

U.S. Department
of Transportation

United States
Coast Guard



United States Coast Guard
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

ADMIRAL ROBERT E. KRAMEK

ON THE

FISCAL YEAR 1999 BUDGET REQUEST

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good morning, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to appear before this distinguished Committee today to discuss the Coast Guard's fiscal year 1999 budget request and its impact on the current and future state of the Service.

During the past four years, the dedicated men and women of the Coast Guard have fulfilled our role as the world's premier maritime service. They have:

- Saved more than 19,500 lives and nearly \$9.3 billion in property.
- Prevented more than 370,000 pounds of cocaine, marijuana and other illegal drugs from reaching America's streets and school yards.
- Responded to more than 64,000 reports of water pollution or hazardous material releases.
- Boarded more than 59,000 fishing vessels to check for compliance with safety and preservation laws.

The Coast Guard has also accepted the challenge to operate and manage more effectively; to engage in smart business practices; and to employ the tenets of quality centered management, the National Performance Review and the Government Performance and Results Act to achieve the greatest possible savings and efficiencies. The result is a lean Coast Guard, staffed at a "most efficient organization" level, which stands proudly as a model of better government at less cost.

Operating the Coast Guard

To provide services to the public, in fiscal year 1999 the Coast Guard requests \$2.772 million in Operating Expenses (OE) and \$67 million in Reserve Training Funds. Included in this request are the necessary funds to restore the Coast Guard workforce, currently under strength largely due to a very strong economy; and funds to provide adequate quality of life for Coast Guard personnel. To continue delivering current services at the requested level, I have identified nearly \$53 million in additional internal efficiencies. The Reserve Training Request funds a Selected Reserve strength of 7,600 personnel that are part of Team Coast Guard and are integral to service delivery. I request your full support for both the Operating Expenses and Reserve Training requests as any reductions will impact the Coast Guard's ability to provide the services to the public. Our fiscal year 1999 OE request reflects the Coast Guard's priorities across five strategic goals - safety, protection of natural resources, mobility, maritime security, and national defense. [Should have worked Search & Rescue in. Safety especially search & rescue]

1) Safety (Preventing death & injuries, saving lives - protecting property)

The Coast Guard's goal is to reduce deaths, injuries, and property damage associated with maritime transportation, fishing, and recreational boating. Each year, we respond to more than 50,000 search and rescue calls for assistance alone - from recreational boaters in distress to freighters sinking in gale-force winds. Each year, the Coast Guard saves approximately \$2.5 billion dollars in property and 5,000 lives during search and rescue missions. Our marine safety program promotes safety through both our regulatory and inspection roles.

2) Protection of Natural Resources

- 1) We strive to eliminate environmental damage and natural resource degradation on the high seas, within the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone, and in our territorial seas, ports and waterways.
- 2) We protect the nation's valuable natural marine resources from the dangers of overfishing and foreign poaching. Every day, the Coast Guard patrols the closed fishing grounds off New England so that depleted species can replenish. At the same time, we are helping to protect endangered sea turtles in the Gulf of Mexico. We are also pioneers in the fight against water pollution. Since 1990, the average amount of oil spilled in the United States has dropped from

6.25 million gallons to 1.5 million gallons annually. We work closely with foreign nations and international agencies to reduce the number of marine accidents and resulting spills through improved safety standards for commercial vessels. Our fiscal year 1999 budget request supports our goal of reducing environmental damage to U.S. waterways through our aggressive prevention, enforcement, and response programs.

Mobility

The Coast Guard facilitates maritime commerce and eliminates impediments to the movement of goods and people, while ensuring safety as Americans pursue recreational enjoyment of the water. Like congested streets, crowded waterways demand careful policing to ensure safe, equal access for all mariners on America's waterways. Our fleet of buoy tenders maintain some 50,000 federal aids to navigation. We are also completing full implementation of the Differential Global Positioning System to provide mariners with the most accurate navigation information available. Our icebreakers keep shipping lanes open for commercial traffic in winter as well as conduct national interest missions in the Arctic and Antarctic. And our Waterways Management Services coordinate the safe and efficient movement of commercial vessels in congested harbors.

Maritime Security

The Coast Guard protects our borders by halting the flow of illegal drugs and aliens through maritime routes, as well as enforcing all federal laws and regulations at sea. Our boarding teams interdict overcrowded boats carrying illegal immigrants into the United States, foil sophisticated attempts to smuggle drugs into our waters, enforce complex international fisheries agreements and domestic fisheries regulations, as well as enforce safety regulations on commercial and recreational vessels. In 1997, the Coast Guard seized a record 103,000 pounds of cocaine and more than 102,000 pounds of marijuana and other illegal drugs being smuggled into the United States. This represents more than a 200 percent increase over our 1996 totals. To strengthen our Caribbean neighbors' abilities to stop these problems before reaching our shores, the fiscal year 1999 budget request includes \$2.7 million to operate a Coast Guard cutter as a training ship, which will serve as a support ship for the President's Caribbean Initiative. This cutter will

that we have been able to undertake such significant change while continuing to deliver the highest level of quality and excellence in services to the public

People are the heart and soul of the Coast Guard. Reductions in people mean reduction in service to the American public. During the past four years, the Coast Guard has reduced its workforce by nearly 4,000 people. But in today's robust economy, where the nation is experiencing such a low unemployment rate, recruiting efforts to replenish our workforce in keeping with our annual accession goals have been a continuing challenge. The highly motivated, capable people we hope to recruit and retain are finding other available options in the private sector. I need your support for our fiscal year 1999 request to restore the funding to our personnel account in order to recruit, retain, and pay the skilled workforce necessary to perform the Coast Guard's missions.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, the President's fiscal year 1999 budget request for the Coast Guard allows the Coast Guard to carry out its missions. I believe this request is responsive to the challenges we face in meeting the nation's maritime transportation needs, yet recognizes the fiscal challenges we face as a nation. Your strong support of this request is critical to ensuring the Coast Guard remains *Semper Paratus - Always Ready*.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you and the other Members of this distinguished committee for your support and guidance. I ask for your continued support in considering the President's Fiscal Year 1999 Budget.