

**GUARDIANS OF THE SEA: NATIONAL SECURITY  
MISSIONS OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

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(118-38)

**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 12, 2023

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Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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DECEMBER 8, 2023

**SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER**

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation  
FROM: Staff, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation  
RE: Subcommittee Hearing on “*Guardians of the Sea: National Security Missions of the United States Coast Guard*”

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I. PURPOSE

The Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation will meet on December 12, 2023, at 2:00 p.m. ET in 2167 of the Rayburn House Office Building to receive testimony at a hearing entitled, “*Guardians of the Sea: National Security Missions of the United States Coast Guard.*” Members will examine the national security missions of the United States Coast Guard (Coast Guard or Service). It will focus on the Coast Guard’s efforts to support national security interests in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic regions. At the hearing, Members will receive testimony from the United States Coast Guard.

II. BACKGROUND

The Coast Guard is a vital component of the United States national security apparatus. Section 102(7) of the title 14, United States Code, states that the Coast Guard shall maintain a state of readiness to assist in the defense of the United States, and section 103 provides authority for the Coast Guard to operate as a Service in the United States Navy under certain circumstances. The Service is unique among armed services in that section 522 of title 14, United States Code, authorizes the Service to conduct law enforcement operations on the high seas and waters of the United States.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, as United States national security interests continue to grow in the Arctic and Indo-Pacific regions, the Coast Guard’s mix of military, regulatory, and law enforcement abilities provide the United States with a flexible tool that can advance its interests in the region, build partnerships, and deter adversary aggression.

In the Indo-Pacific, the Coast Guard plays an important role by providing a means of non-escalatory United States security presence. The Service provides essential technical expertise to allies and partners on how to develop maritime capabilities and regulations, and the ability to counter grey-zone activities by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Peoples Armed Forces Maritime Militia

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<sup>1</sup>See 14 U.S.C. § 522.

(PAFMM).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, its efforts are essential to countering drug, Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, and terrorism threats in the region.

In the Arctic, the Coast Guard plays a critical role of maintaining the Nation's sole ice breaking capabilities across the United States Government fleet.<sup>3</sup> Such capacity is necessary to facilitate commercial and scientific access, maintain a consistent military presence to project sovereignty and counter Russian and Chinese activity, and safeguard United States resources and assets in the region.<sup>4</sup>

### III. INDO-PACIFIC MISSIONS

The 2022 United States Indo-Pacific Strategy recognizes that the Indo-Pacific region is vital to United States national security and economic prosperity.<sup>5</sup> In the face of China's rising dominance in the Indo-Pacific, the Coast Guard plays a vital role in both preserving and advancing United States interests in the region—so much so that it is the only service explicitly referenced by name within the Indo-Pacific Strategy.<sup>6</sup>

The Coast Guard supports United States interests by maintaining a robust maritime law enforcement presence in the region. Currently, the Coast Guard has permanently deployed three Fast Response Cutters (FRC) to Guam to support Indo-Pacific operations.<sup>7</sup> The Service also deploys National Security Cutters (NSC) on Indo-Pacific patrols, and has future plans to periodically station up to five NSCs in the region.<sup>8</sup> These vessels, operating under various multilateral agreements, international conventions, or other negotiated agreements, are able to perform enforcement duties pertaining to international law or the laws of host countries when operating within their territorial waters.<sup>9</sup> The Coast Guard currently leverages 12 bilateral law enforcement agreements with Pacific Island Nations that allow the Service to directly assist each nation in enforcing their respective sovereign rights, build strong maritime governance regimes, and form a unified front against malign activity.<sup>10</sup> More broadly, the Coast Guard utilizes over 60 multi- and bi-lateral agreements that authorize personnel with enforcement authority from partner nations to embark on Coast Guard cutters and conduct combined law enforcement operations inside the partner nation's Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).<sup>11</sup>

The Coast Guard's unique blend of authorities and international image is key to countering Chinese malignant and grey-zone activities that threaten the interests of the United States and its regional partners. China currently uses a range of civilian, paramilitary, and Chinese Coast Guard assets to advance its economic and security interests in the Indo-Pacific and South China Sea.<sup>12</sup> These actors routinely engage in IUU fishing, territorial encroachment, and the harassment of other claimants' vessels and platforms.<sup>13</sup> Recent examples of such activities include the Chinese Coast Guard ramming Filipino fishermen, harassing Filipino oil and gas exploration vessels within the Philippines' EEZ, as well as numerous incursions into Taiwanese

<sup>2</sup>Lyle J. Morris, *Blunt Defenders of Sovereignty—The Rise of Coast Guards in East and Southeast Asia*, NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW, Vol. 70, 2 at 1–2 (2017), available at <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1016&context=nwc-review> [hereinafter Morris].

<sup>3</sup>UNITED STATES COAST GUARD, ARCTIC STRATEGIC OUTLOOK IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (Oct. 2023) available at <https://media.defense.gov/2023/Oct/25/2003327838/-1/-1/0/ARCTIC%20STRATEGIC%20OUTLOOK%20IMPLEMENTATION%20PLAN%20508%20COMPLIANT.PDF> [hereinafter IMPLEMENTATION].

<sup>4</sup>*Id.*

<sup>5</sup>See THE WHITE HOUSE, INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY, (Feb. 2022), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup>*Id.*

<sup>7</sup>Press, Release, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD ACQUISITION DIRECTORATE, *Coast Guard Commissions 3 Fast Response Cutters in Guam*, (July 29, 2021), available at <https://www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-Acquisitions-CG-9/Newsroom/Latest-Acquisition-News/Article/2713364/coast-guard-commissions-3-fast-response-cutters-in-guam/>.

<sup>8</sup>Gidget Fuentes, *Coast Guard Moving Cutter to Pacific as Regional Missions Expand*, USNI NEWS, (Feb. 15, 2023), available at <https://news.usni.org/2023/02/15/coast-guard-moving-cutter-to-pacific-as-regional-missions-expand>.

<sup>9</sup>*U.S. Coast Guard Indo-Pacific Operations: Hearing Before Subcomm. on Transp. and Maritime Security of the H. Comm on Homeland Security*, 118th Cong. (Sept. 28, 2023) (statement of Vice Admiral Andrew J. Tiongson, Commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area) [hereinafter Homeland Security Committee Hearing].

<sup>10</sup>*Id.*

<sup>11</sup>*Id.*

<sup>12</sup>See Morris *supra* note 2.

<sup>13</sup>*Id.*

waters by Chinese fishing vessels during periods of heightened tension with the United States.<sup>14</sup>

These actions often fall below the threshold of armed conflict and are designed to limit the ability of traditional military assets to respond, as doing so may create the perception of over response and escalation.<sup>15</sup> Comparatively, when responding to such scenarios, the Coast Guard is able to maintain a low threshold of escalation. The “White Hull” brand of the Coast Guard is perceived as less provocative within the international community and allows it to maintain a lower profile with respect to use of force escalation when compared to its grey-hull Navy counterparts.<sup>16</sup> In conjunction with the aforementioned maritime law enforcement capabilities, the Coast Guard is the best equipped service to meaningfully address the growing Chinese grey-zone threat in the Indo-Pacific.

The Service also engages in, and is an important tool for, maritime capability building in partner nations. The Service provides operational training and advice to key Indo-Pacific partner countries, aiding in the development of their partner navies and coast guards, which themselves often more closely resemble the United States Coast Guard rather than the United States Navy.<sup>17</sup> In 2022, Coast Guard NSC’s participated in numerous capability building training exercises, including operations *Blue Pacific* and *North Pacific Coast Guard*.<sup>18</sup> The Coast Guard also supports the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency in building regional capacity to address IUU fishing by managing numerous training programs and exercises.<sup>19</sup>

#### IV. ARCTIC MISSIONS

The United States has relied on the Coast Guard’s persistent presence in the polar regions to facilitate American leadership since the United States acquired Alaska in 1867, and took over responsibility for Antarctic icebreaking in 1966.<sup>20</sup> With substantial territorial and economic interests in the Arctic, including one million square miles of territorial waters and EEZ, a \$3 billion arctic seafood industry, 90 billion barrels of undiscovered oil reserves and 30 percent of the world’s undiscovered natural gas, \$1 trillion in rare earth minerals, and increased commercial and tourism activity, the importance of the Arctic to the United States cannot be overstated.<sup>21</sup> Today, the Coast Guard projects United States sovereignty in the Arctic in the face of challenges by Russia and China, and represents American interests in international bodies governing navigation, search and rescue, vessel safety, fisheries enforcement and pollution response.<sup>22</sup> As the Arctic continues to open and strategic competition in the region attracts more actors, the demand for Coast Guard leadership and presence has only grown.

In the last decade, the world has witnessed a rise in access to the Arctic through shipping routes. In 2017, a Russian tanker became the first ship to complete the Northern Sea Route between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans without the aid of icebreakers.<sup>23</sup> By 2021, an astounding 414 ships voyaged on this route.<sup>24</sup> Although the

<sup>14</sup> See Enrico Dela Cruz and Karen Lema *Philippines Says Chinese Coastguard ‘Intentionally’ Collided with its Boats*, REUTERS, (Oct. 23, 2023), available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/philippines-tells-china-stop-provocative-actions-south-china-sea-2023-10-23/>; Jill Goldenziel, *China Challenges Philippines Over Oil, Gas, and Ocean*, FORBES, (Dec. 22, 2022) available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jill-goldenziel/2022/12/22/china-challenges-philippines-over-oil-gas-and-ocean/>; Joel Guinto, *How China is Fighting in the Grey Zone Against Taiwan*, BBC, (Oct. 4, 2023), available at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-66851118>

<sup>15</sup> Morris, *supra* note 2, at 77.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> See UNITED STATES DEPT OF DEFENSE, INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY REPORT—PREPAREDNESS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND PROMOTING A NETWORKED REGION 41 (June 1, 2019), available at <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/01/2002152311/-1/-1/1/DEPARTMENT-OF-DEFENSE-INDO-PACIFIC-STRATEGY-REPORT-2019.PDF>.

<sup>18</sup> Homeland Security Committee Hearing, *supra* note 9.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> See UNITED STATES COAST GUARD, ARCTIC STRATEGIC OUTLOOK (Apr. 2019) available at [https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/Images/arctic/Arctic\\_Strategic\\_Outlook\\_APR\\_2019.pdf](https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/Images/arctic/Arctic_Strategic_Outlook_APR_2019.pdf) [hereinafter OUTLOOK].

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> Russell Goldman, *Russian Tanker Completes Arctic Passage Without Aid of Icebreakers*, N.Y. TIMES, (Aug. 25, 2017), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/world/europe/russian-tanker-christophe-de-margerite.html>.

<sup>24</sup> *Northern Sea Route Sees Lots of Russian Traffic, But No International Transits in 2022*, HIGH-NORTH NEWS, (June 20, 2023), available at <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/northern-sea-route-sees-lots-russian-traffic-no-international-transits-2022>. [hereinafter Northern Sea Route]

total number of voyages fell in 2022 to only 314 vessels, Russia dominated the activity, as 88 percent of the vessels were Russian-flagged.<sup>25</sup> In 2023, the Coast Guard cutter Healy successfully transited the Northern Sea Route north of Russian territorial waters.<sup>26</sup> Russia and China have declared the Arctic region a national priority and made corresponding investments in the capability and capacity to expand their influence.<sup>27</sup> Yet, they have also challenged the rules-based order as they jockey for increasing power and dominance.<sup>28</sup>

As the Nation's primary maritime presence in the polar regions, the United States has increasingly turned to the Coast Guard to secure the Arctic.<sup>29</sup> To facilitate a myriad of strategic goals, the Coast Guard published an "Arctic Strategic Outlook" in April 2019 and an "Arctic Strategic Outlook Implementation Plan" in October 2023.<sup>30</sup> The Strategic Outlook focuses on three lines of effort to achieve the Service's overarching objectives: 1) enhancing the capability to operate effectively in the Arctic, 2) strengthening the rules-based order, and 3) innovating and adapting to promote resilience and prosperity.<sup>31</sup> The Implementation Plan is comprised of fourteen interconnected initiatives to execute the lines of effort and identifies the lead organizations or offices responsible for overseeing each initiative, as well as critical action items to advance them.<sup>32</sup> Of particular note are the initiatives to expand Arctic surface capabilities, associated support infrastructure, aviation and communication capabilities.<sup>33</sup> It also highlights the need to strengthen internal coordination mechanisms, like the centers for Arctic study and policy and the polar coordination office, as well as international partnerships like strengthening the Arctic Coast Guard Forum and preserving United States leadership in the Arctic Council.<sup>34</sup>

As reflected in these documents, the Coast Guard relies on its ice breakers to project presence and sovereignty in the upper reaches of the Arctic. With its distinctive red hull and Coast Guard racing stripe, icebreakers are a beacon of United States power and leadership in the far north. Yet, despite the importance of the Arctic the Coast Guard's current operational ocean-going icebreaking fleet consists only of the medium icebreaker Healy and the heavy icebreaker Polar Star.<sup>35</sup> Healy is the Coast Guard's only icebreaker specifically designed for Arctic research and is operated in collaboration with the National Science Foundation, as well as other agencies.<sup>36</sup> It deploys annually to the Arctic to support multiple science missions and *Operation Arctic Shield*, the Service's annual operation to execute Coast Guard missions, enhance maritime domain awareness, strengthen partnership, and build preparedness, prevention, and response capabilities across the Arctic domain.<sup>37</sup> As the Nation's only heavy icebreaker, the Polar Star annually travels to McMurdo Station in Antarctica to lead Operation Deep Freeze and break miles of ice up to 21 feet thick to restock the research station and allow it to continue its operations.<sup>38</sup>

Healy's recent patrol to the Arctic demonstrates the diversity and the necessity of its operations. Departing in July and still underway, Healy has already traveled over 20,000 nautical miles from Seattle, over the north pole, to Scandinavia, Charleston, and through the Panama Canal and still has thousands more miles to cover before it returns home.<sup>39</sup> During the trip, Healy completed two science expeditions in the Beaufort and Chukchi Seas and the Eastern Siberian and Laptev seas,

<sup>25</sup> *Id.*

<sup>26</sup> Malte Humpert, *U.S. Coast Guard Icebreaker Sails in Proximity to Russia's Northern Sea Route*, HIGH NORTH NEWS, (Sept. 4, 2023), available at [https://www.arctictoday.com/us-coast-guard-icebreaker-sails-in-proximity-to-russias-northern-sea-route/?wallit\\_nosession=1](https://www.arctictoday.com/us-coast-guard-icebreaker-sails-in-proximity-to-russias-northern-sea-route/?wallit_nosession=1)

<sup>27</sup> Northern Sea Route *supra* note 24.

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> IMPLEMENTATION *supra* note 3.

<sup>30</sup> See OUTLOOK, *supra* note 20; IMPLEMENTATION, *supra* note 3.

<sup>31</sup> OUTLOOK, *supra* note 20.

<sup>32</sup> IMPLEMENTATION, *supra* note 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Id.*

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

<sup>35</sup> Ronald O'Rourke, CONG. RESEARCH SERV., RL34391, COAST GUARD POLAR SECURITY CUTTER (POLAR ICEBREAKER) PROGRAM: BACKGROUND AND ISSUES FOR CONGRESS (July 31, 2023), available at <https://www.crs.gov/reports/pdf/RL34391/RL34391.pdf> [hereinafter CRS PSC Report].

<sup>36</sup> *U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Healy, National Science Foundation embark on Arctic Ocean mission*, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD NEWS, (Aug. 26, 2023), available at <https://www.news.uscg.mil/Press-Releases/Article/3506293/us-coast-guard-cutter-healy-national-science-foundation-embark-on-arctic-ocean/>.

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

<sup>38</sup> See UNITED STATES COAST GUARD—PACIFIC AREA, *USCGC Polar Star (WAGB 10)*, available at <https://www.pacificarea.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Cutters/cgcPolarStar/>.

<sup>39</sup> Jameson Moyer, *U.S. Coast Guard cutter Healy visits Charleston*, NBC 2, (Nov. 3, 2023) available at <https://www.counton2.com/news/local-news/u-s-coast-guard-cutter-healy-visits-charleston/>.

led joint operations in the Barents Sea with the Norwegian Coast Guard, conducted joint operations with Danish and Icelandic Sea services in the North Atlantic, and attended the annual Arctic Circle assembly.<sup>40</sup> It became the first United States surface vessel to have sailed near the Northern Sea Route since the 1980s, and therefore entered the Russian EEZ.<sup>41</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Healy's voyage was closely monitored by a Russian research vessel.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, despite the importance of this region, the United States lags behind other Arctic nations in its icebreaking capabilities. With significant territory in the Arctic, Russia has a fleet of 55 icebreakers, including 18 military icebreakers.<sup>43</sup> While China cannot claim any territory in the Arctic, it has declared itself a "near Arctic state," and operates a fleet of two medium and two heavy icebreakers, with more planned for later this decade.<sup>44</sup> The Coast Guard is working to replace and expand its fleet of heavy icebreakers with at least three Polar Security Cutters (PSC).<sup>45</sup> Additionally, the Service is considering the acquisition of additional medium icebreakers through the Arctic Security Cutter Program.<sup>46</sup> The Coast Guard is also seeking to acquire a commercially available icebreaker that could bolster its Arctic capabilities in the near term.<sup>47</sup>

While Congress has appropriated funding for the first two PSCs, like other major Coast Guard acquisition programs, the PSC program has suffered serious delays and cost overruns, and the first PSC may not be operational until the end of this decade. At the same time, the Coast Guard will likely require additional funding to move the PSC program past the first hull.

The success of the Healy patrol demonstrated the need for increasing capacity and capabilities in the Arctic. Yet, with only two aging icebreakers in its fleet and continual delays and cost increases in the PSC program, it is unclear how the Coast Guard will carry out lifesaving and marine safety missions in the Arctic, much less its national defense missions.

#### V. WITNESS

- Vice Admiral Peter Gautier, Deputy Commandant for Operations, United States Coast Guard

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<sup>40</sup> *Id.*

<sup>41</sup> *US Icebreaker Healy on Successful Research Voyage in the Siberian Arctic*, HIGH NORTH NEWS, (Oct. 11, 2023) available at <https://www.highnorthnews.com/en/us-icebreaker-healy-successful-research-voyage-siberian-arctic>.

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*

<sup>43</sup> Abbie Tingstand et. al., *Report on the Arctic Capabilities of the U.S. Armed Forces*, RAND CORPORATION (2023) available at [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1638-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1638-1.html).

<sup>44</sup> *Id.*

<sup>45</sup> CRS PSC Report, *supra* note 35.

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> *Id.*



**GUARDIANS OF THE SEA: NATIONAL SECURITY MISSIONS OF THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

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**TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2023**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME  
TRANSPORTATION,  
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:46 p.m. in room 2167 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Daniel Webster (Chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. The Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation will come to order. I ask unanimous consent that the chairman be authorized to declare a recess at any time during today's hearing.

Without objection, show that ordered.

I ask for unanimous consent that the Members who are not on the subcommittee be permitted to be on it and ask questions in the subcommittee today.

Without objection, show that ordered.

As a reminder, Members who wish to insert a document in the record, please also email it to DocumentsTI@mail.house.gov.

And I will recognize myself for the purpose of an opening statement for 5 minutes.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL WEBSTER OF FLORIDA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. We meet today to examine the national security missions of the Coast Guard, focusing on the Service's vital efforts in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic regions.

I would like to welcome our distinguished witness joining us today, Vice Admiral Peter Gautier. Is that correct?

Admiral GAUTIER. That's correct, sir.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Thank you. Deputy Commandant for Operations at the U.S. Coast Guard.

In 1787, Alexander Hamilton wrote that "a few armed vessels, judiciously stationed at the entrances of our ports, might at small expense, be made useful sentinels of the laws." Over the last 200-plus years, the Coast Guard has grown from these origins to become a vital sentinel of our national security.

Nowhere is this more evident than the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic regions where the Coast Guard's mix of military, regulatory, and law enforcement abilities provide the United States with a flexible tool that is essential to advancing national interests.

The Indo-Pacific region, which spans from our Pacific coastline to the Indian Ocean, is home to more than half of the world's population, nearly two-thirds of the world's economy, and seven of the world's largest militaries. As the strategic value of the Indo-Pacific continues to grow against the backdrop of increased Chinese territorial activity, the Coast Guard's robust law enforcement presence in the region is needed to ensure U.S. security and prosperity.

The Coast Guard leverages a fleet of three Fast Response Cutters in Guam, a rotating presence of National Security Cutters, 12 bilateral law enforcement agreements, and over 60 multilateral agreements to enforce the international legal order. But this order is being challenged by China through state-subsidized illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, unauthorized incursions, and harassment of foreign vessels. China intentionally acts below the threshold of armed conflict, limiting traditional U.S. Navy response.

But with their white hulls, Coast Guard cutters act as the modern version of Roosevelt's Great White Fleet. They leverage a unique blend of authorities to counter Chinese malignant and gray zone activities in a non-escalatory manner unavailable to the U.S. Navy. Furthermore, since most Indo-Pacific nations have maritime forces resembling the Coast Guard, the Service is well-positioned to provide operational training and advice, and forge partnerships with key regional allies.

In the Arctic, the United States similarly has substantial territorial and economic interests, including 1 million square miles of territory, a \$3 billion seafood industry, and trillions of dollars of mineral and oil reserves. As Russia and China challenge these interests, Coast Guard efforts to project U.S. sovereignty, improve navigation, provide search and rescue capabilities, enforce fishery regulations, and ensure vessel safety are the cornerstone of U.S. security and prosperity in the region.

With its distinctive red hull and Coast Guard racing stripe, icebreakers are a beacon of U.S. power in the far north. Yet, despite the strategic importance of the Arctic, the Coast Guard only has two icebreakers. Only one of these, *Healy*, deploys annually to the Arctic to engage in everything from National Science Foundation research to capacity building.

Conversely, Russia has a fleet of 55 icebreakers, and China, which has deemed itself a near-Arctic state, has a fleet of four icebreakers. Russia and China have declared the Arctic region national priorities and have made corresponding investments in the capability and capacity needed to expand their influence.

The United States and the Coast Guard are racing to play catch-up. I fear we are losing.

While the Coast Guard has been working for years to replace and expand its fleet of heavy icebreakers with at least three Polar Security Cutters, PSCs, this committee has serious concerns about the Coast Guard's ability to execute this acquisition program and de-

liver the ships on time. We expect updates as program milestones are met, but no less frequently than every 60 days.

To help plug the gap in the near term, this committee supports the Coast Guard's efforts to acquire a commercially available icebreaker. And we hope the Service can apply some of the lessons learned from the PSC program as it seeks to expand its medium icebreaker fleet.

So, as we explore the Service's national security missions today, focusing on the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic, I look forward to learning what the Coast Guard will do to strengthen its capabilities in these critical regions and how Congress can assist.

[Mr. Webster of Florida's prepared statement follows:]

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**Prepared Statement of Hon. Daniel Webster of Florida, Chairman,  
Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation**

We meet today to examine the national security missions of the Coast Guard, focusing on the Service's vital efforts in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic regions.

I'd like to welcome our distinguished witness joining us today—Vice Admiral Peter Gautier, Deputy Commandant for Operations at the U.S. Coast Guard.

In 1787, Alexander Hamilton wrote that “a few armed vessels, judiciously stationed at the entrances of our ports, might at small expense, be made useful sentinels of the laws.” Over the last 200-plus years, the Coast Guard has grown from these origins to become a vital sentinel of national security.

Nowhere is this more evident than the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic regions where the Coast Guard's mix of military, regulatory, and law enforcement abilities provide the United States with a flexible tool that is essential to advancing national interests.

The Indo-Pacific region, which spans from our Pacific coastline to the Indian Ocean, is home to more than half the world's people, nearly two-thirds of the world's economy, and seven of the world's largest militaries. As the strategic value of the Indo-Pacific continues to grow against the backdrop of increased Chinese territorial activity, the Coast Guard's robust law enforcement presence in the region is needed to ensure U.S. security and prosperity.

The Coast Guard leverages a fleet of three Fast Response Cutters in Guam, a rotating presence of National Security Cutters, twelve bilateral law enforcement agreements, and over sixty multi-lateral agreements to enforce the international legal order. But this order is being challenged by China through state-subsidized illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, unauthorized incursions, and harassment of foreign vessels. China intentionally acts below the threshold of armed conflict, limiting traditional U.S. Navy response.

But, with their white hulls, Coast Guard cutters act as the modern version of Roosevelt's “Great White Fleet.” They leverage a unique blend of authorities to counter Chinese malignant and grey zone activities in a non-escalatory manner unavailable to the U.S. Navy. Furthermore, since most Indo-Pacific nations have maritime forces resembling the Coast Guard, the Service is well-positioned to provide operational training and advice, and forge partnerships with key regional allies.

In the Arctic, the United States similarly has substantial territorial and economic interests, including 1 million square miles of territory, a \$3 billion seafood industry, and trillions of dollars of mineral and oil reserves. As Russia and China challenge these interests, Coast Guard efforts to project U.S. sovereignty, improve navigation, provide search and rescue capabilities, enforce fisheries regulations, and ensure vessel safety are the cornerstone of U.S. security and prosperity in the region.

With its distinctive red hull and Coast Guard racing stripe, icebreakers are a beacon of U.S. power in the far north. Yet, despite the strategic importance of the Arctic, the Coast Guard only has two icebreakers. Only one of these, Healy, deploys annually to the Arctic to engage in everything from National Science Foundation research to capacity building.

Conversely, Russia has a fleet of 55 icebreakers, and China, which has deemed itself a near-Arctic state, has a fleet of 4 icebreakers. Russia and China have declared the Arctic region national priorities and have made corresponding investments in the capability and capacity needed to expand their influence.

The United States and the Coast Guard are racing to play catch up, but I fear we are losing.

While the Coast Guard has been working for years to replace and expand its fleet of heavy icebreakers with at least three Polar Security Cutters (PSC), this committee has serious concerns about the Coast Guard's ability to execute this acquisition program and deliver the ship on time. We expect updates as program milestones are met, but no less frequently than every 60 days.

To help plug the gap in the near term, this committee supports the Coast Guard's efforts to acquire a commercially available icebreaker. And we hope the Service can apply some of the lessons learned from the PSC program as it seeks to expand its medium icebreaker fleet.

So, as we explore the Service's national security missions today focusing on the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic, I look forward to learning what the Coast Guard will do to strengthen its capabilities in these critical regions and how Congress can assist.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. I would like to thank our witness for joining us here today and look forward to a great discussion.

I want to recognize the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. Larsen.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICK LARSEN OF WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First, I want to start by taking a moment to acknowledge the courage of the five women today who testified this morning before the Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations about their experiences with sexual assault and sexual harassment at the Coast Guard Academy. It is incumbent on the Coast Guard and Congress to do everything that we can to ensure cadets are not exposed to sexual assault or harassment at the Academy. Just yesterday, my staff reviewed a prosecution memo that shed light on a lack of accountability at the Coast Guard. And while we continue to conduct oversight and listen to survivors, I am prepared to do whatever is necessary to ensure a safer experience for every Coastie.

Many people are aware of the Coast Guard's search and rescue mission, and I am glad we are having today's hearing to examine the Coast Guard's lesser known missions, including efforts to support national security interests in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic regions.

Extreme weather events are affecting every aspect of Coast Guard operations from severe storms causing maritime casualties to coastal erosion at Coast Guard stations. The Service is forced to confront climate change on a daily basis, and no place is changing more than the thawing Arctic.

The Arctic is experiencing increased cargo and passenger vessel traffic, increased vessel traffic from foreign governments including Russia and China, and a growing interest in natural resources including minerals, oil, gas, and fish. The Coast Guard is the lead agency tasked with maritime safety, law enforcement, and national security in the Arctic, but with current resources, it cannot meet the demand.

The Coast Guard operates one heavy and one medium icebreaker that are responsible for maintaining a regular presence in the Arctic and the Antarctic. The combined age of these two icebreakers

is 72 years. Given the Service's need to be present in both the Arctic and Antarctic annually, more resources are required. While the Coast Guard is under contract to build more heavy icebreakers, I have serious concerns about the procurement, and I look forward to hearing how the Service plans to ensure the smooth construction and delivery of those cutters.

As well, during times of war, the Coast Guard can be transferred in whole or in part to the Navy. Though this has not happened since World War I, the Coast Guard has experienced significant growth in its international missions in support of the Department of Defense.

The Coast Guard's operations in the Indo-Pacific illustrate this point. Three Fast Response Cutters are currently deployed to Guam in support of Indo-Pacific operations, and the Service regularly deploys National Security Cutters to patrol the region.

The Coast Guard's presence in the Indo-Pacific is invaluable. As a non-DoD Service, the Coast Guard can operate in unique ways and places. For instance, in June of this year, a Coast Guard cutter transited the Taiwan Strait in conjunction with trilateral exercises with the Philippines and Japan, an operation that garners far less attention than if conducted by the U.S. Navy.

The Coast Guard's presence in the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific are just two examples of a broader trend of increased demand on the Service. Unfortunately, this growth has not come with an increase in the requisite resources, and we are seeing mission strain across the Coast Guard.

Just last month, we were alerted that the Coast Guard has a servicemember shortage of 10 percent, and, as a result, it is suspending or scaling back operations at dozens of stations across the country.

Coast Guard shoreside infrastructure faces a maintenance backlog of at least \$3 billion, and several cutter procurement programs face delays, including the Polar Security Cutters, Offshore Patrol Cutters, and Waterways Commerce Cutters. There are real consequences associated with insufficient funding. While its motto is *semper paratus*, or always ready, I fear we are quickly reaching a point where the Coast Guard will be only sometimes ready. It is time for Congress to fully resource the Coast Guard for all of its missions.

I want to thank you, Chair Webster, for holding today's hearing. I look forward to hearing how Congress can do better to support the Coast Guard.

With that, I yield back.

[Mr. Larsen of Washington's prepared statement follows:]

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**Prepared Statement of Hon. Rick Larsen of Washington, Ranking Member,  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

I'd like to start by taking a moment to acknowledge the courage of the five women who testified this morning before the Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations about their experiences with sexual assault and sexual harassment at the Coast Guard Academy.

It is incumbent on the Coast Guard and Congress to do everything we can to ensure cadets are not exposed to sexual assault or harassment at the academy. Just yesterday, my staff reviewed a prosecution memo that shed light on a lack of ac-

countability at the Coast Guard. While we continue to conduct oversight and listen to survivors, I am prepared to do whatever is necessary to ensure a safer experience for every Coastie.

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Coast Guard shoreside infrastructure faces a maintenance backlog of at least \$3 billion. Several cutter procurement programs face delays including Polar Security Cutters, Offshore Patrol Cutters, and Waterways Commerce Cutters.

There are real consequences associated with insufficient funding.

While their motto is "Semper Paratus" or "always ready," I fear that we are quickly reaching a point where the Coast Guard will only be "sometimes ready." It is time for Congress to fully resource the Coast Guard.

Thank you, Chairman Webster, for holding today's hearing and I look forward to hearing how Congress can do better to support the Coast Guard.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. I now recognize Ranking Member Carbajal for an opening statement of 5 minutes.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SALUD O. CARBAJAL OF CALIFORNIA, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION**

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Chairman Webster, for another opportunity to dive deeper into the Coast Guard missions.

Before we get started, I, too, want to begin by acknowledging the bravery of the survivors who came forward to testify in the Senate about a culture of sexual assault, sexual harassment, coverup, abuse, and retaliation in the Coast Guard this morning. I hope our witness and every leader in the Coast Guard was watching. Your stories were deeply impactful, and I am committed to doing everything I can to ensure it doesn't happen to another person.

The U.S. Coast Guard is vital to national security, but their role in protecting this Nation is oftentimes forgotten.

With Coast Guard presence on all seven continents, their missions extend far beyond our shores. Coast Guard operations in areas like the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific directly supports U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives in these regions. Their unique capabilities, mission sets, and longstanding partnerships allow the Coast Guard to be valuable in enhancing maritime governance, safety, and security throughout the world.

Cutters and crews regularly engage in professional exchanges and capacity building with partner nations to support a free and open Indo-Pacific. This comes at a time when tensions are high in areas like the South China Sea, where maritime encounters between China and allied nations have increased. A white-hulled cutter poses a less significant threat compared to a gray-hulled Navy vessel, giving the Coast Guard the ability to conduct international diplomacy.

As our climate continues to change, the Arctic is melting at an alarming rate, opening up shipping lanes and leading to an increase in commercial traffic in areas once inaccessible. The Coast Guard is tasked with maintaining maritime safety, search and rescue, emergency response, and law enforcement across this vast landscape, but it is continually provided insufficient resources.

Icebreaking capabilities and presence in the Arctic and Antarctic are limited due to the dismal fleet of two operational Coast Guard icebreakers. Increased shipping in the Arctic will increase the need for a Coast Guard presence.

The Coast Guard's budget is less than 2 percent of the Department of Defense's budget comparatively. Yet, along with significant mission growth elsewhere, the Coast Guard is continually expected to increase its assistance to DoD.

I am increasingly concerned that the Coast Guard is not receiving the appropriate resources to effectively conduct their missions. I am also concerned that the reimbursement that the Coast Guard receives from DoD has not kept pace with actual costs.

As mentioned last hearing, the Coast Guard is facing one of the worst staffing shortages in their history. With a shortage of more than 4,000 personnel, the Service will soon begin closing stations and laying up cutters. This poses a serious threat to fulfilling their missions and ensuring national security. Without greater resources and improved recruitment, the Coast Guard will not be able to maintain their international presence and support DoD.

While I understand we will not be able to resolve that today, I expect this hearing to help provide a pathway forward and demonstrate the needs of the Service.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

[Mr. Carbajal's prepared statement follows:]

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**Prepared Statement of Hon. Salud O. Carbajal of California, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation**

Thank you, Chairman Webster, for another opportunity to dive deeper into Coast Guard missions.

Before we get started, I want to begin by acknowledging the bravery of the survivors who came forward to testify in the Senate about a culture of sexual assault, sexual harassment, cover-up, abuse, and retaliation in the Coast Guard this morning. I hope our witness and every leader in the Coast Guard was watching. Your stories were deeply impactful, and I'm committed to doing everything I can to ensure it doesn't happen to another person.

The U.S. Coast Guard is vital to national security, but their role in protecting this nation is often forgotten.

With Coast Guard presence on all seven continents, their missions extend far beyond our shores. Coast Guard operations in areas like the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific directly supports U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives in these regions.

Their unique capabilities, mission sets, and longstanding partnerships allow the Coast Guard to be valuable in enhancing maritime governance, safety, and security throughout the world.

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Without greater resources and improved recruitment, the Coast Guard will not be able to maintain their international presence and support DOD.

While I understand we will not be able to resolve that today, I expect this hearing to help provide a pathway forward and demonstrate the needs of the Service.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Thank you very much.

I would like to welcome our witness, thank him for being here today. I would like to also take a moment to explain our lighting system, which is: Green means go, yellow means slow up, and red means stop, it is time to end. And I would also like to ask unanimous consent that the witness' full statement be included in the record.

Without objection, show that ordered.

I ask unanimous consent that the record of today's hearing remain open until such time as our witness has provided answers to any questions that might be submitted by the Members. I also ask

unanimous consent that the record remain open for 15 days for any additional comments or information submitted by Members or the witness to be included in the record of today's hearing.

Without objection, show that ordered.

As your written testimony has been made a part of the record, the subcommittee asks that you limit your remarks to 5 minutes. And with that, Vice Admiral Gautier, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**TESTIMONY OF VICE ADMIRAL PETER GAUTIER, DEPUTY  
COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS, U.S. COAST GUARD**

Admiral GAUTIER. Thank you, Chairman Webster, Ranking Member Carbajal, Ranking Member Larsen, distinguished members of this subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the U.S. Coast Guard's role in advancing our national security interests across the globe. And a particular thanks for this subcommittee's enduring support of the Coast Guard men and women and their families.

Our national security strategy tells us that we are in a decisive decade that will determine the direction of the world and impact security and prosperity of the American people for generations to come. As the U.S. and people around the world struggle to cope with the effects of shared challenges, transnational crime, climate change, and great power competition, more and more our Nation and international partners look to us, the U.S. Coast Guard, for maritime governance solutions for those challenges.

The Coast Guard has an important role in national security, delivering services across all statutory missions wherever we operate. This is increasingly evident in both the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic. In the Indo-Pacific, we provide Coast Guard services to Americans in Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa, as well as supporting the Compact States of Free Association.

The 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy charges the Coast Guard to increase presence and meaningful engagements with partners, and for good reason. Their top maritime concerns are also ours, and they look to us to help advance their maritime sovereignty and security. Together, we advance regional maritime governance and promote free, prosperous, and secure maritime domains, all squarely in the U.S. interest when these foundational principles are being undermined.

The Service is relocating the *Harriet Lane*, a Medium Endurance Cutter, to Hawaii to increase Coast Guard presence in the region and engagements with partner nations. We have homeported six new Fast Response Cutters in Guam and Honolulu. With congressional support in 2024, we would hope to add four additional FRCs. These cutters have proven to be an ideal platform with expeditionary capability even into the far reaches of Oceania. These capabilities combined with a long list of Coast Guard activities and partnerships across the Indo-Pacific to provide unity and strength in bolstering our U.S. maritime governance goals.

In the Arctic, we provide Coast Guard services throughout Alaska and the U.S. Arctic region. Like the Indo-Pacific, the Arctic is undergoing physical, operational, and geographic, geostrategic

transformation. This opens the Arctic region to greater human activity, and with it, increased risk across the maritime sector. The Coast Guard is deeply concerned about rising risk to national security, in particular from Russia and China, as nations compete for diplomatic, economic, and strategic advantage in the Arctic.

These changing conditions drive increased demands for Coast Guard services. This year in Operation Arctic Shield, we increased seasonal presence in the U.S. Arctic by deploying cutters, aircraft, and shore forces to respond to search and rescue cases, inspect bulk oil facilities, complete commercial fishing vessel exams, and conduct oilspill and mass rescue exercises, and training and outreach events across 91 Alaska communities.

We need continued support from Congress to build the next generation of Coast Guard capabilities for the Arctic. Funding to increase near-term presence to the acquisition of a commercially available medium icebreaker is included in the fiscal year 2024 President's budget request, and we are working with the Navy and Bollinger Mississippi Shipbuilding to advance the Polar Security Cutter acquisition.

Never has the Coast Guard leadership been more important in the Arctic Indo-Pacific and regions around the globe. With our meaningful combination of authorities, impactful capabilities, and history of performance and partnerships, we play a vital role in national security as we seek to build and sustain a coalition of unified partners to shape each region's maritime domain as peaceful, stable, and cooperative.

And, Mr. Chairman, before I close, might I just thank the two ranking members for mentioning the Senate committee this morning examining sexual assault in the United States Coast Guard. The Commandant of the Coast Guard has this as her number one priority to get after, and the senior leadership team is totally committed to getting after, embracing, providing the transparency, and having the difficult exchanges in order to really attack this challenge.

I understand that there were a number of Coast Guard witnesses this morning, both retired, and past, and then also on Active Duty, and I, too, commend the courage of those individuals in telling some really, really difficult stories, so, thank you.

[Vice Admiral Gautier's prepared statement follows:]

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**Prepared Statement of Vice Admiral Peter Gautier, Deputy Commandant  
for Operations, U.S. Coast Guard**

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Chairman Webster, Ranking Member Carbajal, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. It is my pleasure to be here today to discuss the U.S. Coast Guard's (Coast Guard) role in advancing national interests in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic.

The United States is both an Indo-Pacific and Arctic nation and the Coast Guard delivers services across all eleven of its statutory missions to American citizens throughout these regions. In both the Arctic and Indo-Pacific, the Coast Guard serves as a unique instrument of national security, with authorities, capabilities, and partnerships that allow seamless operations across the spectrum of national power. Through routine presence, meaningful engagements, and actions that strengthen maritime governance, the Service promotes a free, open, prosperous, and

secure maritime domain during a time when these tenets are being challenged. While the Coast Guard has routinely operated in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic for over 150 years, a changing environment, the intensification of geostrategic competition, and dynamic trends in maritime trade and waterways usage are increasing the demand for Coast Guard leadership, presence, and services. The changing climate is already exerting adverse impacts in both the Indo-Pacific and Arctic regions and the Coast Guard plays a critical role of in protection of the lives of our citizens and our neighbors from the resulting hazards. In response to these demands and in alignment with national strategies and related plans, we continue on a path of growing investments in these regions, reflected most recently in the President's fiscal year (FY) 2024 budget request.

I understand the significant level of investments required to advance Coast Guard efforts in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic, and I embrace the trust Congress and the American people have placed in the Coast Guard. The Service will continue to prioritize actions that safeguard U.S. sovereignty and interests, honor Tribal Nations and Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific and Arctic, deliver Coast Guard services within U.S. waters, and promote adherence to international rules and norms.

#### INDO-PACIFIC OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Coast Guard's strategic vision for the Indo-Pacific is to support a free, open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient region where the United States is a trusted partner for maritime safety, security, and prosperity. The Coast Guard works closely with the Department of Defense (DoD) and U.S. interagency partners to achieve this vision.

First and foremost, we provide Coast Guard services to Hawaii, the United States' territories of Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa, as well as supporting U.S. engagement with the Compact States (COFA). The 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy builds on this legacy of service by directing the Coast Guard to increase both its regional presence and the training and advisory services offered to partner nations. In response, the Service has increased targeted patrols with National Security Cutters (NSC) and Fast Response Cutters (FRC) in support of our regional partnerships. Working with the Department of State (DOS) and the DoD, we have increased engagements with international partners who seek to advance maritime governance within their own territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Across Oceania, we actively leverage 12 bilateral law enforcement agreements with Pacific Island Countries to assist partners in enforcing their respective domestic sovereign rights, building strong maritime governance regimes, and forming a unified front against malign activity. A free and open Indo-Pacific is best achieved through building collective capacity and encouraging our partners to take on regional leadership roles.

The Coast Guard's law enforcement, regulatory, and humanitarian missions are attractive to nations in this region and the Coast Guard is regularly sought out to help solve issues of mutual interest. We promote professional service-to-service relationships and enhanced cooperation across a wide range of maritime, economic, and national security challenges. The Coast Guard works through Security Cooperation, Security Assistance, and capacity building programs with DoD and DOS to provide bilateral and multilateral training to partners. These efforts demonstrate commitment to the region and promote the United States as a trusted partner.

The Coast Guard employs a unique blend of diplomatic, military, economic, and law enforcement tools to provide integrated deterrence through routine presence, meaningful engagements, and the advancement of maritime governance. Working with DOS, we leverage efforts such as the Southeast Asian Maritime Law Enforcement Initiative (SEAMLEI) to help train and educate partner nations to build a multilateral coalition for enforcing standards of behavior in the maritime domain to preserve their sovereignty and strengthen international rules-based norms. The Coast Guard works with regional partners collectively through forums such as the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum and in bi- or multi-lateral engagements to develop strategies to address common problems. The Coast Guard uses its expeditionary capacity to provide tailored support to partners to enable them to protect their maritime sovereignty while also protecting U.S. sovereign rights in the U.S. EEZ.

To meet increasing challenges and demands in the Indo-Pacific, the Coast Guard has expanded capability in the Pacific by homeporting three new FRCs in Guam and three in Honolulu with the intent to continue to grow FRC capacity with Congressional support. These cutters have proven to be an ideal platform with expeditionary capability to sail to the far reaches of Oceania. They conducted five Oceania expeditionary patrols in FY 2023, embarking ship riders from eight nations and conducting 44 bi-lateral boardings and 74 shoreside engagements.

The Indo-Pacific FRCs also became the first Coast Guard cutters to operationalize the new bi-lateral agreement with Papua New Guinea (PNG) conducting four counter Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing boardings and shoreside engagements with the PNG Defense Force, Fisheries, and Customs authorities. Similar engagements were conducted with the Philippines and Palau, growing the capabilities of key regional partner states that enable them to govern their own waters.

The Service also relocated the *Harriet Lane*, a medium endurance cutter, to Hawaii this year. The first Famous-class cutter to be homeported in the Pacific, this ship will promote maritime governance, increase persistent U.S. presence in the region, and conduct engagements with partner nations.

The Coast Guard supports the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) with NSC deployments, adaptive force packages, and capacity building engagements. In FY 2023, Coast Guard NSCs participated in several multi-national initiatives. These deployments supported the U.S. 7th Fleet during U.S. Navy-led Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training, Rim of the Pacific, and Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training exercises, and transits through the Taiwan Strait. NSCs also supported the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), targeting IUU fishing in Oceania. Coast Guard deployable specialized forces also embarked on U.S. Navy vessels operating in the Western and Central Pacific in support of IUU fishing enforcement under the Oceania Maritime Security Initiative. The Service remains committed to interoperability with our DoD partners and is always ready to fulfill a complementary role during conflict or contingency operations as a part of the Joint Force.

The Coast Guard's FY 2024 Unfunded Priority List included \$400 million for four FRCs in the Indo-Pacific to advance the Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States. Additional FRCs in the Indo-Pacific would increase the Coast Guard's persistent and visible presence, strengthening coordination with partners and bolstering regional security.

#### ARCTIC OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

The Arctic is undergoing a dramatic transformation of its physical, operational, and geostrategic environment. Increasing impacts of climate change are opening up new access to Arctic waters. This drives greater activity in the Arctic region, and with it increased risk across the maritime sector. The 2022 National Strategy for the Arctic Region (NSAR) establishes priorities within the Arctic, addressing the climate crisis with greater urgency, expanding scientific research, recognizing the need to advance U.S. leadership at home and abroad, and directing new capability investments. The Coast Guard contributed to developing both the National Security Strategy (NSS) and NSAR and continues to be at the forefront of Arctic strategic leadership.

In alignment with the NSAR, the Coast Guard published its Arctic Strategic Outlook Implementation Plan last month. The plan underscores the Coast Guard's commitment to promoting safety, sovereignty, and stewardship in the region, describing actions the Service will take over the next decade, including continuing our efforts to build Polar Security Cutters (PSCs) and related shoreside infrastructure, acquiring a commercially-available medium icebreaker, strengthening the Arctic Coast Guard Forum (ACGF) and Arctic Council, increasing Arctic communications capabilities, and modernizing the U.S. Arctic Marine Transportation System (MTS).

The Coast Guard acts in concert with allies and partners throughout the region to support U.S. strategic objectives, and to assert international leadership to advance cooperation and uphold international law, rules, norms, and standards for Arctic coastal states and other non-Arctic flag states whose ships sail in Arctic waters. The Coast Guard consistently provides guidance and direction through pre-eminent multilateral forums such as the International Cooperative Engagement Program for Polar Research, Arctic Council, and the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Since 2017, the Coast Guard has conducted exercises with partner Arctic states through the ACGF and the Arctic Council to enhance interoperability and provide a platform for direct dialogue among Arctic agencies fulfilling Coast Guard-like functions. The Coast Guard will continue to exhibit model governance grounded in international law, rules, norms, and standards in the U.S. Arctic and to encourage like-minded partners to do the same in their Arctic waters.

This year, Coast Guard Cutter *Healy* completed a voyage from the high Arctic above Asia and Europe to the U.S. east coast before returning to its homeport in Seattle, Washington. *Healy's* operations supported a blend of national priorities across the Arctic, including building international partnerships, reinforcing international norms, and supporting scientific activities in partnership with the National

Science Foundation (NSF) along the edge of the Russian EEZ. *Healy* exercised U.S. presence in the Chukchi, East Siberian, and Laptev Seas, in accordance with international law, and experienced numerous professional encounters with Russian vessels and aircraft.

The Coast Guard is directly observing increased strategic competition in the U.S. Arctic. Through the operations of the Coast Guard Pacific Area Command and its Seventeenth District (D17), which is responsible for Coast Guard activities for an area of over 3,853,500 square miles including Alaska and the Arctic, the Coast Guard meets presence with presence, through Operation *Frontier Sentinel*. Over the past three years, the Coast Guard has provided operational presence and monitored Chinese military Surface Action Groups, as well as combined Russian-Chinese Task Groups, operating in the U.S. EEZ. In September, an NSC maintained presence to ensure the safety of U.S. fishing vessels during a lawfully conducted Russian military exercise in the U.S. EEZ. In these instances, the Coast Guard's visible forward presence ensured that Russia and China operated in accordance with international law.

Since 2009, the Coast Guard has influenced Arctic governance and sustainable development through Operation *Arctic Shield*. This Operation demonstrates the Coast Guard's operational capability, asserts leadership, and models responsible international governance in a region of key geostrategic importance. Operation *Arctic Shield* delivers a full suite of Coast Guard services to residents and waterway users across Alaska and the U.S. Arctic region.

This work strengthens the MTS, protects the environment, and supports the resilience of Alaska Native communities. This year, Coast Guard personnel conducted extensive marine safety-oriented regulatory activities in 91 villages, inspecting bulk oil facilities and commercial vessels, issuing commercial fishing safety decals, and providing training in areas such as boating safety and ice rescue. Coast Guard presence in the region is by far the largest of any Federal agency. The Coast Guard is also aware of serious challenges facing many communities in Western Alaska stemming from the declines of certain fisheries in the Bering Sea.

Through governing relationships such as the Task Force on the Northern Bering Sea Climate Resilience Area (NBSCRA), the Coast Guard is participating with a broad range of Federal departments and agencies in an effort to address these challenges, in partnership with Tribal representatives of affected communities. Safe shipping and noise reduction standards in respect of marine mammal migrations through the NBSCRA region remain Tribal priorities.

In the Atlantic segment of the Arctic, the Coast Guard's Atlantic Area Command actively participates in opportunities to reinforce the Service's role as a trusted, reliable partner in the region. In June, the Coast Guard participated in Exercise ARGUS 2023, the sixth exercise in a series of annual non-military exercises in the Arctic, which included ships and aircraft from Denmark, Greenland, France, and the Coast Guard. Also in June, the Coast Guard, the Danish Joint Arctic Command, the French Atlantic Command, and local Greenlandic authorities executed a Combined Joint Disaster Relief and Search and Rescue (SAR) exercise. The exercise spanned five days, and included force integration training, navigation exercises, towing exercises, damage control exercises, SAR searches, air drops, and hoist exercises. In August, Coast Guard participated in Operation NANOOK along with Denmark, France, and Canada, where those nations operated as a Combined Task Group to exercise capabilities and integration with multinational defense allies and exchange best practices during fleet integration training. Collectively, these exercises improved our capacity to respond to maritime threats and advanced the U.S. government's standing and influence with key Arctic partners.

U.S. operational presence and influence in the Arctic are founded on Coast Guard polar icebreakers. The Polar Security Cutter (PSC) is a top acquisition priority for the Coast Guard and the Navy. The PSC is the capability the Nation needs to ensure persistent presence and robust domain awareness in the Arctic and Antarctic regions. The integrated Coast Guard-Navy Program Office continues to work actively with the prime contractor to deliver this critical capability.

The FY 2024 President's Budget also requests \$150 million to support the acquisition of a commercially available polar icebreaker, including initial modifications, crewing, and integrated logistics support required to reach initial operating capability. The purchase of a commercially available polar icebreaker will accelerate U.S. presence in the polar regions in the near-term and increase capacity in the long-term.

In addition to recapitalization of our icebreakers, investment in Arctic-capable Coast Guard surface and aviation assets, properly trained and equipped personnel, enhanced communication and domain awareness capabilities, and logistics resources are crucial to delivering Coast Guard services and advancing our security and sov-

foreign interests in the Arctic. As outlined in the Coast Guard's 2019 Arctic Strategic Outlook, closing gaps in these areas requires a whole-of-government approach, such as our partnerships with scientific research agencies, coupled with consistent investment to seize opportunities and confront challenges in the Arctic.

#### CONCLUSION

The physical, operational, and geopolitical environment in the Indo-Pacific and Arctic continues to change, driving demand for Coast Guard presence, influence, and services. The Coast Guard has served and shaped national security in both regions for more than 150 years and will remain central to a U.S. whole-of-government approach to secure our national maritime interests and with partners to reinforce the rules-based international maritime order in the regions.

The continued support of Congress to increase Coast Guard Arctic and Indo-Pacific capacity and presence will fortify the Nation's strategic interests in both regions. Coast Guard leadership is vital in maintaining a coalition of like-minded partners to shape the maritime domain in each region as peaceful, stable, and cooperative. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and for the enduring actions of this Subcommittee to support the members of the Coast Guard.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Thank you for your testimony.

We will now turn to questions from the panel. I will recognize myself for 5 minutes for questions.

Vice Admiral, the current Coast Guard acquisition and modernization strategy was devised in the 1990s. While the Coast Guard works to build the cutters and aircraft planned almost three decades ago, the world and the Service's missions have changed. The Coast Guard did not plan on operations in the Indo-Pacific and the national security missions it is now assigned. How will the Coast Guard ensure its cutters are equipped to execute its national security missions and that they are not outdated before they even get started operating?

Admiral GAUTIER. Mr. Chairman, as you mentioned, we are about halfway through a historic recapitalization of Coast Guard assets. Our cutters and our aircraft, our C5I systems. About halfway through that. We continually update our evaluations giving current trends on what we think our fleet mixes might need to be in the future and what our capabilities are. In fact, to your point, the first National Security Cutter is now about 15 years old. The last one that is being built today has a number of major systems that are indeed different than the original one.

But in terms of how we update things, I will give you an example. The fleet mix analysis we did for Polar Security Cutters and icebreakers tells us that we think we now need eight to nine in a mix of heavy and medium icebreakers in order to tackle all the challenges of the Arctic and Antarctic.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. With the Coast Guard's new focus on the Indo-Pacific, how will the Service ensure that it is completely and thoughtfully part of its core missions, how do they do that?

Admiral GAUTIER. Chairman, thanks to the support of Congress, successive administrations, and partners, the Coast Guard has been getting a lot of support for our growth in the Indo-Pacific. We did things last year like we moved a Coast Guard cutter from the east coast, the *Harriet Lane*, which has now arrived in Hawaii and is going to be part and parcel of our engagement strategies there.

We have, as you have mentioned, we have homeported six FRCs in between Guam and Honolulu. We have built centers. We put

more people and more teams in the Indo-Pacific. And with your support in the 2024 budget, we want to and need to do more.

We have \$40 million in requests in order to build and field four Fast Response Cutters to continue the good work that we have done in the Indo-Pacific, in addition to some of the logistical capability that we need, aircraft support and maintenance, in order to continue our growth to provide the meaningful services that we do.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. So, given the increased timeline for PSC delivery, what is the plan in the meantime to allow the Service to carry out its missions in the Arctic?

Admiral GAUTIER. Sir, we are pressing forward as quickly as we can and meaningfully with the Polar Security Cutter acquisition. In the meantime, we have requested \$150 million in the fiscal year 2024 budget to purchase a commercially available icebreaker which will help us get more presence more quickly up into the Arctic, both in the near term and in the long term in order to tackle some of the things that we need to do.

We have also been in the midst of a very successful service life extension program to the Coast Guard cutter *Polar Star*, which is in Sydney right now to be on its way to break out ice in Antarctica to keep that cutter running longer. It has had three of the five segments in that SLEP, and that is working very well.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. We have talked about it, I know there are very few people that even build the ships, much less fix them up, so, is there a way to kind of grab out all the middle of it, of the old ship and put in new and have a—kind of a new ship out of an old hull? Is that possible?

Admiral GAUTIER. Well, we have examined that, Chairman. The Coast Guard cutter *Polar Sea* is a sister ship to the *Polar Star* and hasn't been operational for a number of years now. In an effort to see what we could field more quickly, we did a study back in 2017 that told us it was going to be about \$500 million in order to gut and renew that ship and get it back into service.

Since then, unfortunately, we use that ship for spare parts. We have removed many more components and systems on that ship in order to keep the *Polar Star* afloat, so, we think the cost of that would be substantially greater, and it would take quite a bit of time in order to do that, so, we have not been pursuing that actively.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. And has the Coast Guard considered contracting out Antarctica icebreaking to free up the *Polar Star* to patrol the Arctic?

Admiral GAUTIER. We have explored that, Chairman, and there, too, there aren't a lot of great options. First of all, we think there is a really important role for a Coast Guard icebreaker in Antarctica, not just to break ice to service the National Science Foundation's McMurdo Station, but to also provide the kind of U.S. sovereignty against the Antarctic Treaty that we believe only a Coast Guard cutter or a U.S. Naval vessel can provide.

Other than that, there really aren't that many heavy icebreakers in the commercial sector that could be contracted by the National Science Foundation to do that mission.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Well, my time is—

Admiral GAUTIER [interrupting]. At least that we are aware of.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. My time is expired. Thank you for your answers, I really appreciate it.

Mr. Carbajal—or Mr. Larsen.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To start on the Polar Security Cutter, how does the anticipated delay of the PSCs impact the 2022 strategy in the Arctic? Are we going to have to delay the strategy?

Admiral GAUTIER. Well, we are going off the national strategy for the Arctic region which presses us to provide that capability, not like a date certain, but it does encumber delays that frankly we don't like as much as anybody. The current contract requires a bill to 2025. We are sure that that is not going to be the delivery date here, but we do believe that this current ship builder is going to be able to start construction in calendar year 2024, and our current estimate of the time necessary to build, we think they will be able to produce an icebreaker heavy by the end of 2028 or 2029.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Can you confidently have any sea presence above a certain latitude on the water, and what is that latitude, as it stands today?

Admiral GAUTIER. In the absence of a heavy icebreaker, we do have the medium icebreaker, Coast Guard cutter *Healy*, which does patrol every summer in the Arctic and, in fact, every other year has been making a trip to the North Pole, and then this last trip is just about to complete an around the world trip that had it going over the northern coast of Russia right off their exclusive economic zone. So, the *Healy* is a very capable ship. We do need to do a service life extension on *Healy*, it was built in 1999, and we do need congressional support to do that.

We can get National Security Cutters north of the Bering into the Chukchi Sea seasonally during the summer season, and we do that as much as we can.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. And then while that is delayed, is that impacting the plans for the homeporting at the Base Seattle or are there other issues involved with a delay there?

Admiral GAUTIER. We are continuing to pursue that aggressively, Congressman. And here is another area where we do need some pretty substantial congressional support. We are working on the first half of the first phase in terms of the dredging of the current Coast Guard base, the Coast Guard slip, and we have sufficient money to complete about half of that first phase.

But we have asked in the 2024 budget for \$130 million in order to complete that first phase so that we can at least get started on the homeporting project for four icebreakers there.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Yes. Shifting to the Indo-Pacific, are there countries that we want to have relationships with, Coast Guard to coast guard, or Coast Guard to maritime law enforcement relationships that we don't have?

Admiral GAUTIER. For almost every country, sir, there is a constant request and desire to tighten and strengthen the relationship with the United States Coast Guard. There are some obvious countries where we do not and probably do not desire to have relationships there.

We are pursuing a couple of countries, though, with longstanding conversations, places like the Solomon Islands and other places

that have not yet sort of fully embraced the relationship with the United States. We are continuing to pursue that.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. So, their presence in their water is—the way I look at it, presence equals sovereignty, so, if we can't be in our part of the Arctic and defend that and plant our flag metaphorically there, then it is like we don't own it at all. And so, for these countries as well, is the Coast Guard the best service—why is the Coast Guard the better service to reach out to these countries in order to show them how best to defend their sovereign water?

Admiral GAUTIER. In terms of the Indo-Pacific states?

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Yes, sorry.

Admiral GAUTIER. Yes. Because we are in a strategic competition with competitors that are seeking to turn countries away from the West and undermine the international order, so, as part of the grand strategy in the United States as penned in the Indo-Pacific Strategy, it is incumbent upon us and especially the Coast Guard with our special set of capabilities and authorities that our partner nations want and want help from and want to partner with, we then can provide the kind of governance that they seek to counter sort of the corrosive and erosive effects of the competitors in the region.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Yes. Just in the last 15 seconds, I will just thank you for your comments at the end of your testimony. I appreciate hearing that. A few other committees over here are starting to look at the issue, sexual assault, sexual harassment. But that said, we will on this committee continue to lead on the oversight on that, and I look forward to hearing more from the Coast Guard and Coast Guard responding to our request on those issues.

Admiral GAUTIER. Welcome that, sir.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Thank you. Yield back.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Mr. Babin, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Dr. BABIN. Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Vice Admiral, thank you for being here. It is good to meet you at headquarters the other night, enjoyed it, seeing some of your other folks there as well.

The entire country is feeling the pain of historic inflation right now that we are dealing with, and I imagine that inflation is having a pretty good impact on the Coast Guard's infrastructure projects, maintenance, service, and assets, et cetera. And I wonder and really worry about some of the newer more junior enlisted Coasties that are trying to pay rent in places that were already expensive a few years ago that have now been hit by out-of-control inflation for the last 2½ years.

I would like to hear from you briefly how inflation is impacting the Coast Guard's national security mission.

Admiral GAUTIER. Thanks for that question very much, Congressman. I think just like ordinary Americans, our frontline sentinels have suffered in the past from just higher costs of living in general, and then in particular, where Coast Guard men and women live on the coast in many areas that tend to be sort of vacation areas and things like that, housing is a particular challenge,

and then getting medical services as well. So, enduring congressional support in terms of base pay and our base allowance for housing, medical support, and things like that, we would be grateful for.

Dr. BABIN. Great, thank you. I am also interested in discussing some of the Coast Guard's unmanned assets. I understand that MQ-9s are being utilized to some capacity in the Caribbean and the Eastern Pacific for counterdrug missions. What unmanned technologies are being used in the Indo-Pacific, and how does the Coast Guard plan to employ them within the Arctic region?

Admiral GAUTIER. Large unmanned systems like the MQ-9 are very, very capable, and recognized that early on. The Coast Guard and Customs and Border Protection created a joint program office in order to jointly operate MQ-9s. We have not operated any in the Pacific yet. We are operating—CPB operates predominantly, obviously, on the border and is doing more so in Puerto Rico, and we are learning lessons from that.

In the meantime, we have had longstanding medium range unmanned aircraft operating off of our National Security Cutters in the Pacific predominantly on counterdrug and illegal fishing patrols. Terrific capability as well. We are going to be fielding more into the Pacific, I think, as we learn more about how these particular capabilities fit in the inventory.

Dr. BABIN. OK, thank you. How do small drones factor into the Coast Guard's operations and national security mission, and does the Coast Guard plan to expand its fleet of secured drones, and if so, how?

Admiral GAUTIER. We field quite a bit of small drones across the Coast Guard, sir. What we do is, we basically authorize local units to go out and purchase sort of the secure American-built drones, and they can use them for whatever. That could be inspecting a building, that could be looking at aids to navigation, and things like that. Those are pretty ubiquitous in the Coast Guard inventory.

The other thing we do that is less known is, we have a counter-UAS capability in the Coast Guard in order to protect sort of maritime secure facilities, major events, and things like that. That authorization is expiring on February 2nd in the PETA Act, and we would ask Congress to renew that. It is a DHS authority, so, on behalf of DHS, we would ask for that to be renewed.

Dr. BABIN. Absolutely. Thank you. Last question. In July 2022, the National Marine Fisheries Service released a proposed rule titled, Amendments to the North Atlantic Right Whale Vessel Strike Reduction Rule, which would expand the geographic range and number of vessels that would be subject to a 10-knot speed restriction along virtually the entire Atlantic coast for half of the year. This would apply to tens of thousands of vessels not currently subject to speed restrictions.

From what I understand, the rule was developed without meaningful consultation with the Coast Guard, and even though the brunt of the enforcement burden would fall on the Coast Guard, the draft rule states, "... we anticipate receiving continued assistance from enforcement partners such as the U.S. Coast Guard and State law enforcement agencies." So, how would the additional bur-

den of being responsible for essentially writing speeding tickets all along the Atlantic coast negatively impact the Coast Guard's ability to carry out its critical national security mission? If you don't mind.

Admiral GAUTIER. Not at all. So, we have a longstanding productive relationship with NOAA and National Marine Fisheries. They asked for a consultation for us on this particular draft of the notice of proposed rulemaking. We provided them specific information that they look for in terms of like AIS coverage, in terms of the relationship between a vessel pilot and a vessel master, some very specific stuff as they have crafted the notice of proposed rulemaking.

So, with regards to enforce—so that—our relationship is strong. But with regards to enforcement, our understanding is some of these areas are pretty expansive. Not all of the vessels that may apply for this speed restriction have AIS, so, admittedly there are going to be challenges to enforcement of that, and the Coast Guard may need some resources if it does indeed fall on us to enforce it.

Dr. BABIN. Yes, sir. Thank you very much.

And my time is expired, so, I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Mr. Carbajal, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Admiral Gautier, the Coast Guard is facing a \$3 billion infrastructure backlog and 4,000 personnel shortage. How will the backlog and the shortage impact operations in the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific?

Admiral GAUTIER. Well first off, Congressman, as the Commandant has said, to address some of these shortfalls you've described, the Coast Guard needs to grow into a \$20 billion organization, and we need to do that within a 10-year timeframe. The 3-percent increases that we are getting budget year by budget year just keep us level with inflation. We need to boost that with Congress' help to 5 percent.

With regards to the Arctic, it has impacted the time and schedule for building things like the Polar Security Cutters because those have been subject to inflation since the original inception and requirements were established. So, inflation does cut into it, but we remain committed with Congress' help to do things like purchase a commercially available icebreaker and homeport that, to create a world-class home port in Seattle, to build three Polar Security Cutters and then move out into Medium Endurance Cutters. It all is incumbent about how much support we get from Congress.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you. Admiral Gautier, I have had the opportunity to see firsthand how the Coast Guard leverages its unique international role. In Panama, the Coast Guard lends capacity as well as technical expertise on illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing; maritime safety including in the Panama Canal; drug and migrant interdiction, and more. What is the Coast Guard doing in the Indo-Pacific, and how important is its presence?

Admiral GAUTIER. The easiest way maybe to describe—and thanks very much for making that trip to Panama—is along three lines of effort in the Indo-Pacific. First is persistent presence with things like cutters and aircraft and people, teams and things like that. The second is advancing meaningful engagements to create

and build the partnerships that are so important to us. That again is we do capacity building, we do training, we do foreign military sails of our retired cutters. And then lastly, it is all to advance maritime governance. We work through the International Maritime Organization to establish and strengthen the sort of guiding principles and authorities that we hold to in the international community. And everything that we do to do things like help enforcing IUUF in other countries' exclusive economic zones helps us get after the maritime governance piece.

Mr. CARBAJAL. The Coast Guard force commitments to DoD Indo-Pacific Command has increased in recent years. Does the Coast Guard anticipate this trend of increased engagement in the region continuing?

Admiral GAUTIER. We have been pushing forth, Ranking Member, to try to grow our capabilities within our budget in the Indo-Pacific while we maintain our frontline services to the American people in the United States in our OCONUS States and Territories. But we have had some trade space to do more things like National Security Cutter patrols, things like China Strait transits, transits into the Indian Ocean on occasion, doing things like getting our Fast Response Cutters to the far reaches of places like Palau and Papua New Guinea with shipriders to help them enforce their own places and exclusive economic zones.

But we have to take a balanced approach to make sure that we mind and put on—have the priority of providing domestic services first and foremost.

Mr. CARBAJAL. And can you do that without more resources?

Admiral GAUTIER. We need more resources, Congressman. A \$20 billion Coast Guard in 10 years, we ask for your support on the 2024 President's budget request, has a lot. It has over a half a billion dollars of support to the Coast Guard in the Indo-Pacific in the 2024 budget. There is a lot there that will help us advance our national security interests there.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Mrs. González-Colón, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And good morning to our witness. I just want to say thank you for being here.

My first question for you would be, the Chinese illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities in the Indo-Pacific region are also directly targeting the United States and our waters. And early this year, the House Natural Resources Committee, we received testimony on how Chinese illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activities have depleted tuna stocks within American Samoa exclusive zones, disrupting the local economy and forcing a tuna cannery, one of their largest employers, not to say the only one, to temporarily suspend operations.

I understand that during the Trump administration, efforts were being pursued to study the facility of basing Coast Guard cutters in American Samoa to help counter these threats and strengthen our presence in the southern Pacific region. Can you provide us an update on this? And I do understand the Service has limited re-

sources, but we are facing a workforce shortage as well. And is there any discussion or evaluations of homeporting Fast Response Cutters in American Samoa, if any?

Admiral GAUTIER. Congresswoman, you gave a great example of just many, many that Chinese IUUF does around the world.

In terms of American Samoa specifically and the Pacific in general, American Samoa is absolutely critical to the United States. Americans live there. It has a large exclusive economic zone.

We do actively—first of all, we do have Coast Guard members who are stationed and assigned in American Samoa, predominantly to do marine safety and security and waterways management functions. In terms of patrol and law enforcement, we do patrol the American Samoa exclusive economic zone with things like the Fast Response Cutters. They do come from Guam, and Guam is at some distance. But what we are able to do in Guam is we can cluster resources so we can reap cost savings and benefits there while we still are able to patrol in and around American Samoa without having to have one stationed there. We can provide that as a forward operating location, keep a cutter there for some period of time to do enforcement activities.

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. And how often do we send our assets to American Samoa?

Admiral GAUTIER. It is an occasional presence, and I can get you the specific information. With more Fast Response Cutters, we could be there more often.

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Question. I know the U.S. Navy has long focused on expanding its capability and capacity in the Indo-Pacific region, even coining the term “Pivot to the Pacific.” And given that the U.S. Navy is larger and better funded than the Coast Guard, why should the Coast Guard use your limited resources in this region?

And I am not saying it is not worth it. I am saying, what capabilities does the Coast Guard provide to the U.S. that the U.S. Navy is not providing in the region?

Admiral GAUTIER. I want to make sure I understand. What is the Coast Guard—I am sorry?

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. What capabilities does the Coast Guard provide that the U.S. Navy doesn't in the Indo-Pacific region? And what is the Coast Guard's focus in the Indo-Pacific, having the U.S. Navy Fleet in the area?

Admiral GAUTIER. Understand. Thank you.

So, really, we do provide complementary capabilities, but the U.S. Coast Guard is different. While the Navy focuses on combat readiness and integrated deterrence to prevent bad behaviors, we are different in that we have different capabilities as a military organization, law enforcement, humanitarian service, and a regulator, to provide the sorts of relationship building opportunities with partner nations that they look to from us while the Navy continues integrated deterrence. We provide positive benefits as Navy prevents bad behaviors, I think is maybe the simplest way I can say it.

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Question, and I know I am running out of time. But the *Healy* is currently sailing home from a [inaudible] deployment to the Arctic. And we understand that on this patrol,

its movements were closely monitored by Russia. Has the Coast Guard witnessed any changes in Russia's activities or posturing in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war in the Arctic?

Admiral GAUTIER. I am sorry, my hearing is not all that great. Could you repeat—

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN [interrupting]. Has the Coast Guard witnessed any change in Russia's activity or posturing in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war while the *Healy* is transiting to the Northern Sea Route?

Admiral GAUTIER. It really has changed the relationship in very bad ways. We have and do maintain a functional relationship between the United States Coast Guard and Russia Border Guard because we have to. We are neighbors. And we need practical communications in order to do things like search and rescue and fisheries enforcement.

However, we do not do any planning, any exercising with the Russians. We are now seeing, because of this conflict and because of climate change, more Russian cargo coming through the Northern Sea Route that come down in through the Bering Strait, which has a risk as well. And some of those are ice-reinforced hulls, some of those do not have icebreaker escorts with them, so, they are taking a higher risk position to do that.

And we do know that the Russians have militarized their northern coast. And it has really created an environment of paranoia and distrust.

Mrs. GONZÁLEZ-COLÓN. Thank you. And I yield back.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Mr. Garamendi, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am going to go to the polar Arctic and discuss the icebreaker situation in the Arctic. I am not going to beat around the bush. We have been at this for a decade in this committee, and we are not even close to getting a heavy icebreaker. And now it is 2028, according to your earlier testimony.

My understanding is that the contract with Bollinger is about to tank, that is, fall apart, that Bollinger is not able to meet the contract obligations to build the first heavy Polar Security Cutter. Is that true?

Admiral GAUTIER. Different words than you perhaps would use, Congressman. But they have been doing a baseline review, and they have told us they do not think they can meet the terms of the existing contract.

Mr. GARAMENDI. OK, let's be blunt about this. They are not going to be able to continue under the current contract terms. Is that correct?

Admiral GAUTIER. That is what they have told us.

Mr. GARAMENDI. OK. So, what are our options? Terminate the contract and start over with a new bidder? That is one?

Admiral GAUTIER. That is one.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Option 2?

Admiral GAUTIER. Option 2 would be to—

Mr. GARAMENDI [interrupting]. Force them into bankruptcy because they cannot complete the current contract? That is option 2?

Admiral GAUTIER. That is a possibility, yes.

Mr. GARAMENDI. OK. Option 3?

Admiral GAUTIER. Option 3, which is what we are evaluating now, we understand what they think and validate the new costs and timelines are, and then we find the money in order to staff that and get Polar Security Cutter 1 built.

Mr. GARAMENDI. OK, so, we are going to rewrite—option 3 is rewrite the contract and go forward with Bollinger, correct?

Admiral GAUTIER. Yes.

Mr. GARAMENDI. OK. For the committee, we have been at this a long, long time. The current strategy by the Coast Guard, the U.S. military, and America, is to have three heavy icebreakers available for the Arctic and Antarctic, and five, somewhere, three to five medium icebreakers. That was the strategy. Is that still the current strategy?

Admiral GAUTIER. We have updated our fleet mix, sir, that we now think we need eight to nine in a mix of heavies and mediums.

Mr. GARAMENDI. So, three heavies and the rest medium?

Admiral GAUTIER. We are thinking it could be three to five heavies and three to five mediums.

Mr. GARAMENDI. This committee has wrestled with this issue for a long time, and we have stumbled, the Coast Guard has stumbled. It is time for us to get real. All of the testimony you have given this committee has heard, and I am sure Alaska is interested in this, is that we are out of luck and out of time. We do not have the capability of projecting the American presence in the Arctic, period. We don't.

I want to put this on the table for the membership here and for the rest of us. And that's the time for us to get real. The U.S. Navy can spend an extra billion dollars or so on each and every one of their ships, \$3 to \$5 billion if they want to build an aircraft carrier. They have 35 guaranteed overruns, several hundred million dollars for each and every plane, or for each and every tranche of planes. It is time for the Coast Guard.

I would propose that the Coast Guard take advantage of the current troubles that Bollinger is having and put together a three Polar Security Cutter program. The first one will probably be somewhere north of \$1¼ billion to \$1½ billion. And then the followup two. Go for three Polar Security Cutters at once. Take advantage of the shipyard, of the first one, which is going to be far more expensive than anticipated, and then the followup on the remaining two, and that we put that forward.

We cannot lose another year. We have lost a decade already. This has been discussed and discussed ad nauseum.

Now, we have got to have the courage to move this thing forward. We cannot delay any further.

How many heavy polar ice cutters does China have? Two. Why? Because they know the Arctic is important for them. How many do we have? We do not have one that's available, because it is in the Antarctic or in repair.

So, are we ready to do this? And I would appreciate the Coast Guard coming forward with a specific plan to develop a strategy to build three Polar Security Cutters. Take the current problem with Bollinger as an opportunity, not as a problem but as an opportunity. Let them build the first one, hold them to very tight time-

frames, very tight accounting, very tight review of their costs, and then follow up with the remaining two, taking advantage of a block buy.

What do you think, Admiral?

Admiral GAUTIER. I like your boldness, Congressman, and I will take that back to the Commandant and our acquisition folks.

Mr. GARAMENDI. And you will come back to us when with a proposal?

Admiral GAUTIER. Early in the new year.

Mr. GARAMENDI. We are back here January 8.

Admiral GAUTIER. OK.

Mr. GARAMENDI. Why don't you deliver a Christmas present to the Coast Guard and to America, a solid plan to build the necessary icebreakers for America's presence in the Arctic? Can you do that?

Admiral GAUTIER. We can.

Mr. GARAMENDI. January 8.

Admiral GAUTIER. Aye, sir.

Mr. GARAMENDI. I will be here. Thank you. Yield back.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Mr. Van Drew, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Dr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I would like to associate myself with the remarks made by Mr. Garamendi. I agree. I know, once in a while we do agree, and this is definitely one of those cases.

And I would like to thank you for being here, Vice Admiral. We appreciate it.

China now has the world's largest coast guard, the world's largest coast guard. So, I am here today with serious concerns about the growing maritime influence of the Chinese Communist Party. China has made no secret of this and no secret of its desire to dominate the world's oceans.

Today, China owns or operates ports at nearly 100 locations around the globe, in over 50 different countries. Many of these ports are located near strategically important maritime bottlenecks. The companies which own these ports—surprise, surprise—are ultimately controlled by the Chinese Communist government.

Chinese development of its ports around the world continue forward in an aggressive way. They're not kidding around. They're serious. The situation presents serious national security and economic concerns for our great United States of America. The most obvious security concern is that China could convert its ports into naval military bases. This would instantly give China a global military reach. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, out of 102 known Chinese port projects, 70—70—of them have the physical potential for naval use.

Of great concern to the Coast Guard should be the possibility that Chinese ports may be used to facilitate international black-market operations, activities like drug trafficking, human trafficking, weapons trafficking. Of immediate economic concern is China using their port infrastructure to steal valuable commercial data from our American businesses.

In August, the United States Department of Transportation issued an advisory against the Chinese logistics software known as

LOGINK. I am sure you are familiar with it. LOGINK is owned and controlled—surprise—by the Chinese Communist Party. It allows them to collect vast amounts of information on port activity, and it gives them a complete global picture of maritime activities. This software gives China incredible, incredible power. LOGINK provides the Chinese Communist Party with leverage to control international markets, steal proprietary data, and dominate the maritime supply chain. Serious stuff.

Multiple Federal agencies have sounded the alarm on this threat. This affects our entire maritime supply chain. We cannot allow LOGINK to penetrate our domestic ports, and we cannot allow it to become an entrenched global standard. We must be sure that American commercial activities at home or abroad are not being compromised by the LOGINK platform.

Vice Admiral, as the Deputy Commandant for Operations, you have overseen the International Port Security Program. I am going to ask you a few questions, and my first question here as quick as I can.

Are we as secure as we can possibly be? Are we 100 percent buttoned up? Question number 1.

Second question. Are we controlling illegal fishing, illegal drug trafficking, and illegal human trafficking? Are we 100 percent buttoned up?

Under the International Port Security Program, are Chinese-owned ports, are they cooperating and are they meeting the expected standards on activities like I just mentioned, illegal fishing, drug trafficking, human trafficking, you name it? I will ask that first.

Admiral GAUTIER. So, going through your questions one by one, sir, if that works, are we as secure as we can be? The answer to that is no. There are certainly more things that we can and should be doing, especially since our ports and international ports are predominantly private sector run.

So, the Coast Guard plus CISA and other agencies have a role in that, and we work very hard domestically to try to stitch up those vulnerabilities.

Likewise, on question number 2, in terms of illicit activity, drug smuggling, IUUF, we make humble investments for big impact, but we can do more with more. So, the answer to that question, are we buttoned up, is no, as well.

And then in terms of China and operating ports internationally, we do have an International Port Security Program sanctioned by the International Maritime Organization, where we visit and validate their procedures against security measures that are accepted around the world. That gives us great insight into how ports are operating in and around the world. Is there more that can and should be done? Given the vulnerabilities you articulated in terms of the Chinese reach, yes.

Dr. VAN DREW. Mr. Chairman, I know I have run out of time, so, I am going to ask that my other questions are entered into the record. And Vice Admiral, I would like to thank you. This is not a reflection upon you, but it is a reflection upon the state of affairs as they are right now, and we need to do better. I yield back.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Mr. Auchincloss, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. Thank you, Chairman.

To start with, I want to associate myself with the comments from the gentleman from California about the ice cutters. I will cosign both his comments and his sense of urgency. And I also want to add my own appreciation for those Coast Guard men and women who were so brave this morning to share their harrowing experiences to help improve conditions for all members.

Vice Admiral, the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to counter Chinese encroachment against allies in the South China Sea and is a key component of the White House's Indo-Pacific Strategy. I am a member of the Select Committee on the Chinese Communist Party, and I support the administration's efforts to expand cooperation and deepen ties with our partners in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in the South China Sea, which I think is being overlooked a little bit with our focus on Taiwan. But the militarization of the South China Sea, despite the 2016 court ruling against China, and despite really multilateral opposition to it, is a huge surface area for inadvertent or intentional escalation that could lead to conflict.

Last weekend, and this was covered in the New York Times in a compelling article that I am sure you read, the Chinese coast guard blasted water cannons to block three Filipino fisheries' vessels from entering the Scarborough Shoal. They were accompanied by other vessels using a long-range acoustic device which caused severe discomfort and incapacitation to some Filipino crew. This was documented by U.S. journalists. In October, the Philippines reported Chinese vessels intentionally colliding with its vessels on a resupply mission in the South China Sea.

What does the Coast Guard need to help our allies defend against what you termed in your testimony the growing Chinese gray zone threat in the Indo-Pacific?

Admiral GAUTIER. Congressman, your U.S. Coast Guard does have presence and reach in the South China Sea. We can do more with more. But I can give you a couple of examples.

The Coast Guard leads a multination engagement program called the Southeast Asia Maritime Law Enforcement Initiative, which gives us connectivity to most Southeast Asian nation states which are really hungry for additional law enforcement capacity and capability. We are helping countries in that region with our bilateral relationships to establish multilateral relationships and meaningful operations.

Just a few months ago, a Coast Guard cutter off of the Philippines did a joint exercise with the Philippine coast guard and the Japan coast guard, which is a pretty historic moment. We do a lot of training and capacity building there as well to help countries like the Philippines combat the very thing that you are describing that just shocked us all when we saw that on the news.

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. And let's imagine a scenario where the Coast Guard had all the funding, all the money it needed. What would become then the rate limiting factor for an expanded Indo-Pacific presence? Would it be workforce and personnel, would it be ports, would it be the ships themselves, would it be interest from poten-

tial allied partners? All the money in the world, what becomes the next rate limiting factor?

Admiral GAUTIER. Congressman, I think you have just named a number of—a basket—

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS [interrupting]. Put them in priority order for me.

Admiral GAUTIER [continuing]. All of the above that could. So, for example, starting with our objective for moving from episodic presence to more persistent presence, we can do that when we get more Offshore Patrol Cutters that we can bring into the Bering so we can free our National Security Cutters to be more present in that region.

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. So, ships would be the next rate limiting factor?

Admiral GAUTIER. Ships is one. We have asked for four Fast Response Cutters in the 2024 budget to help us get there. More training and capacity-building teams, more Coast Guard liaison officers in the region, perhaps more aircraft.

So, I think more of those capabilities enable us to connect with our partners and allies in ways they appreciate.

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. Final question, and you mentioned this earlier about reauthorizing the drone program that you have to protect your ports. Talk a little bit more in these last 40 seconds about what the Coast Guard is doing to lean into autonomous drone swarms to surveil, sense, and strike, because that is clearly going to be a key capacity in such a huge area as the South China Sea.

Admiral GAUTIER. We are just in the very early stages of implementing—

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS [interrupting]. Are you working with the Navy and the DoD on this stuff?

Admiral GAUTIER. Absolutely. The 4th Fleet is making great gains in that place, and we are tied at the hip with them on that.

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. Do you have the commercial access that you need to AI and hardware talent?

Admiral GAUTIER. We do, but we are learning. This is a new journey for us. We are piggybacking a lot on what the intelligence community is doing in terms of AI, in terms of object detection, so that our sensors can actually find things without a human eye, making gains there as well.

Mr. AUCHINCLOSS. OK. To be continued. I will yield back, Chair.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Mr. Ezell, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. EZELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The only thing about being a freshman is all the good questions have been asked by the time it gets to be my turn.

But I thank you, Vice Admiral, and your staff. The Coast Guard has been very responsive every time I have called and asked, and during my law enforcement career, dealing with the Coast Guard.

Listening to what all has been asked and said today, I am very concerned about going forward and the protection that is offered by the Coast Guard not only to the homeland but around the world. Listening to what was said about Bollinger Marine, I understand that Bollinger just recently got to the point where they bought the

other shipyard out that was building the Coast Guard cutter. Is that correct?

Admiral GAUTIER. That is correct. They are building our Polar Security Cutter.

Mr. EZELL. So, what they did was they picked up on another company and they were, whatever, trying to repair the mistakes that had been made? Or could you tell me a little bit about the transition from the former company now to Bollinger and where that's at?

Admiral GAUTIER. Sure. The former company, VT Halter, decided that it wanted to sell that shipyard. The combined U.S. Navy-U.S. Coast Guard Joint Program Office did an evaluation of Bollinger to ensure that they, what we thought, they had the capability in order to continue that particular project should they buy the shipyard. That was endorsed. They purchased the shipyard.

Bollinger has made some substantial movements and advances in this particular project, and I think we are encouraged with the forward momentum.

Mr. EZELL. I have been down there several times and met with the workforce at Bollinger in some of their other shipyards, and it seems that they have a handle on work. They seem to have a good workforce. I was listening to everything that has been said today. Is there any opportunity going forward that Bollinger could complete what they have bought into?

Admiral GAUTIER. Congressman, we do have some challenges ahead. I think Congressman Garamendi in his questions raised some of those challenges that we have. But those challenges aside, I think we feel confident. And I just visited the shipyard with some of our senior acquisition folks in October and saw it firsthand. With where they are in the detailed design, and with their baseline evaluation, we think we are going to get a much clearer idea of cost and schedule from them between now and March, the first 3 months of calendar year 2024. With that, we believe that they are competent to begin construction in calendar year 2024 to get us to a place where we could see the first Polar Security Cutter in 2028, 2029.

Mr. EZELL. Very good. All right, well, Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you. Thank you, Admiral.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Mrs. Peltola, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. PELTOLA. Thank you, Chairman Webster.

Good afternoon, Vice Admiral Gautier. I am encouraged by how many of my colleagues have mentioned Alaska and the need for a polar cutter, an ice cutter. And I, too, am frustrated by the projected cost overruns and the protracted timeline on the Polar Security Cutter program. And, of course, this is of national strategic significance, but it's also a project that is of life-and-death importance to my constituents in Alaska.

It's not hard to imagine a scenario during busier times, lots going on in the Arctic, where multiple situations could occur at once, where an icebreaker's presence is needed. And my question is, in the event of multiple crises or multiple events, and we don't have the ability to summon an American icebreaker, what is the Coast Guard's contingency plan?

Admiral GAUTIER. Congresswoman, we do have agreements through the Arctic Council structure and the Arctic Coast Guard Forum, with specific plans in place where we can have mutual assistance. So, in a case with the vastness of the Arctic and the challenges with resourcing, it really is an all-in, whoever-is-first-there sort of proposition.

A cruise ship just grounded in September off of Greenland. It's the Danish search and rescue region. But it was the first fishing boat that could get out there that helped free up that vessel.

Mrs. PELTOLA. All right. My second question is that the Coast Guard receives significantly smaller amounts of money than its DoD counterparts. In particular, in the context of your broad and challenging—the broad missions that you all are involved in, and if the Polar Security Cutter procurement were to go over budget, does the Coast Guard have the ability to fund an acquisition of the Polar Security Cutter's size and complexity without having to make deep cuts elsewhere?

Admiral GAUTIER. Congresswoman, we are evaluating options, because we do believe that this particular contract is going to run over budget and over time from what the original contract was. There are some options in terms of flexing money between the funding that we have with the second Polar Security Cutter in order to really drive in and make sure we get the first Polar Security Cutter.

In any event, to get to what we think we need, we are going to need a lot of congressional support.

Mrs. PELTOLA. So, you don't have funding elsewhere that you could dive into?

Admiral GAUTIER. We do not have the ability in our budget to find appropriations in order to plus up that particular contract.

Mrs. PELTOLA. Sure. OK, thank you for that.

And when you were going over the Coast Guard's Arctic strategic outlook implementation plan, it references a need to expand Arctic surface capabilities and associated support infrastructure shore-side. And I am wondering if you would be able to provide specifics about the kind of infrastructure you are referring to or the communities that you are interested in working with.

Admiral GAUTIER. Yes, Congresswoman. We start, I think, first and foremost with our preeminent base in Alaska, and that's Kodiak. And we have been making advances, and we need to make more in terms of providing the piers and the housing to do things like homeport two Offshore Patrol Cutters, which will be coming to Kodiak, Alaska, and the housing and ancillary services.

We know we need to build out other locations to homeport Fast Response Cutters in Sitka and in Seward to help support operations in and around Alaska. We are transitioning our fleet of aircraft in Kodiak to an all H-60 fleet. We mean to eventually decommission our H-65s. And so, that is in the plans as well with blade-fold, tail-fold aircraft. We know that we will need to homeport a commercially available icebreaker if we have congressional support to provide that. We have committed to the Alaska delegation that that will be in Alaska as well.

Mrs. PELTOLA. Outstanding. Thank you, Vice Admiral. And I want to commend the Coast Guard on all of the real substantive

efforts and forward progress on housing and childcare in many of your stations. Thank you.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. Ms. Scholten, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Vice Admiral Gautier, for taking time to be with us today. This is such an important hearing, obviously, as the testimony and questions here today discuss. Of course, the Coast Guard plays such a critical role in national security. And I want to associate myself with the comments of our ranking member and Representative Auchincloss as well about the critical role that dedicated servicemembers play in supporting the Coast Guard and ensuring that national security, and I encourage you to do all that you can to keep our servicemembers safe and undistracted. We are grateful for the brave testimony of the servicemembers who testified in the Senate this morning. Thank you.

While we are talking about icebreakers, the Great Lakes would like a word. We know how important economic security also is to national security. And the Great Lakes region contributes billions to our national economy every year. Maintaining safe passages, open passages through the Great Lakes year-round is critical to that end.

And in order to maintain commercial navigation throughout the year, Lake Michigan needs more modern icebreakers. Funding for new icebreakers was included in the fiscal year 2023 appropriations. Has the Coast Guard made any progress in procuring a new heavy-duty icebreaker in the year since the bill's passage?

Admiral GAUTIER. Congresswoman, I am a *Mackinaw* sailor myself, so, I know exactly what you are talking about. And the Coast Guard, the Commandant, has committed to construction of a second medium icebreaker like the *Mackinaw* in order to get after what you are describing.

In terms of the funding strategy, we do have money or a request in the 2024 budget to get the program office running and start looking at the long leadtime materials for this particular asset.

Ms. SCHOLTEN. At this particular time, do you have any projections on timeline?

Admiral GAUTIER. It is all dependent really on what outyear funding is going to look like for us as we put together the program. I don't have a great estimate for you right now.

Ms. SCHOLTEN. If you wouldn't mind getting those and circling back with us, we would be grateful.

Admiral GAUTIER. Certainly.

Ms. SCHOLTEN. So, I want to talk a little bit more broadly about funding. We narrowly avoided a shutdown last month, with a temporary stopgap measure, of course, as you know. Many of us continue to be concerned about the impacts of further continuing resolutions in place of appropriations. If Congress fails to pass these essential appropriations, can you talk specifically about national security missions of the Coast Guard and how the disruption in funding would impact the Coast Guard's foreign partnerships?

Admiral GAUTIER. In terms of a lapse of appropriations scenario?

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Lapse of appropriations.

Admiral GAUTIER. Well, a couple of thoughts. We have been there. Unfortunately, the Coast Guard in 2018 and 2019 had a lapse of appropriation. DoD did not at the time.

We will continue our Coast Guard frontline missions with our Active Duty, Reserve, and our accepted civilian individuals on those most critical national security, search and rescue, lifesaving, life-sustaining missions. That will not be impacted. But it's at the cost of our people, because they won't be paid, and that creates considerable anxiety, economic stress, that we hope to avoid.

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. WEBSTER OF FLORIDA. OK, well, I don't see anybody else that's ready to speak, so, that brings conclusion to the meeting.

However, I would like to say that we support the request for additional moneys that are in the budget and so forth. We support that. We also will look into the date that you are saying that reauthorization needs to take place for the drones and so forth. We will check that out and see what comes of it. We hope we can fix that.

And so, no further business to come before this hearing, it's adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 4:05 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]



## APPENDIX

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### QUESTIONS TO VICE ADMIRAL PETER GAUTIER, DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS, U.S. COAST GUARD, FROM HON. JEFFERSON VAN DREW

*Question 1.* What security concerns does the Coast Guard have in relation to the LOGINK software?

*ANSWER.* LOGINK is an integrated logistics platform sponsored by the PRC government. Like any such network, LOGINK may contain information which, if available to the PRC government, may provide information about U.S. cargo and U.S. government logistics.

*Question 2.* Is there any legislative action Congress should take in response?

*ANSWER.* U.S. Coast Guard can provide views on future legislative text that Congress develops, in accordance with Office of Management and Budget and Department of Homeland Security processes.

### QUESTIONS TO VICE ADMIRAL PETER GAUTIER, DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR OPERATIONS, U.S. COAST GUARD, FROM HON. MIKE EZELL

*Question 1.* The William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 (P.L. 116–283) commissioned a study, which ultimately will be utilized by the Coast Guard to provide recommendations on how the service could enhance the efficiency of its resources, specifically in relation to liquefied natural gas tank vessels.

Would adopting policies, such as adopting a risk-based approach for inspecting all tank vessels, free up resources that could be redirected towards other missions with implications for national security?

*ANSWER.* The study commissioned by section 8254 of the William M. (Mac) Thornberry National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021 was specific to the Certificate of Compliance program—which pertains to foreign liquefied natural gas tank vessels. Adopting policies such as a risk-based approach for inspecting all foreign tank vessels would allow the Coast Guard to utilize inspection resources more efficiently and may serve to avert delays at particularly busy ports.

*Question 2.* How do small drones factor into the Coast Guard's operations and national security mission, and how does the Coast Guard plan to expand your fleet of secure drones?

*ANSWER.* Coast Guard is employing the use of small, secure drones (commonly referred to as BlueUAS) across multiple statutory missions. These systems are proving to be mission enablers, allowing operators in the field to quickly obtain localized aerial imagery to support mission needs at low cost and minimal risk. The Coast Guard is expanding its use of small drones by equipping field units with approved BlueUAS systems on an as needed basis.

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