

U. S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

ORAL STATEMENT OF

ADMIRAL THOMAS H. COLLINS

ON

**LAW ENFORCEMENT MISSIONS OF AGENCIES TRANSFERRED
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM, AND HOMELAND SECURITY

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss our enhanced law enforcement role since the stand-up of the Department of Homeland Security. I am delighted to be here with Admiral Loy, Mr. Bonner, Mr. Basham and Mr. Dougherty.

Since my meeting with you last year, and our transition to the Department of Homeland Security, I am happy to report the Coast Guard has preserved our fundamental character as a military, multi-mission and maritime service. The importance of this cannot be overstated. Threats to the security of our homeland extend beyond overt terrorism.

To guard America's security, we are:

- Countering illegal drug smuggling,**
- Preventing illegal migration via maritime routes,**

- **Protecting living marine resources from foreign encroachment, and**
- **Preventing environmental damage and responding to spills of oil and hazardous substances.**

These are all critical elements of national and economic security, and they are all Coast Guard responsibilities.

We are a military service with robust command, control, communications and response capabilities. We maintain a network of coastal small boats, aircraft, deep-water cutters, and expert personnel to prevent and respond to safety and security incidents. As a statutory member of the national foreign intelligence community, we bring extensive intelligence gathering and coordination experience to the new department.

The Coast Guard has relied upon our authorities and capabilities to address national priorities, deploy to Operation Iraqi Freedom and contribute to Operation Liberty Shield. While these events have challenged the Coast Guard's ability to sustain mission balance, we continue to emphasize all our missions.

We remain focused on performance-based results and have found the impact on our Homeland Security missions, which includes law enforcement, manageable. For example, in fiscal year 2002 the Coast Guard seized 53 metric tons of cocaine, the third highest amount ever. Currently, with two weeks left in this fiscal year, cocaine seizures are already higher than last year. We met our migrant interdiction goal last year, and expect to do so again this year. We have also noticed a significant reduction in foreign fishing vessel incursions of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone along the maritime boundary line that the U.S. shares with Russia.

To ensure we have the capability in the future to perform at this enhanced level we are pursuing a multi-year budget resource effort. The Integrated Deepwater System remains the cornerstone of that effort.

We are capitalizing on the synergies available through organizational relationships within the Department of Homeland Security. We are developing information exchange requirements in which every DHS agent will have access to the same law enforcement information in real time.

The field-level working relationships between the Coast Guard and the other DHS agencies, forged through decades of joint and cooperative operations, continues to strengthen and adjust to modern threats.

Just last week, the Coast Guard and the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) executed another successful interdiction near the Texas-Mexico border after a Coast Guard helicopter spotted a go-fast vessel 2 miles off of South Padre Island, TX.

As the local CBP office was notified, a Coast Guard small boat was launched from a shore station and another from a cutter patrolling in the area. While the helicopter maintained surveillance, the smugglers ran the go-fast vessel aground on the beach and began offloading contraband to awaiting vehicles. Together, the Coast Guard and CBP apprehended 8 people and 12 bales of marijuana.

In another example of interagency cooperation, we requested air and surface assistance from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) after receiving a tip from the Cuban Border Guard of a go-fast vessel heading towards the Florida coast.

After the ICE aircraft located the go-fast, Coast Guard and ICE boats engaged in a high-speed pursuit, stopping the vessel 8 nautical miles south of Marquesas, FL. Two of the 26 migrants were identified as smugglers and taken into custody by ICE. A Coast Guard cutter repatriated the remaining migrants to Cuba.

Expanding upon these critical relationships and capitalizing on each others' strengths, along with our Deepwater program and other multi-year resource efforts, will enable the Coast Guard to achieve our multi-mission goals, including the enhanced Maritime Homeland Security missions that are now a major part of our responsibilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.