going into a black hole of a general fund. Because dredging is important for commerce and a critical element of our economic path to prosperity, I think.

At this time, the chair would recognize the gentlelady from California.

SANCHEZ:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I appreciate the time.

Admiral, first of all, as you probably know, I think, the Coast Guard does a great job. So we are really happy to have you before us.

And I got see it firsthand when I was the Chairwoman of this subcommittee. So thank you very much for the work that you all do.

I was going to talk a little bit about the TWIC program. Because the -- it is -- for those that don't know, the transportation worker identification program that we have, a card that would be used by our port workers, and actually anybody who goes onto a port. And we have been trying to get this implemented now for a few years and have had various problems, actually, with it. Certainly delays in implementation, which have cost a lot of workers work time.

Because, for example, if you are a longshoreman and you can't get onto the port to do the eight -- onto the port to do your eight-hour work day, that is time lost. I mean, that is what these people are selling, their labor for the day. And you can't get that back.

So with the budget constraints, I am worried about where we are going to go forward with this. And in fact, in this past Coast Guard authorization, I put in there, I expected the Coast Guard to help facilitate escorted access for TWIC applicants, who were trying to get to their job, but had been, for whatever reason, been unable to get their card, had been -- they have got a background check to go through. Maybe the place where they have to go get the card is far away. The card got lost in the mail or the card doesn't come or it can't come through the mail. They have to go pick it up, so they have to lose another day to go find it.

There are a lot of people, and by the way, this is affecting a lot of our minority communities, especially African American and the Hispanic community.

So I had put in something to say that if they were in the middle of that process, the Coast Guard should help facilitate, to escort them onto the port. Because if you don't have a TWIC card and you are not escorted, you can't get onto the port to do your work.

So can you please explain to this committee, because I have heard a lot from -- a lot of the people who are suffering with this problem, that the Coast Guard hasn't helped to escort workers onto the ports.

And if you are indeed providing this service, in accordance with the law that we passed, would you please explain how you are doing that and are you -- and how you are reaching out to employees and to labor organizations to help them to understand what the process is if someone is in the TWIC process, for whatever reason, hasn't really been able to pull their card and still manages to get onto the board -- onto the port to work?

PAPP:

Well, thank you, ma'am.

I -- first of all, let me say that I agree, philosophically, with everything you said.

As a ship captain, I was always -- and I have told this to many of the industry groups, I always was concerned, in my case, about regulations and policy coming out of Coast Guard headquarters that made it harder for me to do my job. And I sort of transferred that philosophy to dealing with the marine industry as well.

Oftentimes, we come up with broad-based solutions to perceived and real problems and we don't understand full well the difficulty of implementation that goes across the board.

I have heard you and others loud and clear and I have made it my personal -- made a personal effort to get out and meet with the industry groups.

The Passenger Vessel Association.

America Waterways Operators.

I went down to Houston last week and met with industry and first and foremost, I am listening and finding out about their concerns.

And then going back to Coast Guard headquarters, and coming up with, let us come up with some solutions on perhaps how we might modify or change or look at other arrangements for certain segments of that maritime industry population.

But at the end of the day, I agree completely with having a single identification card that can be used across the industry. The whole philosophy of that has found the course, the details and the problems of the implementation, as you have well identified.

I don't have the answer on the escorted process right now. I would be happy to provide that for the record. It is certainly something that I think is reasonable and I understand your concern. I will go back with my staff and work and see what solutions we can come up on that.

We have other challenges that I found out, last week, when I went down to the harbor safety committee and convention that was down in Houston that deals with seamen that come off foreign ships and how they get across the facilities to go out for deserved shore leave as well.

SANCHEZ:

But in some cases, it is easier for them than actually one of our workers to get onto the port, if they don't have this TWIC card.

I agree with the whole issue.

This should be one card. We shouldn't have to have a HazMat card, a something card, a port card, a state card. Because it is costing time and effort and money for these people to be credentialed to get onto our ports. But in particular, for those who, other than the processes bogged down, we need to figure out how you help them get onto the port for their day's work until we figure out these other SNAFUs that we are having.

PAPP:

Yes, ma'am.

SANCHEZ:

And I would appreciate that. And I look forward to your report on that.

PAPP:

Yes, ma'am.

MILLER:

I thank the gentlelady for bringing up the question of the TWIC and I think every member of this committee, certainly myself included, have had a number of conversations with the maritime industry about the, as you mentioned, the implementation of that. So perhaps you could provide the committee with the status of where we are, any suggested recommendations you might have on how you intend to proceed and if there is any additional legislation needed by the Congress or how we can help you work that problem through.

PAPP:

Yes.

MILLER:

I appreciate that.

At this time, the chair would recognize the gentleman from Detroit, Mr. Clarke.

CLARKE:

Yes.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson.

Admiral, it is great to see you.

I wanted to commend you for your years in the Coast Guard and also specifically of being the 13th gold ancient mariner of the Coast Guard. That is an extraordinary accomplishment.

I represent the city of Detroit, that Detroit sector, that I know you know well. I wanted to follow-up on ranking member Thompson's questions, which I believe go to the very heart of the major issue here.

It is whether this proposed 2012 budget provides the Coast Guard with enough money to actually guard our coasts. And in particular, I would like to refer to some comments that were summarized to me about your 2011 state of the Coast Guard address, where you stated that in light of the sharp increase in mission related deaths, the Coast Guard may need to either reduce the number of homeland security missions and the training related to the skills needed to execute those missions and that you are also performing a comprehensive review of deployable specialized forces and that that review would be coming out sometime in early August.

Will that review, or do you have an opinion, on whether you need more service personnel in order to carry out your additional homeland security mission that you have been given, subsequent to 2001?

And does the proposed budget provide you with the resources you need to hire these people?

PAPP:

Well, sir, we have gained 6,000 people since 2001 and I value and need each and every one of them.

We were reduced in size during the 1990s. Actually, the size of the Coast Guard right now, the active duty force of about 42,000 is about the same size we were in 1990. And it is before we went into those reductions.

We have what is adequate right now to meet our mission. But as I have said before, we can't do 100 percent on every mission, every day. We cannot be everywhere and be -- do everything for everybody.

As we make those risk-based decisions, our senior leaders make decisions on the allocation of the finite resources to whatever is the most important mission on that particular day.

Having spent some time in Detroit, I was the federal coordinator up there for the Super Bowl, in Super Bowl XL, a couple of years ago, the Coast Guard certainly can't do it on our own and what the federal coordinator does is exactly what I am trying to do with the Coast Guard. We have strengthened and enhanced partnerships.

And when you do a security operation for a national security event like a Super Bowl in Detroit, you have got to bring in the municipal, the state, the other federal agencies and then bring them together in a unity of effort to leverage everybody's authority and everybody's capabilities to get the job done.

Coming into my job, in the -- as commandant, one of the four principles I put out was strengthening our partnerships because I foresaw that we would be confronted with constrained budgets and we would have difficulty building the Coast Guard larger in the years ahead.

So we are reaching out everywhere we can to share partnerships.

The customs and border protection operations integration centers out at Selfridge Field was a great example of what can be done, enhancing partnerships and bringing people together. In fact, I have directed my folks to see if sector Detroit can in fact leverage that and perhaps co-locate a little bit better so that we can bring multiple agencies together to enhance the effectiveness of our security operations that better than one agency can do all by itself.

So these are things that I have been devoting my efforts to, seeing where we can leverage out other agencies, things that the taxpayers are paying for already that we can put to use.

CLARKE:

Thank you.

Thank you, Admiral.

I have one question regarding your deep water program on whether the proposed 2012 cuts would impact the number of acquisition personnel we have dedicated toward managing that program, especially in light of the fact that this program is to coordinate the acquisition upgrades of aircrafts and vessels that are desperately needed.

The GAO back as -- back in 2007, even indicated that in order for you to step up your presence, in that -- in monitoring the acquisition program, you need more people.

PAPP:

Well, I am not aware that it is the individual cut on the acquisition side. I don't believe we will cut any acquisition people because we are able to keep the bare minimum going on all the project baselines. What it will do is it will push to the right the completion of those projects because we are getting fewer patrol boats and response boats constructed this particular year. We still need the people on the projects.

And we cannot afford to lose any of our acquisition people.

One of the communities in our Coast Guard, they got hit the worst during the 1990s when we had to cut back, was our acquisition professional corps that we had on the Coast Guard.

We weren't getting money to build ships. We couldn't sustain them. So we lost those people. So then after 9/11, when we started getting a lot of acquisition money, we had to basically rebuild our acquisition work force.

I am confident we are at where we need to be in terms of the makeup and the structure and the number of people we have on our acquisition program right now.

What we need is the steady funding stream coming into those projects, so that we can keep those people employed and get our capital assets recapitalized.

MILLER:

I thank the gentleman. And I appreciate the admiral mentioning the OIC, as we call it, the operational integration center at Selfridge International Guard Base, which, of course, is in my district. And we had advised Commandant Brice-O'Hara, that came out and was there when we had the grand opening and I know that the gentleman was -- from Detroit was there as well, and really I do think, particularly in light of the GAO's report about the northern border being essentially unsecured, and the takeaway from their entire report was how we do have to strengthen our partnerships, as you have mentioned, Admiral.

And in a time of declining budgets, we have all of the affected stakeholders be able to consolidate and analyze data and that is a fantastic operation, I think, that is working very well already, where we have not only the Coast Guard and the CBP, first responders in the immediate area, the county emergency management department, our counterparts with the Royal Mounted Police in Canada.

And everybody, I think, involved there and in analyzing all of this data, so that you do have a working tool at the end of it that can get out into the hands of the -- our folks in the various agencies and on the border to be able to identify threats, etcetera.

But when we think about the total force concept, going forward, I think something like that could be replicated, not just on the northern border, but the southern border, everywhere, really. It is where we are going to have to go and I know you are mentioning about your constrained budgets.

If it is any comfort, you are not the only one that is taking this. This is a problem that we have in our nation right now and it is one of the reasons we are having this hearing today, how can we think about prioritizing the resources and making sure we are able to allow you to do the job that you do so fantastically well each and every day.

And with that, then the chair would recognize the gentlelady from Texas, Ms. Jackson Lee.

JACKSON LEE:

I want to thank the chairman and the ranking member for holding these continued oversight hearings and on such an important issue.

And I truly believe the chairwoman when she speaks to her concern and recognition of the vitality and importance of the Coast Guard, along with my colleague and friend from Texas, who has mentioned eloquently his concern about Coast Guard assistance for the very difficult neighborhood that Mexico is in and difficult challenges that we are in.

I might say, Admiral, that I believe that we have to engage priorities.

I heard from an eloquent constituent that during hard times, it be the consumer spending, business spending and investment or government investment, and for some reason we have turned that upside down.

I think if we take -- as history recalls, we take our historical record from the president who was in office preceding the crash in 1928, that president did not run again because he saw the crash and he knew that the lack of government investment was sending the United States in a deep, spiraling downhill.

Unfortunately, the president who followed did not understand that and continued to fall downhill.

It was Franklin Delano Roosevelt that understood that there needed to be government investment.

So let me just quickly raise the question, the port of Houston is 25 miles long and it faces homeland security issues. I would ask what you think the largest threat to a port like Houston and other large commercial ports are.

I would be interested in, as well, if you could start with this question of the TWIC card is very important to ports all over. You all have been rule making since 2009. The deadline has passed and I would be interested in knowing what the Coast Guard plans are to issue a final regulation?

I noticed that your ships are an average age of 14, whereas Navy ships are 40. I was in Panama and Columbia -- excuse me, 14 years old, 14 years average age. I was in Panama and Columbia and they were pleading, I won't call their names, pleading for the greater resources and asked that the Coast Guards, because of the constant activity on the waters, with major drug cartels and major finds, they considered the Coast Guard their front line of armor, if you will, and help. And even if their countries' meager resources are out trying to battle these dastardly, if you will, cartels and violent actors, they feel comforted by the presence of Coast Guard equipment.

Can you respond to how you are able to do it or not do it? And would you tell us whether you have all the resources you need to do the job that everyone is asking you to do?

PAPP:

Well, I -- in talking to Panama and Columbia, and that particular situation, of course that is the drug interdiction and we are becoming increasingly challenged to provide the bare minimum of Coast Guard cutters down to the deep Caribbean and the east Pacific in response to the requests from joint interagency task force south, this is a mission

that I believe in because when we are intercepting four, five, six, seven tons of cocaine in a load, it prevents it from landing in Mexico or other places in Central America and then being broken down into smaller transportable packages that then contribute to the violence along our southern border.

Those...

JACKSON LEE:

So more resources would help you?

PAPP:

Yes, ma'am.

And more reliable resources.

We are trying to build this new fleet of cutters. Quite frankly, my major cutters, I am getting about 75 percent of their program hours right now because of breakdowns and other challenges in keeping 40- year-old ships running.

The newer ships will be more reliable, more effective, and will provide a better presence and be safer for our people to operate and so will contribute to better effectiveness in that particular mission.

We, right now, are supplementing by putting law enforcement detachments aboard Navy shifts and foreign vessels that are down there, but foreign governments are finding it increasingly difficult to keep ships on station, whether it is French, Dutch or British. And frankly, the United States Navy is having a hard time keeping ships down there on station as well.

So even with those law enforcement detachments, we are losing time and we are losing effectiveness.

Our interdiction still is pretty good. Of the predicted drug flow, we think we got about 40 percent of it in the transit zone last year, but I think the smugglers are starting to look at other routes as well.

More ships on station will help us out. But we -- those ships are versatile and able to use for other missions across the Coast Guard where we need them also.

JACKSON LEE:

I had asked you about the TWIC card. And when do you think you are going to have that regulation, there is a lot of backlog now, when do you think you are going to have that regulation ready?

PAPP:

That is a backlog and, ma'am, I don't have the current prediction on that one. We are, of course, working with TSA. We need to make progress on the TWIC readers and if I may, I will submit that answer for the record.

JACKSON LEE:

Would you, please?

Madam Chair, if you would indulge me for a moment?

MILLER:

Actually, just to interrupt for a moment, just before you came in, we had asked the admiral to give us a complete breakdown of the status on the TWIC cards. There had been several questions. So he is going to give a full report to the committee on how we proceed with the TWIC card.

JACKSON LEE:

I would greatly appreciate it, since the subcommittee that I have has dual jurisdiction to do so.

You did -- and quickly, could you just answer the terrorist question, the greatest threat to ports in America?

PAPP:

The greatest threats to ports in America is the small boat threats, simply because we don't have a good handle on sorting. But we -- through our small vessel security strategy, working in partnerships, leveraging technology, applying our resources in a risk-based manner, I think we are doing much better.

I appreciate the comment on the port of Houston. I was down there last week for the harbor safety committee.

JACKSON LEE:

Yes.

PAPP:

Convention, which brought in 350 people from across the nation, sponsored and hosted by the Houston Area Maritime Security Committee and Harbor Safety Committee. That is my second visit to the port down there. The other being a couple of years ago, after Hurricane Ike went through.

JACKSON LEE:

Yes.

PAPP:

Made an amazing recovery. Our secretary is doing a good job down there. And, once again, leveraging intelligence, information, other things, helped to mitigate the risk within our ports and then applying our boats for escorts and other activities.

JACKSON LEE:

Thank you. And let me thank you for your service and that of all your personnel. We greatly appreciate it. And we thank you for being a very viable part of the United States military.

Thank you again for your service.

PAPP:

Thank you, ma'am.

JACKSON LEE:

I yield back.

MILLER:

I thank the gentlelady for her questions. And we have gone through our first round of questioning and I realize the admiral has other things to do, as do we, but I would like to ask a couple more questions if I could, Admiral.

And for transparency, a bit parochial, with the Great Lakes region, and I know you are very familiar with that.

One of the things I have noticed, I have had an opportunity at Air Station Detroit to go out on the helicopters or the HELOs. They don't have deicing equipment on these helicopters, which I have to say I was stunned, in that environment, not to have deicing capabilities.

Are you aware of that? Do you think there should be some deicing put on these helicopters as the -- what is the cost of such a thing? Do you think that is even a priority? I know you are already doing emissions with that. But again, it was just startling to me to see that there was no deicing capability.

And my other question, talking about icing conditions, is perhaps you could talk a little bit about where you are, status wise, with the ice breaking capabilities, within the United States Coast Guard and the kind of things we need to look at in the future?

PAPP:

Yes, ma'am.

Thank you.

That is two great opportunities for me.

Well, first of all, as you know, we have the H65 helicopter, both at Air Station Detroit and Air Station Traverse City.

Going back in history, Air Station Traverse City used to have larger helicopters until we went through new helicopter purchases and then for, probably, for standardization reasons, in the ninth Coast Guard district, they went to H65s at both those air stations.

The other complicating issue is that we are also -- we have been directed in statute to provide for the two aviation detachments, one in Waukegan and one in Muskegon. And those use the H65 and they are resourced out of Detroit and Traverse City.

I agree with you, we need deicing. But we can't install on the H65. That just adds to the weight of an already semi-limited helicopter to begin with. It is good for its purpose, but for deicing and for larger mission profile, we really need our H60 helicopter, our medium-range helicopter.

When I was the ninth district commander, I advocated for putting H60s up at Air Station Traverse City because of the longer distances on Lake Superior and the harsher conditions. Unfortunately, we haven't seen any growth in our helicopter fleet.

Last year, when the 2011 budget was -- the fiscal year 2011 budget was proposed, because of some reductions that we had anticipated, we were looking at reallocating helicopters, taking H60s from other locations and perhaps outfitting Traverse City with H60s.

Ultimately, that was not supported in the budget, so we continue with the H65.

In an unconstrained resource environment, I would love to have H60s up at Air Station Traverse City. Because of the challenges they face, we will continue to look at that.

The H60, as you know, does have deicing and we will continue to evaluate that and look at the potential for a resource proposal. Or a reallocation if it permits us to move further forward.

And I am sorry, but I lost the second part.

The second ... ?

MILLER:

Yes. Ice breakers. Where are we with the ice breakers?

PAPP:

It is -- we are in a deplorable condition. We have two 30-year-old polar ice breakers, neither of which works right now. For a variety of reasons, which does me no good to whine or complain about, except that it is my job now to come up with an action plan to provide us with that capability.

With the 2012 budget, the president has requested \$35 million to put Polar Sea into operation, one of our polar ice breakers, and to sustain Healy, which is our medium ice breaker.

That brings the money back into the Coast Guard from the National Science Foundation, which is a good move. We gave up the operating funds a number of years ago. I think that was a mistake. It was probably for good reasons at the time. But I am glad to get the money back in our budget.

Unfortunately, that is not enough money to run both polar ice breakers. Ultimately, what we need to do is come up with a long-term solution of what suits our country. Our high latitude study should inform that decision.

And then what we really need is a policy decision across government on what the United States is going to fund in terms of capabilities in the Arctic, which doesn't just include ice breakers. We need to look at aircraft, potentially air stations, search and rescue facilities.

I made a trip up to the northern slope last summer, to evaluate the situation. I visited Nome, Costa View (ph) and Barrow. And we have zero resources up there right now, up to carry out Coast Guard missions.

Ice breakers are a part of that, but we really need a full spectrum of Coast Guard capabilities.

So that will require either a reallocation of resources that I already have, which we already admit is -- we are underresourced to begin with, or put in the resource proposal for what we need in the Arctic and that is the direction 2009, 2010 takes.

MILLER:

Thanks very much.

I recognize the gentleman from Texas.

CUELLAR:

Thank you, Madam Chair.

A quick question.

In your testimony, you referenced that well before vessels arrive to the U.S. ports, screening, targeting operations provide critical information regarding vessels, crews, passengers, cargo destined for the U.S. Tell us how this information flows between the U.S. customs and border protection and the Coast Guard and how that aids your performance in port security missions?

PAPP:

Mr. Cuellar, that is another great example of strengthening and working our partnership, once again. No agency can do it all on their own, so we have to share.

Part of the value that the Coast Guard brings to the Department of Homeland Security is we are a member, a named member, of the intelligence community.

Our intelligence coordination center, ICC, is co-located with the Navy intelligence at -- out at Suitland.

So we share information there.

We are also linked with the targeting centers that customs and border protection maintains for both cargo and passengers. So as we get cargo and passenger manifests for those ships that give us their advanced notice of arrival, we are able to screen the passengers, screen the crew, screen the cargo, compare notes with customs and border protection, with Navy intelligence and other agencies to make an assessment on the safety and security of that ship that is coming into our ports.

And then, of course, as I said, we have our international port security liaisons that inspect the various foreign ports. It is a support that we don't have to plea confidence in. We can impose additional conditions at entry before they come into our ports.

So it all works together with our partners. It starts overseas and I would say, also, that it is not just customs providing it. I have been out to the targeting centers, we have Coast Guard people who work with customs and border protection and vice versa, sharing people and information to make sure that it is seamless across government.

CUELLAR:

Thank you, Admiral, for the questions.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I yield back.

MILLER:

Does the gentleman from Detroit have any further questions?

CLARKE:

Admiral, I am just concerned. I want to make sure you are able to upgrade your vessels and aircraft and information systems. So again, this is regarding deep water. Apparently it is indicated that the contract you had was an integrated Coast Guard system, which is a joint venture between Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin, apparently expired in January of this year. I just wanted to find out, what is the successor to that in terms of the acquisition plan?

PAPP:

Well, we brought it back into our conventional acquisition program. As I mentioned earlier, we have had a chance, over the last four to five years, to rebuild our acquisition program, primary the people, and to update our acquisitions manual and get our people trained in the defense acquisition college.

And we have shown significant improvements there and what we have been able to do is we now have resident, the people should be able to negotiate directly with the companies that are producing either the aircraft or the ships.

Before, we had to use a lead system integrator, because quite frankly, we didn't have the capacity within our small acquisition staff to be able to do that.

We have got the lead on it now. We have reformed our acquisition policies and procedures and it has paid benefits in this fixed priced contract, as I mentioned, for the national security cutter and actually we have better pricing on all the assets that we are doing because we are not paying a middle man.

CLARKE:

Wonderful. You answered my questions. I appreciate it.

PAPP:

Thank you, sir.

MILLER:

Thank you very much, again, Admiral, for coming and giving us a lot of food for thought. I know I have got all my notes spread out all over here, about various things that you have said and as we think about an authorizing bill that is coming up this year, yet.

I made a number of notes about various things that I am sure that we are going to want to talk to you a little bit more about as we get into specific detail about what we need to help to resource you with adequately.

And we look forward to your report about the TWIC card and, as well, if there are any kinds of legislative authorities that we haven't had a chance to talk about today, that you think we could help you with or comes to you in a couple of days, please make sure that you get that information and suggestions to us.

It is very important.

As I say, we all have our missions. You have yours. We have ours in the Congress, to provide oversight and to help however we can to prioritize some of these resources and give you the, again, the kind of tools that you need to do your jobs so well. That you do.

But we, again, thank you for your service to the nation.

This committee looks forward to continuing to work with you and the entire Coast Guard and I will notify the members that the hearing record will be held open for 10 days for any additional questions that they may have.

And that this time, we stand adjourned.

PAPP:

Thank you, ma'am and thank you for your support.

MILLER:

Thank you.