

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Opening Statement
Coast Guard FY 2013 Budget Request
10:00 PM | Tuesday | March 6, 2011 | 2359 RHOB

As we all were made painfully aware just one week ago, the Coast Guard's work is inherently dangerous.

We all mourn the tremendous loss of the brave helicopter crew in Mobile Bay last Tuesday: Lieutenant Commander Dale Taylor, Lieutenant Junior Grade John Cameron, Chief Petty Officer Fernando Jorge, and Petty Officer Andrew Knight are far from forgotten. But we are not defined by the shadow of this tragedy....rather, the Coast Guard best honors the memory of their fallen brothers by resolutely carrying out its vital missions in protection of this great Nation.

In fact, last week was visibly bittersweet for the Coast Guard –

Just days after inexplicable loss, the Coast Guard celebrated the production of its newest class of cutters: the Fast Response Cutter.... a modernized patrol boat that represents the strength of American craftsmanship and the future of the world's most capable Coast Guard.

I was joined at that ceremony by some very proud American shipyard workers, emboldened active duty service members, and by a man who was both grieving yet also proud – Admiral Papp, the Commandant of the Coast Guard and our witness here today.

Admiral, again, we are very sorry for the loss of your fellow service members and we thank you for being here to discuss the Coast Guard's FY13 budget request.

Admiral, no one can doubt your dedication to service...or that of the active duty military and civilians that you command.

But, our chore here today is a challenging one – we are trying to make some sense of the Coast Guard's latest budget request....a proposal that:

- ⇒ Cuts over 1,000 active duty billets and decreases military end-strength to just over 41,000;
- ⇒ Decommissions two High Endurance Cutters;
- ⇒ Decommissions three 110-foot patrol boats;
- ⇒ Terminates the high-tempo patrol boat program, largely championed by this Subcommittee;
- ⇒ Delays the acquisition of several key assets; and
- ⇒ Squanders \$30 million dollars in savings by dragging out the acquisition of two Fast Response Cutters funded by this Subcommittee last year.

In addition, the Coast Guard continues to assert that its eight-year old Mission Needs Statement is the basis for requested investments—even though neither the budget for FY13 nor the Coast Guard's funding profile in the out-years support the requirements developed back in 2004.

So, instead of the Administration's *claimed* support for frontline operations or for building capacity towards stated mission requirements, this budget submission diminishes current, near-term, *and* future capabilities.

Admiral, to put it mildly, this is a budget that is challenging for us to accept. We full well understand the difficulty you faced in balancing a shrinking budget while also trying to take care of Coast Guard families, sustaining operations with aging assets, and recapitalizing for the future. This is no small task in today's fiscal environment.

But, the Congress has *never* supported a plan that so bluntly guts operational capabilities. Rather, we have repeatedly funded a *rationalized* modernization program that minimizes gaps by phasing-out antiquated cutters and aircraft while simultaneously bringing new assets on line.

Admiral, I believe what is at stake is no less than the future of our Coast Guard – you appear to have arrived at a tipping point between the Coast Guard that you assert is needed and the agency this Administration is *actually* willing to support.

In my view, the Coast Guard cannot be shortsighted in its approach to this challenge. Instead, the service must approach these issues strategically by applying an updated look at capabilities and requirements within the confines of the Budget Control Act's new realities.

Admiral, we know you have a tough job – that is precisely why we are relying upon you to explain how this budget meets our Nation's needs for both fiscal discipline and robust security.

Before I turn to the Admiral for his statement, let me first recognize the distinguished Ranking Member for any remarks he wishes to make.

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