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U. S. Department of
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United States
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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

ADMIRAL THOMAS COLLINS

ON THE

**ROLE OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD IN
INTERNATIONAL FISHERIES MANAGEMENT**

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE & TRANSPORTATION

U.S. SENATE

JUNE 12, 2003

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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
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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 the Coast Guard's role in international fisheries management.
- As the global demand for fish increases, so does our responsibility to ensure the sustainability of our finite fishery resources. Today we see many significant threats to their sustainability, including under-reporting catch, using illegal harvesting methods such as high seas drift nets, and unlawful encroachment into our EEZ. The Coast Guard's role is to enforce the laws and regulations that prohibit these practices. Our highest priority objectives are to prevent illegal encroachment of U.S. EEZs and to ensure compliance with U.S. and international laws and regulations regarding living marine resources. We take this role seriously . . . approximately 12% of our budget is planned for this mission area.
- There are four key ingredients to improving our international fisheries posture:
 - The existence of strong regulatory schemes that are enforceable;
 - Adequate enforcement presence in key LMR areas for compliance and deterrence purposes;
 - The application and leverage of effective technology, especially in the areas of monitoring and surveillance; and
 - Productive, outcome-focused partnerships with other nations.
- These four aren't mutually exclusive . . . there's a linkage between all four.
- Presence . . .
 - It is clear from our experience that the more our vessels are out there, the less fishing vessels violate the law.
 - The challenge is that we have a vast area to oversee (3.36 msm) . . . and the United Nations Fish Stock Agreement (FSA) adds to enforcement requirements. Clearly, there is a current and projected mismatch between current force structure and enforcement requirements.
 - Of course, our presence requirements can be mitigated by the application of technology. For example, our presence is augmented by the Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and by cooperative agreements with international enforcement partners, such as Russia and Canada.

- Strong regulatory scheme – we actively support DoS and NOAA/NMFS in developing and promoting international enforcement regimes and partner with NMFS and DoJ in prosecuting violations . . . and there has been much progress.
 - The United States was one of the first nations to ratify the FSA whose purpose is to ensure long-term conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks.
 - The FSA is far-reaching in its goal of promoting the conservation of marine fish stocks. It does this by:
 - Thwarting traditional threats such as employing flags of convenience to avoid regulation and inadequate enforcement by certain flag states.
 - Imposing specific duties and obligations on flag states, port states, and regional fisheries management organizations.
 - Granting unprecedented enforcement authority to non-flag states to protect their own EEZs and to enforce measures adopted by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations.
 - A remaining challenge is to increase nation state participation, until we do so . . . the FSA's utility is limited. 20 nations harvest over 75% of the world's total fish catch, yet only 4 of those nations have signed onto the FSA (U.S., Russian Federation, Norway, and Iceland) in the 7-1/2 years it has been open for signature.
- Technology
 - We are currently working with NOAA Fisheries to implement a National VMS. We estimate it to be on line this summer to our Command Centers and to have a live feed to our major cutters by the end of 2004.
 - VMS provides positive identification of the vessel transmitting the data and it indicates what the vessel is doing. Since it employs satellite technology, it has a far superior range compared to other Maritime Domain Awareness tools such as Automatic Information System that is only line-of-sight. VMS is key to fisheries enforcement on the Pacific Ocean.
 - In 2001, the master of F/V INDEPENDENCE was found guilty of fishing in a closed area based on VMS data alone. This is an important case because it was the first one decided on VMS data alone, proving the validity of the system, its usefulness as an enforcement tool, and a way to increase presence through technology.
 - And most importantly, our Deepwater program will provide a powerful network- centric capability to our cutters and aircraft on the front lines of fisheries enforcement.
- Partnerships with other nations – we are directly engaged with enforcement agencies in Canada, Mexico, Russia, Japan, South Korea, PRC, and many others. Our efforts include enforcement MOUs, fisheries enforcement workshops, ship-rider agreements, joint operations, and boarding officer training.

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- We currently have fisheries enforcement agreements with Canada, the People's Republic of China, and Taiwan. We are in the process of concluding one with the Russian Federation and working on one with Mexico.
 - We collaborated with Russia on a Joint Operations Manual addressing law enforcement operations in the Bering Sea and have had successful joint operations with their vessels, due in part to the Manual.
 - The United States is a member of many formal Regional Fishery Management Organizations. Through these organizations we partner with other nations to oversee stewardship of marine resources.
 - Through our International Maritime Officers Courses, our deployable International Training Teams, and specialized workshops, we routinely work with countries around the world to assist them in developing their own management/enforcement/ stewardship program.
- Presence, a strong regulatory scheme, technology, and partnerships are what we need to ensure the sustainability of the world's fishing stocks.
 - Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.