

**United States Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Hearing on FY 2012 Coast Guard Budget Request
Tuesday May 10, 2011 10:00 AM
Location: SD-138**

Witness: Admiral Robert J. Papp, Jr., Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard

Introduction:

Good morning, Chairwomen Landrieu and Ranking Member Coats. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and for your unwavering support for the men and women of the Coast Guard. It is my great honor and privilege to lead and represent these outstanding patriots.

Value of the CG:

America is a maritime nation. 90% of our goods arrive by, or are shipped by sea. The safety and security of our “maritime” impacts the daily lives of every American – regardless of whether they live on or near the water.

Operational Highlights:

In the past year, our citizens have witnessed the Coast Guard in action like never before...Coast Guardsmen conducting drug and migrant interdictions in the Caribbean instantly transitioned to respond to the devastating Haitian earthquake...then, with the dust from Haiti still on their boots, they responded with agility to the unprecedented Deepwater Horizon oil rig explosion and spill.

These “all-hands-on-deck” responses demonstrated the value of our unique, versatile and adaptable maritime, multi-mission, and military capabilities. While we surged to meet these challenges, we continued to perform our many other persistent missions, just as thousands of Coast Guardsmen are doing today...

- In the flood-ravaged Ohio and Mississippi River Valleys, Coast Guard personnel are assisting state and local officials to protect our citizens;
- On the Great Lakes, Coast Guard icebreakers freed the flow of \$2 billion in job-sustaining commerce...facilitating, among other things, the start of the 41st international shipping season in the Port of Indiana-Burns Harbor, allowing stevedores, longshoreman, truckers and small business to get back to work...
- Deep in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, Cutter *Midgett*, one of our 40-year-old high endurance cutters based in Seattle, interdicted a “drug sub” loaded with 6.6 tons of cocaine worth \$138 million;
- In the Arabian Gulf, 700 Coast Guardsmen, including 6 patrol boats and a Port Security Unit, are protecting oil platforms that provide 85 percent of Iraq’s revenue;

- Coast Guardsmen are also deployed off the African coast as part of the joint anti-piracy taskforce;
- In Alaska, Coast Guard helicopter crews deployed from Kodiak to Cordova for the spring and summer fishing season have rescued 4 persons in two separate plane crashes this week...
- And, as I speak this morning, the Cutter *Campbell* is alongside a fishing vessel in the Caribbean on which it has just located 31 bales of cocaine.

These Coast Guardsmen, as their predecessors have done for more than 220 years, are tirelessly working to safeguard our Nation's maritime interests on our rivers, in our ports, along our coasts, and upon the high seas.

Budget:

Yet today we find our Coast Guard at a critical inflection point. I am well aware of our Nation's current economic and budget challenges. However, I also know that decisions made today will do one of two things: sustain a Coast Guard capable of meeting mission and responding to future man-made or natural disasters – or result in a less capable and diminished force.

Your steadfast support, as most recently demonstrated through the FY 2011 appropriation, enables us to continue to perform our challenging maritime missions at the level the Nation demands. The FY 2011 funding addresses our most pressing requirements - major cutter recapitalization and sustaining current operations. By fully funding National Security Cutter # 5, you enable us to deliver this ship up to one year earlier, potentially saving taxpayers millions of dollars. Our acquisitions momentum must continue. Gaps in funding our recapitalization are costly, and jeopardize our ability to protect the Nation's high seas sovereignty.

QUOTE: "When we pay later, the price is greater."

The 2012 budget request responds to our Nation's budget challenges. I have made tough trade-offs and directed management efficiencies and reductions in administrative costs and professional services totaling over \$100 million.

I will reinvest these savings to:

1. Sustain Front Line Operations;
2. Rebuild the Coast Guard;
3. Enhance Maritime Incident Prevention & Response; and
4. Support our Coast Guard Families.

I am requesting over \$1.4 billion to continue our recapitalization effort, including funding for national security cutters, fast response cutters, response boats, maritime patrol aircraft, and sustainment of our aging ships and aircraft.

I also recently decommissioned two antiquated high endurance cutters and our oldest commissioned cutter, known as the “Queen of the Fleet” - the Cutter *Acushnet*. This allowed me the privilege of bestowing the “Queen of the Fleet” designation on Cutter *Smilax* – a ship which is 67 years old!

But at some point it becomes unfair to keep asking our crews to expend countless hours fixing old machinery – our crews deserve state of the art equipment and decent living conditions to do their jobs.

And the American people deserve the capability of a modern Coast Guard fleet to preserve and protect our maritime sovereignty. The good news is, because of your support, our recapitalization is starting to pay dividends...

The first of eight national security cutters, Cutter *Bertholf*, is currently conducting its first Alaska patrol. *Bertholf's* patrol marks the beginning of decades of service the National Security Cutter fleet will provide in the Bering Sea...and on the high-seas throughout the world.

And, the first of 58 fast response cutters – the *Bernard C. Webber* – was just put into the water in Lockport, LA. This is a critical step towards replacing our tired but venerable workhorse – the Island Class Patrol Boat fleet.

The 2012 budget also invests \$22.7 million to ensure the safe and efficient flow of maritime commerce, protect our natural resources, and effectively manage pollution incidents when they occur.

Finally, you cannot have a strong military workforce without healthy families. This budget requests funding for military housing projects and increases access to child care services for Coast Guard families.

Conclusion:

As the maritime component of the Department of Homeland Security, the 2012 budget will ensure that the Coast Guard is able to continue to perform our vital maritime missions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your questions.

Semper Paratus.