

U. S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20593-0001
Staff Symbol: G-ICA
Phone: (202) 366-4280
FAX: (202) 366-7124

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

**ADMIRAL THAD ALLEN
COMMANDANT**

ON

**DISASTER PREPAREDNESS:
HOW THE COAST GUARD COMPARES TODAY TO ONE YEAR AGO?**

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

UNITED STATES SENATE

SEPTEMBER 7, 2006

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the preparedness of the Coast Guard today compared to one year ago.

Introduction

Over the course of its celebrated history, a number of significant events have shaped the missions and structure of the United States Coast Guard. For example, when steam engine technology dominated maritime commerce in the mid-19th century, a series of horrific steam accidents in the unregulated industry led to the passage of the Steamboat Act of 1852 and a precursor to today's Coast Guard marine safety missions. Similarly, the tragic sinking of the HMS Titanic in 1912 provided the impetus for the Coast Guard's ice patrol duties in the North Atlantic, a mission that is still executed today. However, the events of September 11th, 2001, brought the Coast Guard to face its greatest operational challenges and potential for change in its role as the nation's premier maritime guardian. While in the throes of adjusting its roles to focus on threats from global terrorism, the Coast Guard was again faced with scrutinizing its missions and capabilities after the passing of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. One year later, the Coast Guard, as part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is working closer than ever with our federal, state and local partners to better prepare to respond and recover from any major disaster, with clear lines of command and control that have bolstered our protection of America. The Coast Guard's continued improvement in emergency preparedness can be summarized under three important and related areas: (1) changes in its organizational structure, (2) refinements in its planning processes and products, and most importantly, (3) substantial progress towards fostering interagency cooperation.

Winds of Change

The Coast Guard has traditionally been described as "the small service with the big job." This is an understatement considering the disparate missions that the Coast Guard tackles on a daily basis: marine safety; aids-to-navigation (ATON) maintenance; search and rescue (SAR); living marine resources (fisheries law enforcement); ice operations; environmental protection; ports, waterways and coastal security; drug interdiction; migrant interdiction; other law enforcement; and defense readiness. As the events of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina showed, many of the Coast Guard's traditional missions can be significantly stretched or modified during catastrophic events. For example, the entire aids to navigation system in a particular waterway may be destroyed in a major hurricane, thereby inhibiting the recovery of maritime traffic flow. Not only will the Coast Guard have to replace this critical infrastructure, but it may also be called upon to assist the Army Corps of Engineers in removing a staggering amount of waterway debris. Major incidents may require the Coast Guard to simultaneously perform an increased number of rescues, shuttle vital supplies to devastated areas, and enforce safety and security zones to protect life and critical infrastructure.

Today, the Coast Guard is preparing to respond to threats ranging from waterborne terrorism to a possible avian influenza pandemic by adopting new strategies for enhancing its effectiveness. As a member of the Department of Homeland Security, the Coast Guard recognizes that these additional responsibilities dictate that it must perform its missions in coordination with other agencies, and in a management framework that is different from its previous model of separate operational and marine safety divisions. Now more than ever, effective communications, properly trained personnel, and "state of the art" equipment/platforms are vital to the Coast Guard to optimize its contributions with other agencies in responding to a major emergency.

Organizational Modifications

Adhering to the spirit of the National Response Plan (NRP), the Coast Guard typically manages maritime incidents at the lowest level possible. Consequently, the Coast Guard relies on a port-centric approach to address its responsibilities under the NRP. This approach incorporates three layers of leadership and

coordination: a field level, a regional level, and a national level. The field level bears the primary responsibility for managing an incident, while the regional and national components provide resource and policy support as requested or recognized. As an incident grows in complexity, or during a catastrophic event, the Coast Guard responds by activating a number of additional mechanisms in each of the three command layers.

This multi-tiered approach ensures that the Coast Guard can deliver its best response to an incident, and address the myriad of issues that will affect municipal, state, and federal interests. During a major event, such as an Incident of National Significance, disciplined and well-staffed participation in all three layers coordinates a number of priorities, such as:

- Ensuring field units receive the resources and support needed to confront the incident;
- Collecting the most up-to-date and accurate information possible between the field and the top leadership elements of the Coast Guard and DHS; and
- Maintaining full cooperation and partnership with other governmental and non-governmental organizations involved in the emergency.

One of the most important organizational changes that the Coast Guard has pursued in its three-tiered prevention and response structure has been the creation of Sectors. First envisioned in 2004, the Sector concept was adopted to consolidate the Coast Guard's operational resources and missions under a single command umbrella for a particular portion of the United States. The major thrust of this reorganization is at the field level. In describing the Sector Model for an article in Coast Guard Magazine, Mr. Michael Shumaker writes:

The new Sector organizational construct represents a transformation from a Coast Guard traditionally organized around its operational programs to one organized around core operational service delivery processes. It focuses the coordinated efforts of all assigned operational capabilities to accomplish Coast Guard mission objectives. It recognizes that in a broad sense, all Coast Guard operational activities focus on prevention of an incident or illegal event, or on response to an emergency where prompt action mitigates loss of life or property, or adverse impact.

The Coast Guard has nearly completed its implementation of the Sector construct across the country. By the end of calendar year 2006, 40 Marine Safety Offices, 39 Group Commands, 3 Activity Commands, 9 Vessel Traffic Service Commands, and a few Air Stations will be consolidated into 34 distinct Sector Commands. Within ports, the Sectors will offer "one-stop shopping" for all Coast Guard interests and needs presented by other agencies and the public. The regional and national command tiers of the Coast Guard have also changed to better align with this Sector construct. In January 2006, Coast Guard Headquarters undertook a major reorganization of its offices and formed three primary directorates to support the Sectors: Response, Prevention, and Policy. Finally, Coast Guard Auxiliary sub-regions are also aligning their geographic and organizational boundaries to better facilitate communications and support to the Coast Guard commands.

In the past year, the Coast Guard implemented another important organizational modification. Based on the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, DHS and its member agencies solidified the concept of the Principal Federal Official (PFO) and the Joint Field Office (JFO). During a major incident response, these two entities provide the vital coordination and communication between all affected stakeholders. Hence, they are cornerstones of the Coast Guard's emergency management at the regional command level during a major hurricane or other disaster. Designated by the Secretary of Homeland Security, the

PFO does not become the Incident Commander, nor does the PFO have direct authority over the Senior Federal Law Enforcement Officer (SFLEO), Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), or other Federal and State officials. Rather, the PFO is tasked with the following responsibilities:

1. Ensure that incident management efforts are maximized through effective and efficient coordination;
2. Serve as a primary point of contact and situational awareness locally for the DHS Secretary; and
3. Serve as a channel for media and public communications and as an interface with appropriate jurisdictional officials.

The PFO is an established tool in emergency response. The Coast Guard has been asked to assume the role for five of the six nation's pre-designated PFOs for the 2006 hurricane season. As part of the ongoing efforts to enhance this new leadership concept, PFOs from both the Coast Guard and FEMA have engaged in integrated training to better define the position's roles and responsibilities.

The PFO is supported by the JFO. The JFO is the interagency office established with the PFO to support federal and state response and recovery operations. Consequently, Coast Guard personnel will provide staff support to this entity, alongside other state and federal representatives, to address the various Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) involved in an incident under the NRP. In shouldering its share of responsibilities for the JFO concept, the Coast Guard identified its primary JFO team members throughout the country and delivered the nationwide JFO training during the summer of 2006.

Based primarily on the realities of resource needs resulting from 9/11 and Katrina, the Coast Guard continues to review and expand its Auxiliary and Reserve force deployment organization and policies as well. Reserve and Auxiliary personnel were absolutely critical for carrying out the Coast Guard's responsibilities after Katrina. Over 680 Reservists mobilized in support of the storm's response operations. Regular-duty Coast Guard personnel assigned across Louisiana were devastated by the effects of the hurricane. The rapid activation of Coast Guard Reserve personnel allowed the affected members time to attend to their personal hardships while the Coast Guard continued to carry out its missions. In another example of continuous improvement and to fully capitalize on the capabilities of all members of the Coast Guard family, Coast Guard Auxiliarists are now included in the Coast Guard's formal Contingency Planner schools, where they can bring a unique out-of-service perspective in the development of the Coast Guard's policies and directives.

Planning and Training Initiatives

The Indian diplomat Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit¹ (vijī'u lāk'shmē pūn'dit) once stated, "The more we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war." Echoing this concept, the Coast Guard continues to institute new and refine existing mechanisms for emergency response planning and training. Events in the past five years have starkly shown the importance of developing a coordinated and rehearsed response structure in all levels of government. Taking its cue from the NRP, the Coast Guard is developing a number of initiatives and is supporting a range of interagency contingencies to support a robust national emergency management structure.

¹ Pandit, Vijaya Lakshmi (vijī'u lāk'shmē pūn'dit) [[key](#)], 1900–1990, Indian diplomat, sister of Jawaharlal [Nehru](#). She was leader of the Indian delegation to the United Nations (1946–51), ambassador to the Soviet Union (1947–49) and to the United States (1949–51), president of the UN General Assembly (1953–54), and India's high commissioner to the United Kingdom (1955–61).

For over a decade, the Coast Guard has been dedicated to integrating the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) within the foundation of its business plan. The efforts bore fruit, and today the Coast Guard is recognized as a leading component in DHS in its understanding and implementation of the ICS concept. All Coast Guard personnel are now required to complete ICS Level 100 and 200 training, as well as a familiarization with the NRP. This training has expanded to include all elements of the Coast Guard family; the Coast Guard Auxiliary has increased the number of its ICS 100/200 trained members by over 125% in the last year alone.

In addition to implementing ICS service-wide, the Coast Guard is addressing its planning and training responsibilities in other specific areas. The massive rescue efforts conducted in the aftermath of Katrina underscored the need for emergency planners to re-examine the mass evacuation and rescue annexes of the NRP. Consequently, the Coast Guard is working closely with FEMA and other agency planners in expanding the scope and language of Emergency Support Function (ESF) #9, which currently addresses only Urban Search and Rescue. Coast Guard members participating in these ESF #9 Working Groups and Hurricane Evacuation Working Groups are developing new policies and increasing awareness concerning coordinated search and rescue, and evacuation initiatives. These new changes will be reflected in the upcoming update of the NRP.

As for new projects being implemented, the Coast Guard is working closely with DHS, DOD and other agencies to ensure Coast Guard's contingency capabilities and readiness architecture are aligned with and integrated into the national preparedness goals of aligning federal capabilities with state and local level needs in disaster preparedness. Key areas of emphasis include development of a detailed catalogue of tasks the Coast Guard performs in support of specific missions (Mission Essential Task List (METLs)), and a larger catalogue of all tasks we perform across all mission areas (Universal Task List).

Other Coast Guard planning components continue to focus on the importance of protecting the Nation's critical infrastructure and operations during a major emergency. The Coast Guard continues to be a major player in the Marine Transportation System (MTS) where the service has established MTS Recovery/Surge Units to address post-event issues related to infrastructure assessment and recovery. In expanding the awareness of this topic, the Coast Guard organized an August 2006 MTS Recovery Symposium involving a variety of agency and industry partners. The Coast Guard is also actively involved in five DHS work groups addressing a potential future pandemic influenza. In this area, the Coast Guard has been diligently working to address two important concepts: (1) supporting federal quarantine policies and procedures, and (2) protecting the operational readiness of all Coast Guard personnel. The Coast Guard is working to allocate over three million dollars of supplemental appropriations earmarked by DHS to develop pandemic influenza policies, resource allocation, and training and exercise support.

Coast Guard Sectors continue to develop planning and preparedness initiatives related to the historic events of the past five years. Planning elements in the Sectors continue to work through Local Emergency Planning Committees, Area Planning Committees, Area Maritime Security Committees, Harbor Safety Committees, Joint Terrorism Task Force Offices, Regional Response Teams and other venues to develop and strengthen partnerships with federal, state, local, and tribal responders. Through these collaborative efforts, the Coast Guard is able to develop and refine contingency plans, exercises, and policies that are tailored to address local political, geographical, and logistical needs. These planning committees are a vital component in keeping the Coast Guard ready for any type of emergency in any U.S. location.

Internal and external training exercises continue to be the bedrock for the Coast Guard's emergency preparedness posture. For example, in an effort to better prepare the East and Gulf Coast regions for this year's hurricane season, the Coast Guard partnered with other agencies in a series of exercises held from May through June 2006. Sponsored by DHS, the Coast Guard participated in table top exercises held in six different FEMA regions, a full-scale exercise in Louisiana, and a Catastrophic Assessment Task Force Exercise held in Washington, D.C. These exercises addressed key lessons contained in reports released after Katrina by the White House, Congress and the Government Accountability Office (GAO). Focusing on the integration and coordination of different response disciplines like fire, public works, private industry, and emergency management, PFOs and senior state officials benefited from an environment of frank candor. Other preparedness exercises continue to focus on many of the Coast Guard's long-standing responsibilities. The Coast Guard is one of the primary facilitators of the New Madrid 2007 Spill of National Significance (SONS) Exercise. This will be the first SONS exercise focused on the nation's inland waters and will support an awareness of the disaster preparedness issues related to the seismically vulnerable New Madrid region in the nation's heartland.

Interagency Coordination and Outreach

Over the past year, interagency cooperation has risen to the forefront of critical issues related to national emergency preparedness. Information exchange and mission familiarity are vital concepts to all organizations working together to resolve major emergencies. In this realm, the Coast Guard has also made a number of changes to best carry out its responsibilities. Coordination and outreach is one of the most important initiatives that the Coast Guard is pursuing.

One of the most valuable intra departmental relationships fostered in DHS is the partnership that continues to evolve between the Coast Guard and FEMA. Coast Guard/FEMA cooperation has increased in intensity and scope during exercises, in identifying lessons learned, and in tracking and implementing remedial actions at the national level. As a result of this cross-pollination, both components have been able to make a number of improvements to their respective contingency plans, such as the joint creation of Pre-Scripted Mission Assignments (PSMAs). FEMA and the Coast Guard developed 22 PSMAs relating to ten of the ESFs outlined under the NRP. These PSMAs developed at the national level, and currently being finalized by FEMA, will allow the Coast Guard to more easily perform those missions within Coast Guard capability, but outside its normal operational scope. Cooperative successes, such as these at the national level, will strengthen the Coast Guard's ability to operate at the regional and field levels.

The Coast Guard has also made a significant number of contributions to and benefited from the Nation's joint intelligence picture. Relying on new initiatives from different components in its intelligence architecture, the Coast Guard continues to strengthen its ability to collect and share intelligence related to the maritime domain. For example, the Coast Guard Intelligence Coordination Center (ICC) works closely with a number of agencies, such as the National Counterterrorism Center, Department of Justice (DOJ), Department of Transportation (DOT), and the Department of Defense (DOD) to process a number of issues related to vessels, crews, passengers, cargo, and ports of departure and arrival. The interagency cooperation maintained through the ICC continues to be important for monitoring potentially dangerous operations, such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) vessel movements and intermodal container transfers. Recently, persistence and close cooperation by the Coast Guard's intelligence offices with the DEA and elements of DOJ and DHS resulted in the ship-board capture of Javier Arellano-Felix, a leader of one of North America's most violent drug cartels.

The Coast Guard has taken a leadership role within the DHS to ensure that intelligence products generated by the Coast Guard are shared rapidly and accurately throughout the Federal Government. Threat information and reports of suspicious activities from the maritime industry and other maritime

stakeholders are shared with appropriate members of the intelligence community, appropriate offices within DHS, and the National Response Center (NRC). Additionally, the Coast Guard and Navy continue to build an effective joint intelligence partnership to enhance Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).

Finally, the presence of Coast Guard liaisons in a number of agencies and countries continues to strengthen the service's functionality and awareness. For example, in the past month we have prepared to deploy emergency oil spill response personnel and equipment to both Lebanon and the Philippines in support of State Department initiatives in both those regions. The Coast Guard has dedicated liaisons assigned to both DHS and FEMA to perform a variety of important functions such as maintaining open lines of communication and developing novel solutions to intra departmental problems and questions, ranging from the air transport for FEMA's new First Response Teams to policies associated with mass evacuations and rescues of coastal communities. On the world stage, the Coast Guard maintains a network of Coast Guard International Port Security Liaison Officers to help coordinate assessments of the maritime anti-terrorism measures established in ports that trade with the United States. The Coast Guard also participates in the Defense Attaché Program. These initiatives enable Coast Guard officers to provide valuable information in foreign nations where Coast Guard efforts are particularly focused.

Conclusions

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita altered the traditional response paradigms for a number of agencies including the Coast Guard. One year later, the service readily recognizes the unique communication and mission challenges that a large-scale catastrophic disaster can suddenly pose. The Coast Guard's ability to respond to major catastrophes is partly attributable to the flexible, multi-mission nature of its forces. Perhaps the most important factor contributing to the Coast Guard's effectiveness is the fact that its forces are engaged in related missions on a daily basis. The Coast Guard will continue to be a leading component of the federal emergency management structure. Your continuing support is vital to the service's enduring excellence as our Nation's maritime first responder – maintaining its flexible organizational structure, seeking out opportunities to partner with other governmental and non-governmental agencies, empowering planning and preparedness initiatives, and realistically acknowledging its own capabilities and limitations.

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