

**THE FLEET WE FUNDED:
ASSESSING COAST GUARD FORCE LAYDOWN ON
THE HEELS OF HISTORIC INVESTMENT**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD, MARITIME,
AND FISHERIES

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,
SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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**THE FLEET WE FUNDED:
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ON THE HEELS OF HISTORIC INVESTMENT**

Thursday, January 29, 2026

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD, MARITIME, AND FISHERIES,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room SR-253, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Dan Sullivan, Chairman of the Subcommittee, presiding.

Present: Senators Sullivan [presiding], Cruz, Wicker, Sheehy, Blunt Rochester, Cantwell, Baldwin, and Duckworth.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAN SULLIVAN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ALASKA**

Senator SULLIVAN. Good morning, everybody. Earlier this month, the men and women of the United States Coast Guard carried out a number of incredible rescue missions, saving nine people from a commercial fishing vessel that ran aground on St. George Island.

Closer to home, a larger scale heroic number of rescues followed Typhoon Halong in Western Alaska, where some of our smaller communities were hit by this massive typhoon. Our Coast Guard, working with the National Guard, rescued 51 Alaskans in the middle of the night during a typhoon. These missions are a powerful reminder that the Coast Guard's work is not abstract. It is immediate, dangerous, and often the difference between life and death for Americans.

Today's hearing, and I am very honored to have our newly confirmed Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, Admiral Kevin Lunday, is about making sure the historic investments Congress made in the United States Coast Guard translate into real operational capability where it matters most, when it matters most.

Just to remind folks, and I try to remind everybody in Alaska about this, last year during the budget reconciliation bill, what we now refer to as the Working Families Tax Cuts Act, the Congress of the United States, working with the Trump administration, made the biggest investment in the Coast Guard in American history; \$25 billion.

Now, I like to say the Coast Guard has a great culture, similar to the Marine Corps, in my view, an ethos of, "Hey, we can do more

with less. Don't worry, it's OK. We know we have 50-year-old helicopters and cutters and icebreakers, but we can do more with less."

Well, it's time, in my view, of the Coast Guard to do more with more. And that's what we're able to do in this budget reconciliation bill. The numbers which the Coast Guard needs are historic in that \$25 billion; 16 new Icebreakers. By the way, we have two, and one is broken. And the Russians have 54. It's time to close that Icebreaker gap.

Almost \$4.5 billion to repair, replace shoreside facilities and aging infrastructure. 22 new Coast Guard cutters, including OPCs and FRCs. 40 new helicopters, mostly H-60, 6 new C-130J aircraft. This is, as I mentioned, the biggest investment in Coast Guard history.

And I think everybody, including members who didn't vote for the bill, thought that it was time to do that for the Coast Guard. So, well, I mean, I think had it been just that bill, you guys probably would have voted for it. It's a great bipartisan achievement, and we are very, very excited about it.

The Coast Guard is being asked to do more across every theater; counter drug missions in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific, complex law enforcement actions against sanctioned dark fleet tankers, sustained operations in the Indo-Pacific, in the Middle East, search and rescue, combating illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing, what we call IUU fishing. At the same time, it must manage operational risk while transitioning from platforms that, as I mentioned, are decades beyond their intended service lives.

Nowhere is the need for this investment clearer and more prominent than in the Arctic. Just months ago, I was with Admiral Lunday: For the first time ever, we commissioned and started a home port in American icebreaker where the ice is, in Alaska. The U.S. Coast Guard, the *Storis*, designated to be homeported in Juneau, Alaska, represents a generational investment in the Coast Guard in our national security. It also marks a long overdue shift in how the United States approaches the Arctic, not as a distant afterthought, but as a core strategic domain.

I'd like to show a slide here. As the only Arctic state, we focus on what's going on in the Arctic a lot. And there is a lot going on in the Arctic. Our adversaries, particularly Russia and China, are all over the place in America's Arctic, in our EEZ, in our ADIZ. You flip that slide over, this gives you the number of incursions from Russian strategic bombers and Chinese Navy assets.

And very alarmingly, the green is joint Russian-Chinese operations in America's Arctic. Strategic bomber task forces, joint and Navy task forces in our EEZ. Joint green, that's joint Russian-Chinese. The Chinese were off the coast of Alaska all summer. There was a really important *Wall Street Journal* article about this just a couple weeks ago. I'd like to submit it for the record, without objection. It's called, "China's Push to Master the Arctic Ocean Opens an Alarming Shortcut to the U.S."

[The information referred to follows.]

December 29, 2025

The Wall Street Journal

CHINA'S PUSH TO MASTER THE ARCTIC OPENS AN ALARMING SHORTCUT TO U.S.

By Daniel Michaels and Sune Engle Rasmussen

Chinese research submarines for the first time traveled thousands of feet beneath the Arctic ice this summer, a technical feat with chilling military and commercial implications for America and its allies.

U.S. national-security officials say the Chinese undersea expeditions offer fresh evidence of a growing threat from China in the Arctic region, known as the High North. This year, Chinese military and research vessels have operated around Alaska's Arctic waters in unprecedented numbers, the Dept. of Homeland Security reported in November.

For China, mastery of Arctic travel could yield valuable data about the natural resources awaiting below melting ice caps, significantly reduce travel time for commercial shipping and position nuclear-armed submarines closer to potential targets, including the U.S., say Western marine strategists and military officials.

"The Chinese are being more and more aggressive" across the High North, said U.S. Air Force Gen. Alexis Grynkeiwich, the top military leader of North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Chinese vessels on research missions often give cover to military purposes, he said.

China has declared itself a "near-Arctic power," an informal designation Beijing hopes will place it alongside the U.S. and Russia. China's Foreign Ministry says its activities in the Arctic are reasonable and lawful, "contributing to the maintenance and promotion of peace, stability, and sustainable development in the region."

Beijing views future sea routes through the High North as a shortcut for global commerce, a so-called Polar Silk Road. China this summer sent a cargo ship to the Polish port of Gdansk by skirting the North Pole, a route twice as fast as travel times using the Suez Canal. Chinese officials have said they plan to expand trans-Arctic cargo traffic with Russia, particularly imports of liquefied natural gas.

During the Cold War, the Arctic marked a front line dividing NATO members and Moscow. Its waters offered Russia gateways to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, which the U.S. and its allies closely patrolled until the early 1990s—and are now policing again.

Arctic waters provide a military advantage because of the North Pole's proximity to other nations. The U.S. in 1959 sent the world's third nuclear submarine there to pop up from under ice, delivering a potent warning to the Kremlin. Moscow reciprocated in 1962. Today, the two rivals are again dispatching submarines on Arctic exercises.

Tensions over the High North, renewed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, are being amplified by China's reach. The U.S. and its allies expect Beijing will be able to send armed submarines to the North Pole within a few years. China already has military-grade surface vessels in the Arctic region while expanding its fleet of ice-breaking ships.

The U.S. and allies are training more Arctic troops in response to new dangers. They have beefed up sub-hunting patrols out of Iceland and other locations. President Trump struck a shipbuilding deal with Finland to expand the U.S. icebreaker fleet and has pressured Denmark into expanding defenses on and around Greenland.

Grynkeiwich in December put NATO members Denmark, Sweden and Finland under the alliance's Atlantic and Arctic command to bolster the defense of the High North, citing "the alignment of our adversaries."

Chinese and Russian military planes last year flew patrols near Alaska for the first time, with Chinese long-range bombers operating from a Russian air base.

Such cooperation not only gives China new abilities to strike North America but raises the prospect of a joint attack by America's most powerful adversaries, Air Force Gen. Gregory Guillot, commander of the North American Aerospace Defense Command, or Norad, told Congress in April.

'Basically warships'

China in 2015 updated its national-security law to include defending national interests in polar regions, seeking unfettered access to new sea lanes and resources, said Ryan Martinson, an associate professor at the U.S. Naval War College's China Maritime Studies Institute. There is much evidence, he said, that China's goal is to conduct naval operations in the Arctic Ocean.

Beijing says its commercial and research vessels in Arctic waters are peaceful. That was accurate until recently, according to Rob Bauer, a retired Dutch admiral

who served as one of NATO's top military officials until this year. Beijing, in addition to staging joint air patrols with Russia, is now sailing coast guard vessels that resemble frigates near the Alaska coast, he said.

"They're basically warships, but they're painted white," Bauer said. Joint patrols with Russian navy ships indicate China's aim is gaining military advantage, he said, not coastal security. When more ice melts along international waterways in the High North, the same shortcuts used by commercial vessels could speed China's navy into the Atlantic, he said.

Arctic travel by Beijing's commercial and scientific vessels benefits China's navy by gaining experience and data about a region relatively new to its military leaders. China's policies merge its civilian and military spheres, aiming to strengthen its armed forces through collaboration with universities, research institutions and defense companies.

Beijing's polar exploration echoes its military expansion in the South China Sea. China launched research expeditions and published academic papers about the region almost 20 years ago. In 2013, Beijing used what it learned to begin building artificial islands that now hold military air bases, according to intelligence officials from the U.S. and Pacific allies.

In the Arctic, the U.S. and NATO worry most about subsea warfare. Submarine navigation relies on detailed knowledge of ocean-floor topography and undersea conditions. China is cataloging the world's oceans to build computer models to guide submarines and help them evade detection, military experts say.

"China doesn't field the world's largest fleet of oceanographic survey ships because they want to save the whales," said Hunter Stires, a naval strategist who until this year advised the Secretary of the Navy. "China aims to take the lead in marine and climate science because understanding the ocean and the climate is a critical enabler to success in naval operations, particularly in anti-submarine warfare."

U.S. analysts say data China gathered from its Arctic dives north of Alaska and Greenland isn't just about studying climate change, as Beijing's state news agency reports, but also to educate the Chinese navy, which operates relatively noisy submarines that are easily tracked by U.S. forces.

Arctic ice impedes airborne submarine detection that works in other oceans. Water temperature layers and changing salinity from melting ice interfere with sonar. Icebergs colliding and the chatter of marine mammals generate sounds that complicate submarine detection. Information gathered on Chinese Arctic voyages enables its scientists to build computer models of undersea conditions, which its navy can later tap to plot routes allowing them to operate more freely in the open sea.

China's ultimate aim, said Adm. Samuel Paparo, head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, is to end "American undersea dominance," he told a conference in Canada in 2024. To help Beijing reach that goal, Paparo said, "I expect Russia to provide submarine technology."

Partners of convenience

Beijing sells Russia electronics and components for military equipment Moscow needs to wage its war in Ukraine, and ships civilian products restricted by international sanctions over the war.

Western military officials believe Russia is repaying China's help, in part, by sharing advanced technologies in space, stealth aircraft and undersea warfare. Russia's nuclear-powered, nuclear-armed submarines, and its agility in deploying them, have kept the country a superpower, despite its economic decline since the breakup of the Soviet Union.

China is already mastering other complex naval domains. It now deploys three aircraft carriers, among the most demanding surface warships to build, manage and deploy effectively. Only the U.S. has more.

Both Beijing and the U.S. are short of vessels capable of navigating thick Arctic ice compared with Russia, which has more than 40. China last year commissioned its fifth icebreaker. The U.S. has only two such vessels in operation, and Trump is buying more.

After years of development, China launched its first domestically built icebreaker in 2019 with Finnish help. Last year, it built and deployed its first domestically designed icebreaker in 10 months, a swift accomplishment noted with worry in Arctic countries.

Russia also has advocated for greater Chinese involvement in governance of the High North and invited China to develop infrastructure in Arctic Russia. The two nations created a working group in 2023 to develop northern sea routes. They agreed to coordinate Arctic maritime law-enforcement, initiated by their recent joint patrols.

“China wants to shape rules before they are settled,” said David Cattler, a former U.S. intelligence officer and NATO Assistant Secretary-General for intelligence and security. “Early presence shapes future influence.”

China’s expanding presence and influence in the Arctic helps Russia now, but it might prove to be a problem for Moscow later, Western military officials said. Since the Cold War, the Arctic has offered Russia a remote sanctuary for much of its nuclear arsenal. Until now, only the U.S. could seriously threaten Russian bases or military assets there.

Chinese vessels operating north of Russia could complicate matters for Moscow, especially if the national interests of the two countries diverge and the current “no-limits partnership” breaks down. “Chinese operations in the High North are as direct a challenge to Russia as to any other power,” Stires said.

For now, Western countries are the ones sounding the alarm about China’s naval advance in the Arctic.

French Adm. Pierre Vandier, who oversees NATO’s efforts to prepare for future warfare, sees the possibility of China’s navy sailing from the Pacific to the Atlantic over the Arctic, bypassing more easily observed and defended routes through the Suez or Panama canals or around South Africa.

“For all of us, for NATO and the U.S., it means the threat that is in the Pacific is ubiquitous,” Vandier said in an interview. “If we have Asian forces in the Atlantic, it would be a huge game-changer. And we need to be prepared for that.”

Senator SULLIVAN. They weren’t doing research. They were spying on us, and everybody knows it. So, the Arctic is another key place where the Coast Guard with its new significant investment dollars, is going to be making much more important investments to protect the northern domain of America. I’d like to again commend Admiral Lunday for his great work on this issue as well. But it’s just one area that the Coast Guard’s global demands have to be met.

So, what we want to do in this hearing is not just focus on the Arctic. I’ll do that significantly, but I’m sure my colleagues want to have a better sense of the Coast Guard’s force posture, lay-down global deployments, workforce decisions, and importantly, how the Coast Guard sees its ability to rapidly deploy the investments that the Congress and the Trump administration made this past summer, again, the most significant investments in Coast Guard history. It’s about time.

We are very fortunate to have with us Admiral Kevin Lunday, the Commandant of the Coast Guard, who was confirmed at the end of last year at a pivotal moment for the service. Admiral, we appreciate your leadership, your willingness to discuss candidly how the Coast Guard is manning operational risks, global deployments, acquisition execution as these historic investments begin to come online.

So, I would now like to offer the statements from my Ranking Member, Senator Blunt Rochester, at this important hearing.

**STATEMENT OF HON. LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE**

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. To you, Admiral Lunday, welcome back, to your team as well, and thank you for being here for today’s hearing.

I want to first congratulate you in person, and just say also thank you so much for your responsiveness. As this year has gone by, whenever I text you, whenever I called, you responded so promptly. And I want to thank you and your team for your responsiveness.

I also want to say how just proud we are of the Coast Guard in this country. And as you know, I got the opportunity to be with some of the Coasties in Delaware and spend some very good quality time. And so, I think on behalf of all of us, I know established in 1790, I think it was, you have stood the test of time, and we're pleased to see that today we can talk about the future. Your leadership is especially important as we enter into a new era of modernizing the Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard recently received the historic \$25 billion investment. And so, while you're poised to revolutionize your ability to counter emerging global threats and protect mariners, fishermen, and marine environments, this is a moment that is going to really present clear opportunities for you to show your leadership.

And so, today, we will talk about that blueprint, Force Design 2028, and the investments that were made. We will also talk about how do we guarantee success. The question before us is whether the Coast Guard can convert all of that funding into something that is sustainable, long-term improvements that will correctly anticipate the growing maritime threats from global actors, as our Chairman has shared, and from competitors as well, and keep us safe at the same time.

I think it's also important to know that the reason this hearing is so vital is that Congress and the American people need to know how do we go from the blueprint, to the plan, to execution. And in your testimony that I received last night, you're already making a lot of steps very quickly in that regard. But what you do every day is connected to our safety, our economy, and our national security.

Again, reading through your testimony last night, I am really eager to especially focus on your plans to recruit, and train, and retain a workforce as you leverage this increase in assets, as well as the rapid increase in assets. And again, this isn't just about investing in vessels, it is also about investing in the people. And I was pleased to see in your testimony, that's where you started, with workforce.

It also means ensuring that Coast Guard families have access to affordable housing, good health care, and quality child care, because it's our responsibility to take care of the Coast Guard at home so that you can serve our country with confidence at sea.

A large part of investing is investing in training. And that's why I want to recognize the critical role of the Coast Guard's training institutions, whether it's Woods Hole, Rhode Island, or Coast Guard Boot Camp in Illinois, or the training center, Cape May, which is just across the bay from Delaware. These institutions remain foundational to Coast Guard personnel development.

So, Admiral, again, thank you so much for the responsiveness, for your service, and the service of all of the Coasties and their families. And I look forward to your testimony, and discussing how your leadership will guide the Coast Guard through this critical period.

And Mr. Chairman, thank you. I yield back.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. And Admiral, I want to introduce you again. Recently confirmed as the 28th Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard after serving as the 34th Vice Commandant, pre-

viously also commanded the Coast Guard Atlantic Area, and led at the district level in the Indo-Pacific.

So, thank you for being here. You are now recognized for five minutes for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL KEVIN E. LUNDAY, COMMANDANT,
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD**

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Member Blunt, Rochester, distinguished members of this subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and represent our Coast Guard men and women. Chairman, I ask that my written testimony be entered into the record.

Senator SULLIVAN. Without objection.

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, and thank you for the Subcommittee's strong support for our Coast Guard, especially our people. For over 235 years, America has depended on the Coast Guard to ensure our national security and economic prosperity. In the face of unprecedented challenges, including adversary threats to our sovereignty, prosperity, and way of life, the Nation needs a strong, capable, and more ready Coast Guard now more than ever before.

With the leadership and support from President Trump, and Secretary Noem, and this Congress, the Coast Guard is better positioned than it was one year ago to achieve operational control of the border and maritime approaches, facilitate the flow of commerce, and rapidly respond to crisis.

Through Force Design 2028 and the historic \$25 billion investment through budget reconciliation, we are renewing the Coast Guard to become a more agile, capable, and responsive fighting force. Your continued strong support, including for sustained, higher annual top-line growth in our appropriation, is vital to our continued success.

2025 was a historic year for the Coast Guard in delivering mission results with record-setting outcomes. Two examples: we interdicted over 510,000 pounds of cocaine at sea that was headed for the United States. That's over 193 million potentially lethal doses that would have otherwise reached American communities.

And we saved an additional 5,000-plus lives through search and rescue operations, including over 290 following devastating storms in Texas, in Alaska, and the Pacific Northwest. All of this while implementing Force Design 2028 as the most sweeping service transformation in more than a century.

Our operations continue. In the past two months, in the Caribbean and North Atlantic, Coast Guard tactical teams and cutters conducted high-profile boardings of dark vessel tankers, enforcing U.S. and customary international law, along with others, to stop illegal activity, including sanctions violations and funding of narco-terrorism.

In the polar regions, the Nation's only heavy icebreaker, Coast Guard Cutter Polar Star, commissioned 50 years ago this week, is right now conducting icebreaking operations vital to the resupply of America's McMurdo Station in Antarctica. But Polar Star is only one of three operational U.S. polar icebreakers, so we're rapidly expanding our icebreaking fleet to secure our northern border and maritime approaches in the Arctic.

Under the President's leadership and direction, we're moving to expand our icebreaking capacity with the construction of 11 Arctic security cutters. We recently awarded two contracts to rapidly build and deliver six Arctic security cutters, two to a shipyard in Finland, four to a shipyard in the United States. And we're working on awarding additional contract for five more that will onshore more shipbuilding into U.S. shipyards and strengthen America's industrial base.

But assets do not make the Coast Guard, our people do. We must grow our workforce, and support the readiness of our men and women, and their families. We must increase annual operating funds to provide our people and their families the housing, childcare, medical care, training, and the support services they need to be able to serve and serve successfully.

Last year, the budget reconciliation funded recapitalization of aging assets and new technology needed for the Coast Guard to rebuild readiness. We've already obligated \$7.8 billion, and will obligate over \$20 billion, 75 percent of the full amount, by the end of this year to deliver new cutters, boats, aircraft, shore infrastructure, and technology.

But this is a down payment. We need significant, sustained higher annual top-line growth, especially in our operating funds, starting with the 2026 appropriation. Any lapse in appropriation disrupts our ability to conduct operations, rebuild readiness, and deliver value to the American people. Any shutdown means that many of our people will go without pay, even while they have to continue working, which is an unwarranted financial hardship.

I urge the Congress in strongest terms, to pass a budget now that funds the Coast Guard and pays our people. I also ask for the Senate's support to put the full Coast Guard senior leadership team in place by confirming the President's nominees for our Vice Commandant, our four Vice Admiral positions, and our other Presidential nominees. The new leadership team is critical to our success now.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Lunday follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ADMIRAL KEVIN E. LUNDAY, COMMANDANT,
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Chairman Sullivan, Ranking Member Blunt Rochester, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the Coast Guard's transformation and the historic results we are delivering for the American people.

As a vital instrument of national power, the U.S. Coast Guard controls, secures, and defends the U.S. border and maritime approaches, facilitates the safe and secure flow of commerce that is vital to economic prosperity and strategic mobility, and responds to crises and contingencies that may come without warning. As part of the Department of Homeland Security team protecting our Nation and as a military service and part of the Joint Force defending it, every action the Coast Guard takes delivers value through our statutory missions. The American people depend on the Coast Guard, and the Service provides unmatched return on investment, generating more than \$74 billion in social and economic value through cost avoidance—representing a 6-to-1 return on taxpayer investment.

Thanks to the strong leadership and support of President Trump, Secretary Noem, and this Congress, the Coast Guard is emerging from a readiness crisis that was decades in the making. In May 2025, Secretary Noem launched Force Design 2028, a bold blueprint to transform the Service into a more agile, capable, and responsive fighting force. Coupled with the capital investment passed by Congress and

signed into law by the President of nearly \$25 billion in the Working Families Tax Cut, the Coast Guard is executing the most significant modernization and recapitalization in at least a century.

My top priorities are conducting our statutory missions to deliver value to the American people and transforming the Coast Guard by executing Force Design 2028, fueled by the historic capital investment to rebuild the readiness of the Service, starting with our workforce. As detailed in the first update on Force Design 2028 released on January 15, 2026, our remarkable mission success in 2025 is already proving the importance of Force Design 2028 and setting the course for even greater achievements in 2026.

In 2025, Coast Guard forces seized over 511,000 pounds of drugs, more than any year in the Service's history, and over three times the annual average—representing over 193 million potentially lethal doses and subsequently avoiding \$2.3 billion in healthcare costs. We achieved record-setting recruiting results, bringing in more than 6,000 active-duty and reserve enlisted members, our best recruiting year since 1991. And we conducted thousands of search and rescue cases, saving 5,220 lives and assisting 19,437.

Starting in March, we launched three major operations to secure the U.S. border. Through Operation Border Trident, we achieved operational control of the border against illegal immigration and drug smuggling in the California coastal region, increasing interdictions by 44 percent over 2024 levels. In August, we surged additional assets to the Eastern Pacific under Operation Pacific Viper, seizing over 100,000 pounds of narcotics in less than three months. And through Operation River Wall, we deployed assets and tactical teams to secure 260 river miles of the U.S. border along the Rio Grande River.

Last summer, the Coast Guard acquired Cutter *Storis*, the first icebreaker to join the fleet in over 25 years. Under Operation Frontier Sentinel, Cutters *Storis*, *Healy*, and *Waesche* intercepted and chased away five Chinese research vessels operating over the U.S. extended continental shelf in the Arctic, reflecting our enduring operations to protect U.S. sovereign rights.

Simultaneously, the Coast Guard facilitated the safe movement of over 1.8 billion tons of cargo, a 13 percent increase over 2024, through U.S. ports and waterways and responded to catastrophic flooding events in Central Texas, Alaska, and the Pacific Northwest, rescuing over 290 people. In the past few weeks, Coast Guard elite tactical teams conducted high-profile boardings of “dark fleet” tankers, enforcing U.S. and customary international law with the Departments of Justice, State, and War. Across all our statutory missions, Coast Guard men and women continue to set a new standard for operational excellence.

Beyond our historic operational successes in 2025, the Coast Guard is moving at speed and scale to modernize our capabilities, employ cutting-edge technology, and invest in our people. In just seven months, we have obligated \$7.8 billion of Working Families Tax Cut funding to begin restoring readiness. By the end of this Fiscal Year, we will obligate over \$20 billion of that funding to deliver new cutters, boats, aircraft, shore infrastructure, and technology. Moving forward, significant, sustained increases in annual operating funds are necessary to crew, maintain, and operate these assets.

In the coming months, the Coast Guard will implement several significant structural changes and investments, including:

- Establishing a Deployable Specialized Forces Command;
- Expanding training center facility capacity;
- Enhancing maritime domain dominance through Coastal Sentinel;
- Rapidly identifying, testing, and acquiring new operational assets; and
- Reducing bureaucracy and revolutionizing how the Coast Guard organizes, trains, equips, and employs its forces.

Force Design 2028 is already delivering results. The Coast Guard is now stronger, more capable, and better prepared than it was a year ago. We will build on these successes in 2026 and beyond. We strongly support the bipartisan efforts to provide more direct civilian leadership, oversight and advocacy, with the establishment of a Coast Guard Service Secretary [*as passed in HR4275*], reporting to the Secretary of Homeland Security. These steps are essential to ensure enduring Coast Guard mission success for decades to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today and for your continued support of the brave men and women of the Coast Guard.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Admiral. And I'm going to defer my first round of questionings to the distinguished Chairman of the Armed Services Committee. And I will tell you that Chairman Wicker cares deeply about the Coast Guard. And we had an important victory in December where we attached the Coast Guard Authorization Act that we worked on hard here in this committee to the National Defense Authorization Act, which is something I've been advocating for for years.

It makes sense to bring all of our military services together in their Reauthorization Acts in one bill and one vote. And that's what we achieved at the end of last year. And we did it in large part because of the Chairman of the Armed Services Committee.

So, I'm going to defer my first round of questioning to Chairman Wicker.

**STATEMENT OF HON. ROGER WICKER,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MISSISSIPPI**

Senator WICKER. Mr. Chairman, I really do appreciate that. And of course, much of the credit for the inclusion of that provision in the Armed Services Authorization Bill goes to you as a Senator from Alaska, and as a subcommittee chairman here. So, thank you for that.

There's a lot I need to mention, and I only have a moment or two. Let me mention Junior ROTC. You and I spoke about this, Admiral Lunday. Thank you for whatever role you may have played in directing that two new units be established in April of this year, one in Oregon and one in Alaska. I think Junior ROTC is a great citizenship builder and it helps our readiness, and I just wish we could have twice as many because it has been proven.

Second, Senator Schatz and I have legislation that would require an annual plan and budget display for Coast Guard operations in the Pacific. So, if you would speak to the relationship that the Coast Guard and DOD have, and tell us what you need extra of this top line that you mentioned to increase our operation tempo in the Indo-Pacific?

Admiral LUNDAY. Mr. Chairman, thank you for your question on the Indo-Pacific. You know, the Coast Guard—well, first of all, the United States is not only a Pacific nation, we're also a Pacific Island nation because of Hawaii and our three territories there. And so, the Coast Guard's been present in Hawaii—excuse me, in the Pacific for a very long time. And we work very closely with the Department of War there.

And our presence has increased in the Pacific. Since I served out there as the Commander of the Oceania District, we've added nine additional cutters. Congress has funded in the Fiscal Year 2024 appropriation, the addition of two more fast response cutters to go to Guam.

We shifted a medium endurance cutter permanently to the Pacific to increase our operations there. And the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriation, that is pending now, would add another \$116 million in operating funds to improve training, engagement teams throughout the Pacific Island nations, and to strengthen U.S. national security and defense in the Indo-Pacific.

And so, it's a vital area of operations, and we continue to expand our commitment and our footprint into the Indo-Pacific. Because that's not just somewhere over there, the Indo-Pacific for us is also the U.S. homeland because of Hawaii and our three territories.

Senator WICKER. Do I take it from your testimony, and the answer to the question is, we've made a good start? We've got a lot more to do.

Admiral LUNDAY. Yes, sir, we do. We've made a good start, but we have much more to do to strengthen our presence in the Indo-Pacific.

Senator WICKER. And are you also suggesting that our plus ups really should be part of the regular appropriations process, ideally, rather than going through the reconciliation process, or do you have a position on that, sir?

Admiral LUNDAY. Well, yes, sir. Certainly, the reconciliation process infuses an investment that's needed, but it really must be supported by sustained investment in the capitalization money, and also our operating funds, because these assets are badly needed, but it's the crews that operate them that make the Coast Guard able to do what it does.

Senator WICKER. And the annual top line does matter, doesn't it?

Admiral LUNDAY. It does, yes, sir.

Senator WICKER. Now, OK, tell us about where we are on helicopters. We put some money in for the Jayhawks. Apparently, we're phasing out the Dolphins, actually the MH-60 Jayhawks. Are we moving then to a combination of that, just simply called to the Jayhawk and not the MH-60? Where are we on that? You got to clear us up.

Admiral LUNDAY. Yes, sir. Senator, the MH-60, we call our variant the Jayhawk. And so, we are moving toward primarily, and have been on a road to move to a 60 rotary wing fleet. We are continuing to look at other options, and then reconciliation investment has given that because the older 65 short-range helicopter is approaching obsolescence.

Senator WICKER. The Dolphin.

Admiral LUNDAY. The Dolphin. Much harder to maintain. The original equipment manufacturer doesn't supply parts. So, we're phasing those out, and we're growing those.

Senator WICKER. At what time, sir?

Admiral LUNDAY. Well, the original was to phase them out by 2037, but we think the sunset's going to come much faster given the obsolescence.

Senator WICKER. Because of the reality there. Well, keep us posted on there. And again, I think we got two—Mr. Chairman, if you'll just indulge me, we got \$2 billion in last year's reconciliation for the Jayhawks. So, keep telling us what you need.

What are your plans for Coast Guard Station Pascagoula? I know it's not in Alaska, but there are Coast Guard facilities elsewhere in the country.

Admiral LUNDAY. I didn't know that. That's really good to know.

Senator WICKER. Will we be returning to full response operations according to your plans at Coast Guard Station Pascagoula?

Admiral LUNDAY. Yes, sir, we will. I made a decision in December to restore that to a full response station. We had downgraded

it in 2023 when I commanded Atlantic Area. I was part of that because of our severe personnel shortages, and now, we're in a position where we need to restore it to full response operations, and we're going to do that in 2026.

Senator WICKER. Was that a mistake or just something you had to do?

Admiral LUNDAY. Something we had to do, Senator, because we were so short of personnel. But based on recruiting successes over the last several years, we're now in a position to restore it to full operations.

Senator WICKER. How important—and this is my last question, Mr. Chairman, and you all have been very indulgent. How important are autonomous systems going to be going forward?

Admiral LUNDAY. Well, they're critical, Senator. And we've made investments in those systems, especially fueled by the budget reconciliation investment. In fact, we've already, in that \$7.8 billion that we've already obligated, we've purchased a number of short-range and medium-range autonomous systems, both air and surface, and even subsurface. They're providing us an ability and a capability we didn't have before to perform our missions. And there's also funding for long-range UAS that we haven't yet obligated, but we're on track to.

Senator WICKER. Thank you, sir, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Senator Blunt Rochester.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think, Admiral, I might have shared with you that in a former life, I was head of state personnel for the state of Delaware. And so, again, the focus on jobs. I was secretary of labor as well, and the focus of making sure that the workforce is well-equipped, well-trained, that you can recruit has always been sort of a top mind of mind for me, because you can't do your mission if you don't have the people, and you can't do the mission well if the people aren't—you have a good culture and people feel that they're in a good place.

And I know with Force Design 2028, it called for the expansion of the Coast Guard by 15,000 active-duty personnel, which is over one-third increase of the number of active service members. Am I correct on that?

Admiral LUNDAY. That's correct, Ranking Member Blunt Rochester.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Yes, and I know that it was a GAO report last year that indicated that you were about 2,600 personnel short. Do you recall that report?

Admiral LUNDAY. I do, yes.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Was it accurate?

Admiral LUNDAY. It was close, but we're moving in the right direction, so the numbers are changing in a positive way since that report.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Which is a huge direction because I saw in your testimony you indicated you hired 6,000 folks, is that—did I read that correctly?

Admiral LUNDAY. Last year, we finished with over 5,200, so near 6,000, and we're on track to reach 6,000 already this year.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. OK. So, would you say you're at full strength for what you're trying to do now?

Admiral LUNDAY. Well, we're almost back to restoring that deficit, that 10 percent shortage in our enlisted workforce. I think by the end of the summer or early fall, we'll have been out of that and well positioned to keep growing the force toward that 15,000 number.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Can you talk a little bit about what you did to be so successful in that recruitment? Were there specific things that you did differently? Were there things that you said we're not going to do that anymore? Can you talk a little bit about how you have been able to so far make this kind of progress in a year?

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you for the question, because it really highlights the importance of our recruiting effort. And I think we're going to need a level of effort that we've put into recruiting going forward.

We're never going to go back to a situation where we can just expect people to know and want to join the Coast Guard. We've got to tell our story better. And so, we invested in the people, and the talent, and the expertise, and technology to be able to recruit, to tell, reach all parts of the United States, attract the best young men and women who have a propensity to serve and want to serve their country, and then recruit them into the country.

And that's involved opening more recruiting offices, including in places we didn't have them, or haven't had them for a long time, like the Midwest, and then using technology to be able to reach young people where they operate, where they live, where they consume information, rather than the traditional methods that I was used to, that used to recruit me a long time ago.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. And when I saw the number 15,000, that's significant. And I was thinking, how will you—do you think you'll be able to sustain that pace of—you hired nearly 6,000. Do you think you will be able to sustain that pace, and what do you think it will take to do that?

Admiral LUNDAY. Well, it's really important, Ranking Member, because it's not only on the recruiting side. We need to have that training capacity in our system. First, at Training Center Cape May, where there's a significant investment to improve and expand our capability there, but also in our follow-on training for our force. And so, that's one of the key parts, is expanding that training capacity and the ability to develop our people. That becomes critical.

But it's driven by an increase in our operating funding. Just to give one quick example, the 11 Arctic security cutters that we're building at the President's direction, that will require 1,300 new Coast Guard people that don't exist today to be able to operate those.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Wow. And so, therefore, again, the investment in training is so important because that doesn't exist today. Can you also talk about—I know there are plans to build over a dozen new vessels with this funding that you received. How long does it take to build a ship like a polar ice cutter?

Admiral LUNDAY. Well, Ranking Member, what we've done is taken a new approach where that is enabling us to move at speed

and scale in a way we haven't before. First, the budget reconciliation gave relief from Chapter 11 and Title 14 for the pre-acquisition activities. Originally, thought it was a way to reduce risk, it actually slowed us down by bogging us down with a lot of work before we could move ahead with an acquisition.

We've also gotten rid of these long hundreds of pages of boutique requirements, and we've leaned more on the commercial industry with more basic requirements so they can move faster with the funding in hand. And so, we are going to be delivering these assets much faster than we have in the past.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. I guess one question, and I know I am now over my time, and I don't know if we're going to have a second round—

Senator SULLIVAN. We will, yes.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. OK. Well, then I will yield here and come back for a second round. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SULLIVAN. Admiral, I just want you to re-emphasize kind of what's at stake in the next couple days. If there's a government shutdown, another one, which we don't need, it would be unnecessary. By the way, I know some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are talking about doing it because they don't want to fund ICE. ICE is going to be funded no matter what. They were funded in the budget reconciliation bill. So, shutting down the government is not going to starve them of funds, but it will starve our Coast Guard of funds, and the men and women of the Coast Guard, and FEMA, and others.

Can you again just really emphasize that. I think in previous government shutdowns, the Coast Guard has really, in some ways, borne the brunt of some of these shutdowns. It's not right. And I really would like you to kind of emphasize that a little bit more just on what would happen. It would just be completely unnecessary. We don't need to do this again.

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This is critically important. The first thing is our people. When there's a lapse, they worry about whether they're going to get paid and when they're going to get paid. And it brings financial hardship. It brings worry and concern for them and for their family members. And when they're trying to be focused on being ready and serving their country, both our military and our civilian personnel, then that's a key factor to our ability to get the mission done safely.

It also, they may want to, they're not sure they want to keep serving sometimes if they're not sure they're going to get paid on time. And then, beyond that, it interrupts our ability to do the growth that we need to do in Force Design 2028, transform the service. So, that keeping an appropriation in place, not having a lapse, is critically important.

Senator SULLIVAN. Well, I hope all my colleagues hear that, understand that. It's just, I don't know, it wouldn't be constructive in any way, but particularly the Coast Guard being hurt, and the members and the families and the stress, as you mentioned. So, let's not go there.

I do want to talk about the Arctic. You and I talked about an op-ed that was written by Alice Rogoff, who I know well, just in the *Washington Post* a couple days ago on the importance of the Arctic.

This was similar to one that I wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* about a year ago called, “Greenland is Nice, but Alaska is Better.” I’d like to submit that for the record.
[The information referred to follows.]

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

OP-ED: Greenland Is Nice, but Alaska Is Better

My state is a huge national asset, but Biden treated it like a national park.

By: Sen. Dan Sullivan
January 15, 2025

There’s been a lot of talk about President-elect Trump’s idea of buying Greenland. But one U.S. state offers all of Greenland’s benefits: Alaska. The problem is that the Biden administration has spent its time trying to turn the Last Frontier into a giant national park rather than recognizing it as a great strategic asset.

Greenland would provide the U.S. a gateway to the Arctic. But America is already an Arctic nation thanks to Alaska. The Russians and Chinese know my state is at the forefront of great-power competition. In the past two years, there have been 12 air incursions into the state’s air-defense identification zone, including an unprecedented joint Russian-Chinese strategic bomber operation, and large-scale joint Russian-Chinese naval task forces in our waters.

Greenland plays an important part in missile-defense and early-warning networks, but the cornerstone of America’s missile defense is Alaska. Any missiles launched by Russia, China or North Korea against the U.S. would likely fly over the state. That’s why it hosts the vast majority of America’s radar systems and ground-based missile interceptors. To create an Iron Dome for America—a priority of Mr. Trump—we need to add to our national ballistic-missile interceptor capability in Alaska and build a robust layered missile defense and space-based missile sensor capability.

Greenland is rich in minerals and energy reserves. Alaska is even richer. Our state holds an estimated 40 billion barrels of oil and roughly 235 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. In one field alone, Prudhoe Bay, Alaska reinjects into a reservoir for oil-production purposes as much natural gas each day as Oregon, Washington and California consume.

Alaska also has a wealth of metals and other minerals, some of which are essential for our national defense, economy and renewable-energy sector. President Biden worked to keep them in the ground. The first Trump administration approved a road needed to access one of America’s richest mineral deposits, the Ambler Mining District in Alaska’s Interior. The Biden administration killed that road last June. Then Mr. Biden traveled to Angola to announce \$600 million to build a railroad to help that country market its critical minerals.

Buy Greenland? Sure, if the price is right and the Danes are willing to sell. But as Mr. Trump prepares to unleash Alaska’s potential again, it’s worth remembering what the father of the U.S. Air Force, Gen. Billy Mitchell, once said: “I believe . . . whoever controls Alaska controls the world. I think it is the most strategic place in the world.”

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Senator SULLIVAN. Everyone’s talking about Greenland, which is strategic to Alaska, has in way more than—we already own Alaska. It’s a great state. It’s my state.

So, anyway, but let’s talk about the Arctic. And the icebreaker numbers are great. We have this icebreaker gap with Russia, heck, with China. They’re not even an Arctic nation, and I think they have more icebreakers than we do. So, we’re going to close that

gap, which everybody wants to see. That's a very bipartisan issue here. It has been something I've been focused on my entire career here.

We're starting on a really good front with the Storis. being homeported and commissioned recently, but homeported in Juneau. It was a great event that you and I had the opportunity to attend back in Alaska and Juneau in August. At the commissioning, the budget reconciliation bill has \$300 million for the shoreside infrastructure to home port the Storis in Juneau.

How do you think that's going? And are we on time, on schedule? As you know, in the previous Coast Guard Reauthorization Act, we were able to get the land transferred from NOAA to the Coast Guard to help that. But you think that's going well, and how can we keep pedal to the metal on all these issues?

Part of the hearing is that we want to accelerate the great opportunities that exist in the Coast Guard across the country, across the world, and certainly in my state.

Admiral LUNDAY. Well, Mr. Chairman, thank you. On Storis, thank you for the support and the budget reconciliation for the \$300 million to support the pier and the waterfront facilities to permanently home port Storis there.

And so, we're moving quickly to be able to execute that funding, and have that pier and infrastructure there ready by 2029. What we still need to do, as we've talked, is to get the funding for the housing. As you know, the housing in Juneau is not adequate, and so we need funding to be able to be able to have the adequate housing that will support the crew and the families.

Senator SULLIVAN. And if you put that through your requests? I'm very confident that this committee and the Congress will be strongly supportive of that.

Let me go to the next issue you and I have spoken a lot about. You know, as you mentioned, the next phase of all these Coast Guard cutters, the heavies, the mediums, the smaller ones, I'm sure Senator Baldwin's going to ask about the ones for the Great Lakes.

But I know we're looking at some, especially for the mediums, the decision around—or not decision, homeporting around 2028. You and I have talked about, I've said publicly, I can't imagine that you wouldn't have significant more Coast Guard cutters where the ice is, where the action is, as I just said, in Alaska. I know you're not there yet. I know your team's looking at the homeporting decisionmaking.

But can you give me a sense of that, the direction you've given your team? I certainly would anticipate as the Chairman of this committee, a couple more icebreakers being homeported in the Arctic where the ice is, and that means Alaska.

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And we've talked about this before, sir. The speed that we're moving to build the Arctic security cutters means we're going to have to assign the people very soon, and we're going to have to make decisions in consultation with the department, and then, in communication with Congress on what those homeporting decisions will be. And that'll happen in 2026.

Part of the planning, I've guidance, I've given to my team as they present options to me, and I discuss them with the Secretary, is to start with an option that includes homeporting Arctic security cutters in the state of Alaska.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. I appreciate that very much. And hopefully, we can, you know, when we're talking 2026, you know, I'll keep pressing you guys. I think first quarter, second quarter at the latest, we want to get moving on that. But I appreciate your leadership on that. And with that, Senator Baldwin.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TAMMY BALDWIN,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WISCONSIN**

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Over the last several years, the Coast Guard has received significant increased funding, as was being discussed, nearly \$25 billion from the reconciliation bill passed last year. This committee, however, has received shockingly little information about how, when, and where the Coast Guard plans on spending those funds.

Admiral Lunday, it is my expectation that the Coast Guard will promptly provide information to this committee on all the programs allocated funding in last year's reconciliation bill. And I want to particularly focus on the light and medium ice-breaking cutters, which received about \$800 million in that \$25 billion package. These new cutters are meant to replace the aging Bay-class and smaller ice-breaking tugs.

So, Admiral Lunday, can you provide additional information on the Coast Guard's plan to acquire new light and medium ice-breakers, including how that \$800 million will be split between those programs?

Admiral LUNDAY. Senator, thank you, because our domestic icebreaking capability in our ports, waterways, and in the Great Lakes is critically important. And the funding and reconciliation to replace those medium and light icebreaking capabilities is critically important.

We did a solicitation, asked for information from industry because we're taking a commercial approach so we can, again, move at speed and scale to deliver these much faster than we otherwise would. And we've gotten that input back on both the light and the medium variance, and we're analyzing that information right now as we develop an acquisition plan to move forward with acquiring the light and the medium ice-breaking capability. So, we don't have a specific breakdown of which of the numbers of each variant yet, but we're working toward that.

As to the plan you asked about, I've directed my staff this morning, and I will be prepared to brief and update members of the Committee, and also staffs, on the current status of our overall reconciliation execution. And so, we look forward to providing that briefing to you and to the staff as well.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you. I was very disappointed when the President announced that many of the Coast Guard's new ice-breakers would be primarily constructed overseas. The United States has a long and very proud tradition of constructing effective icebreakers, including in my state of Wisconsin. So, I believe that that money would be better spent at home.

So, Admiral Lunday, does the Coast Guard intend to build the light and medium icebreakers domestically?

Admiral LUNDAY. Senator, yes. Our plan is to build those in domestic U.S. shipyards with American workers.

Senator BALDWIN. That's music to my ears. As you might be aware, Admiral Lunday, last fall, the Navy cut the contract for the Constellation-class frigates that were being constructed in Wisconsin. Following the cuts to that contract, the Navy suggested the possibility of helping the Coast Guard out with speeding up the procurement of a second Great Lakes heavy icebreaker, which I also hope will be built in Wisconsin.

So, Admiral, have you had any discussions with the Navy regarding that possibility, the possible options to speed up procurement of a 7-second heavy icebreaker for the Great Lakes?

Admiral LUNDAY. Senator, thank you for the question. First, acquiring a second Great Lakes icebreaker that is at least as capable as the Mackinaw remains one of my top priorities for the Coast Guard.

We talk with the Navy regularly on their acquisitions and ours because we are always coordinating about how we use and leverage the U.S. Defense Industrial Base. I haven't spoken with CNO Caudle directly on Fincantieri and the Great Lakes icebreaker specifically, but Fincantieri and other yards in the Great Lakes region are a critical part of the U.S. Defense Industrial Base.

And so, we look to award contracts to U.S. shipbuilders. We hope that those yards, shipyards that build great American ships, including those in the Great Lakes, will be competing for Coast Guard work.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you. And you testified before this committee last fall and agreed that it was important to construct a second heavy icebreaker for the Great Lakes. Unfortunately, my Republican colleagues did not include any funding for the icebreaker in the reconciliation package that we've just discussed, a very hearty \$25 billion, including a very significant focus on icebreakers.

So, do you commit to continuing to seek funding to construct the second heavy icebreaker in future budget requests?

Admiral LUNDAY. Yes, Senator, we do. I thank the Committee for the support in the 2024 budget for initial \$20 million. In our 2026 unfunded priorities list, there's a request for an additional \$35 million to complete the analyze and select phase.

I would say that the relief we got in Chapter 11, Title 14 requirements in reconciliation, if we had the Congress's support to extend that relief to other major acquisitions like the Great Lakes icebreaker, it would enable us to move much faster to be able to procure and build that icebreaker.

Senator BALDWIN. Thank you for that information.

Senator SULLIVAN. OK. Senator Sheehy.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TIM SHEEHY,
U.S. SENATOR FROM MONTANA**

Senator SHEEHY. Morning, Admiral. How are you? I don't know if we already covered icebreakers. Sorry, I just came in, but have we already talked about icebreakers?

Senator SULLIVAN. We've started, we're continuing, and we're not done yet.

Senator SHEEHY. All right. Well, if you already thoroughly—

Senator SULLIVAN. Join the party.

Senator SHEEHY. No, if we've already beat that one to death, then I don't need to. I don't need to hit it more.

So, I am curious about back when I was in service, we had a pilot program with the Coast Guard that utilized the SEAL training pipeline where we had some Coast Guard officers go through SEAL training with the intent of enhancing your ability to do VBSS and interdiction operations. That program was subsequently shut down. And of course, in light of recent events, I think we're seeing that the spirit of that program is very much still in demand.

What is the current outlook on the Coast Guard as far as enhancing that? Because Visit, Board, Search, And Seizure, underway capture of vessels is probably the most high-risk mission our armed forces do. We've lost many SEALs over the years. FBI agents, actually a couple with that went through SEAL training with me were killed a few years ago doing training of that.

So, I'm curious what the Coast Guard's current plan is to invest in that capability and enhance it. Because like I said, I was there present when a decision was made to invest in it, and then that decision was made to divest of that.

Admiral LUNDAY. Senator, thank you for the question. You know, the Coast Guard has been investing and spending time building out our advanced interdiction capability in our maritime security response teams, including generating a second team and capability on the West Coast.

The high-profile tanker, dark fleet tanker boardings that you've seen us perform that the Coast Guard has been led by those maritime security response teams, the direct action sections, some of our highest and most proficient operators. They work regularly with Naval Special Warfare and other members of the SOCOM community.

And I've spoken with Admiral Bradley, the SOCOM Commander, and also General Braga, Joint Special Operations Command Commander, about how we can continue to deepen that cooperation and interoperability going forward. I am familiar with the original program where Coast Guard officers went through BUD/S, the Naval Special Warfare Training. And in fact, some of those officers continue to serve with distinction in the Navy, and we remain close to them, and we consider them still part of our family.

So, we haven't renewed that program, but I will take a look at that program and whether or not that's something we should look at. And I'll talk with Admiral Bradley about it as well.

Senator SHEEHY. Yes. And I bring it up only because the very history of Special Ops in the American military, although it's all en vogue now with global war on terror, the history of SOF is actually one of investment and then very quick divestment when it's not convenient to keep the snake eaters around. And they have long hair, and they get in trouble a lot, and they usually drink too much.

So, the services quickly disband them, oftentimes after the conflict's over, and then are forced to recreate that capability again

later when it's needed. And almost every branch has made that mistake. And luckily, you know, after the Eagle Claw mission in Iran, jointly as a military recognized, let's institutionalize our special operations capability.

Let's build it into our doctrine, and let's ensure it's resourced appropriately, because when we try to flex that need, after it's already required, disaster strikes. And in particular, the mission that your forces are specifically tasked to do is such a high-risk mission, both from a combat perspective, but also just from an operational perspective. Even if you're training, it's a high-risk mission because underways, especially if you're North Atlantic or elsewhere and you have rotor wing assets involved, it's just a super, super dangerous environment.

So, the only branch of our military, and I understand the Coast Guard straddles, but the only branch of the military that hasn't really institutionalized Special Ops as a command capability. Understand you've always had the interdiction teams and that, but is the Coast Guard.

So, I would recommend in light of the recent months of Op tempo in this atmosphere to say, listen, maybe the Coast Guard can lean into this again and institutionalize what is a capability which you just outlined. We have the capability, but let's make sure it's institutionalized and it's part of our doctrine so that when you retire and someone else comes in, they don't decide, "Hey, we don't need this anymore. Let's shut it down." Because we've done that so many times in the military. And we don't need to beat a dead horse. But thank you for taking a look at that. I appreciate it.

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Senator. In fact, part of Force Design is to establish a special missions command with a dedicated flag officer focused fully on all of our deployable specialized forces, to your point. But thank you, Senator.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Senator Sheehy. And we have a good naval special warfare training facility in Kodiak, where we also have the largest Coast Guard station in the country. So, great joint ops there.

Admiral, I want to go back to just that decision, the discussion on icebreakers. I think the world of the Coast Guard, one of the criticisms I've heard over the years, though, is it can sometimes be slow on the decisionmaking front, a little bureaucratic. So, I'm hopeful that that kind of timeline, as I just mentioned, on the Coast Guard, decisionmaking on homeporting icebreakers can be made, sometime first quarter, second quarter, at the very least.

Up to how many icebreakers would you potentially see in terms of, given what we have in the budget reconciliation bill, up to how many would you see potentially being homeported in Alaska, and you've given your team guidance on?

Admiral LUNDAY. Mr. Chairman, as I've told the team, in December when I asked them to develop options, as they develop options, one of the first ones that I want them to present among a range of options for consideration decision, me in consultation with Secretary Noem, is for homeporting of up to four icebreakers in Alaska. So, although we are still pending a decision, that's clear guidance I've given to the team.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. Let me turn to your team. I was back home over the recess. I had a great, great force lay down briefing from your leadership team in Alaska, Captain Culpepper, a bunch of others. He actually went to Seward with me as well. So, I really appreciated your team's time and effort. They took with me just last week, actually.

You know, we had—it's long history, but when I first got here, the Coast Guard had this plan for a forced lay down. They were looking all over the country and they were going to take the cutters in Alaska and reduce them despite all these Arctic challenges, which I thought was a big mistake.

So, I kind of worked very closely with the Commandant, and during his confirmation process, got them to change that look from seven. They wanted to go seven cutters to six, we actually went seven to eight. And so, I got an update on that, both in terms of the forced lay down what's happening in Seward with the FRC.

That's coming in the Coast Guard infrastructure dollars, both for housing, \$16 million, and the shoreside infrastructure, \$50 million in Sitka, with another FRC coming there with an additional—I think it's \$66 million for the shoreside infrastructure and the need for housing money. I think they have \$6 million there. The Kodiak plus up of MH-60s from five to nine, and two additional OPCs that are projected there. And I have a two-part question.

One is, how do you think those investments are going? The money is already appropriated. It's part of the plan. There are very strong community interests there. They love the Coast Guard. And second, we've had this surge. It's really exciting. It's kind of chicken and the egg of shipbuilding capacity in Seward, in Ketchikan, even maybe in Wrangell. A lot of companies are starting to do the shipbuilding and heavy maintenance work. Jag is one that's an example.

As you are looking at homeporting, but also cost savings, does it help to have someone very close that can do the heavy maintenance overhauls, not just for Coast Guard vessels, but some of these shipbuilding companies in Alaska are doing it for Navy vessels?

It seems like a really good kind of symbiotic relationship. You guys don't have to send your vessels, whether it's icebreakers or FRCs down to Alameda and other places. You keep the families home-ported, where their ships are doing the overhaul.

It's exciting because it's driving the private sector as well, but I think it's a cost efficiency for the Coast Guard as you look at homeporting these additional assets. Can you speak on the timelines on Sitka, Seward, but also this idea of a stronger relationship with a real budding shipbuilding industry that has taken off in Alaska that's quite exciting?

Admiral LUNDAY. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I think on our plans for building out the infrastructure, including housing in place in Seward, and Sitka, and other locations, much of that is funded. We're moving forward on executing. And then, the areas where we still need more funding, additional housing in some of those locations, continued housing, build out in Kodiak, continues to be important.

Senator SULLIVAN. By the way, the recent housing in Kodiak that you guys have built is just exquisite. Whoever did that in line

with the Coast Guard, that is exactly what our men and women of the Coast Guard deserve. The housing facility there, I'm sure you've seen it in Kodiak, is really, really impressive. So, I appreciate that very much.

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Chairman. When we were there in August, we were able to cut the ribbon on the latest development.

Senator SULLIVAN. Beautiful.

Admiral LUNDAY. To your question about the ship repair. So, the American maritime dominance and a strong industrial base is not just about shipbuilding, it's about the repair that you mentioned. And so, the more capacity in our repair and the closer it is to where cutters are homeported, the more competition and the better cost we're going to be able to get for repairing our ships.

And so, I'm supportive of anything that increases the availability of repair capacity, and capacity that's closer to where our cutters are homeported.

Senator SULLIVAN. Good. And isn't that also good for the crews? Because then, they don't have to—they're not leaving their duty station as that ship is being repaired, say, more locally.

Admiral LUNDAY. It is, Mr. Chairman.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. I see the Chairman of the Committee is coming, and I don't know if you want to—are you ready to go, Mr. Chairman, or should we turn over to Senator Blunt Rochester?

The CHAIRMAN. Go ahead.

Senator SULLIVAN. OK. Senator Blunt Rochester.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Well, thank you. I'm not sure if this is round two or three, but it feels like a moving fleet.

I want to continue my questions, but I also want to start off by acknowledging what the Chairman said, that we hope there isn't a shutdown. And I think there have been positive signs, even in the past 24 hours, with the engagement of the White House, as well as a bipartisan group of Senators, which I think is important for the country to see. And so, let's start there.

Second, I would be remiss if I let the opportunity to go by without acknowledging Sector Delaware Bay, as well as our folks at a station in Indian River in Delaware. Again, just doing exemplary work and represented very well, represented the organization as well as the country.

To follow up on my questions, I know we were talking about the amount of folks you have to hire, the ability that you were able to recruit so many. Did I understand there's still a deficit, though, at this point, of what you'd like to see in terms of a complete force?

Admiral LUNDAY. There is Ranking Member. The clear direction of Force Design is not only to restore our—come out of the deficit in our enlisted workforce, but to grow our military workforce by 15,000. And we're going to need that workforce to operate the assets, the growth in assets that Congress has funded, American people have funded the Coast Guard to do more operations and deliver more value to the American people.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. And I know we talked about the buildup and how long all of that takes as well. When the tankers were seized off the coast of Venezuela, did you have to move your folks from, whether it was, you know, search and rescue, or other core functions, or was it what you expected?

Admiral LUNDAY. Ranking Member, not from search and rescue mission. So, the teams, the specialized elite teams, perform this type of mission in other areas, or they're on ready status to be able to perform. And so, this is within their normal mission profile, just more visible than it's been in the past.

But we've used marine inspectors and our cyber protection teams as well. And then we've used cutters that would maybe otherwise be doing our maritime drug law enforcement mission. We've reallocated them to this mission temporarily while we do some of the tanker operations.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Right. We'll follow up with you as the member who I've worked on supply chains a lot, both here in the Senate, but also in the House, and also on cyber. And so, I'd love to follow up with you afterwards on just the threats that we see in that space. Or if you want to, I've got two minutes now, if you want to talk a little bit about cyber threats as well.

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Ranking Member, because cyber domain is an operational domain for the Coast Guard, and it's of critical importance, not only in the day-to-day work, but in protecting the supply chains that the United States, and our economy, and our national security depend on in cyberspace.

And so, the Coast Guard has a cyber command that we use to operate to protect not only our own networks, but maritime critical infrastructure, our ports, and waterways, and the facilities in cyberspace. And we've also benefited as a regulatory agency from increased authority that we've put out a new regulation that governs U.S. port facilities, and vessels, and offshore facilities, ensuring that they meet required cybersecurity standards.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Thank you also for mentioning the port. We have the Port of Wilmington in Delaware. I think, again, these kinds of hearings are vital in terms of our role of oversight and as well as just making sure that the resources are going where they need to go.

Again, congratulations on being able to quickly recruit so many individuals. I think your testimony said it was the largest since 1991. And I think considering what you're facing, we're going to need all of those resources.

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Senator BLUNT ROCHESTER. Thank you. And I will yield back.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you. Next, we have our Chairman of the Full Committee, and I'm honored that Senator Cruz is here. He and I really tag-teamed the effort in the budget reconciliation bill on making this historic largest investment in Coast Guard history.

So, I want to thank the Chairman for his great leadership on this, this is something that he and I, as the full Chairman and as the Chairman of this subcommittee, have a lot of pride in because I think it was one of the more underreported elements of the budget reconciliation bill, but so important to our country and historic investments in the Coast Guard.

So, with that, Mr. Chairman, the floor is yours.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TED CRUZ,
U.S. SENATOR FROM TEXAS**

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I fully agree with those sentiments. Admiral, welcome. Good to see you. Patrol Forces Southwest Asia's six fast response cutters in Bahrain are doing difficult work in the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, escorting commercial traffic, countering piracy, and interdicting smuggling networks that use small vessels and dhows to move drugs, weapons, and other contraband.

As you know, seizures of these vessels at sea can be extremely dangerous. In 2024, two Navy SEALs tragically drowned during a nighttime seizure in this area when trying to board a dhow moving Iranian weapons to Yemen. To my colleagues who think our Coast Guard and Navy should be boarding every Venezuelan drug runner, that's a risk you take, as our friend Senator Sheehy has pointed out.

Congress just directed you to develop a policy to disincentivize maritime drug trafficking, including seizing or otherwise disposing of trafficking vessels. Right now, these sea pirates are just turned on their way with no consequence. What specific changes do you intend to make in the next year to turn these interdictions into real deterrents, resulting in fewer repeat offenders and fewer dhows going back to sea to move drugs and guns?

Admiral LUNDAY. Mr. Chairman, thank you for your question and your attention on this issue. We're very proud of our crews and patrol forces Southwest Asia that do this dangerous but very important work under the command of U.S. Central Command.

And so, I've directed—I've communicated when I commanded Atlantic area with the Central Command Commander and the Commander of Fifth Fleet out there. And I've asked Admiral Moore to do the same. I'm going to re-engage in the Department of War, the Central Command Commander, Admiral Cooper, and talk to him about the way forward on this so that we can make sure we're being more effective as we do these important boarding operations.

The CHAIRMAN. I want to return to the topic that the Chairman mentioned just a minute ago, which is after years of neglect, the Coast Guard is finally receiving the resources it needs to stop illegal immigration, to intercept drug traffickers, and to keep Americans safe at sea.

In the Working Families Tax Cut Act that we passed last summer. It included the largest recapitalization of the Coast Guard in American history, over \$24 billion. We also cut through layers of red tape and gave the Coast Guard flexibility to buy new ships and aircraft quickly. Let's talk about outcomes. What are three concrete capabilities you will deliver this year with this funding?

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, we are moving at speed and obligating the funds, and then delivering the outcomes is of paramount importance. And so, the first outcome we're going to deliver is, and we've already obligated this funding, and that's the autonomous systems. So, we've already invested in, obligated, and we're delivering the autonomous systems that we're using for air, short and medium range.

We're also using for surface, And we've got a contract, for example, with Sail Drone, and we're using that for border control. And

then we're using it for underwater, remotely operated vehicle operations as well. We're using those right now off the Polar Star in Antarctica. So, that's one example of a suite of capabilities that we're bringing to bear in terms of delivering outcomes.

The other outcomes is we just awarded in early January, I think around the 6th of January, a contract for the rebuild of Station South Padre Island which is along the border there in Southern Texas with Mexico. And it guards the Gulf of America, and it is the eastern end of Operation River Wall in the Rio Grande River.

And that \$200 million award and investment will deliver a much more capable and enduring station there at South Padre Island that incorporates the Customs and Border Protection capability and other teammates, such, for example, from the State of Texas, has a secure communications facility and gives us the preeminent facility we need to be able to control, secure, and defend the southern border.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good. And I will say the investment in South Padre Island, I'm certainly grateful for, as are Texans across the board. Let's focus where you ended that.

In October 2025, the Coast Guard surged additional response boats and tactical teams to the Rio Grande under Operation River Wall to help establish operational control along roughly 260 miles of Border River in South Texas. What are your clear, measurable outcomes for this operation as you surge forces to the river, and how will you prevent this mission from draining cutters, aircraft, and boarding teams from offshore counter-drug and other critical tasks vital to Texas?

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, as the senior operational commander for the Coast Guard, as Commandant, I directed that operation began River Wall in October. And we had a presence there before, a longstanding presence, but it was fairly small; boat teams and boat crews working with Border Patrol.

We needed to infuse a much greater capability. And now, we're looking at what is that enduring long-range force posture to do Operation River Wall in a way that balances our commitment of forces there with operational demands in other areas. It's principally a boat force and tactical law enforcement supported by UAS and other surveillance capability.

But we've learned a lot of lessons since October as we've done that. Our primary metrics are the number of interdictions of border crossings, working with Border Patrol, and then also deterred attempted crossings across the Rio Grande.

The CHAIRMAN. Very good. I'll say finally, I appreciated your remarks earlier today about making sure that Coast Guard leadership is in place. And this committee will be meeting this coming Tuesday to advance those Coast Guard promotions, including the Vice Commandant.

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Senator SULLIVAN. Senator Duckworth.

**STATEMENT OF HON. TAMMY DUCKWORTH,
U.S. SENATOR FROM ILLINOIS**

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Admiral Lunday, welcome. I don't know if you know this, but I am a proud Coastie family member. My brother served under Rush, where he was also part of some of the boarding patrols, because he spoke Indonesian.

I've been troubled, Admiral, that under the Trump administration, the DOD continues to aggressively encroach on one of the Coast Guard's core missions; maritime law enforcement. And as often happens when experienced experts are replaced with interlopers, Secretary Hegseth has arrogantly tossed aside proven tactics that the Coast Guard has employed for years to thwart drug runners, bring them to justice, and facilitate vital intelligence collection.

Instead, he has been playing judge, jury, and executioner, ordering military strikes to summarily kill suspected drug runners without regard for the laws of armed conflict, or any evidence that these small vessels pose immediate imminent threat to the United States.

Admiral Lunday, can you explain why the Coast Guard's trained boarding teams shoot at the engines instead of the operator when pursuing a suspected drug smuggling vessel?

Admiral LUNDAY. Senator, when we conduct our maritime law enforcement operations at sea, under our DHS and Coast Guard authority, we are interdicting those vessels as a law enforcement operation to seek to not only stop the drugs, but potentially prosecute those that are aboard.

And so, part of stopping those vessels that are smuggling drugs is our very specialized capability to disable them from a helicopter, our helicopter interdiction squadron, that works with a cutter and small boat, and our highly specialized teams to do those operations under our law enforcement authority.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Would you agree that the intelligence gathering component of it is also an important part of what you do when you stop these vessels?

Admiral LUNDAY. When we conduct our law enforcement operations, it is, Senator.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. I agree that the use of lethal force against individuals and vessels suspected to be trafficking drugs, an action that by itself does not constitute armed conflict or terrorist activity, is illegal under the United States and international law. The Trump administration has heavily implied that fentanyl overdose deaths justify the unauthorized use of military force against small vessels departing Venezuela.

Admiral Lunday, the U.S. Coast Guard has significant experience combating drug trafficking organizations. Does the U.S. Coast Guard have any reason to suspect that Venezuela is a major manufacturing hub for fentanyl?

Admiral LUNDAY. Senator, our principal interdictions that involve Venezuela or Venezuelan gangs and we've seen that principally in the Caribbean, that's principally we see the movement of cocaine at sea. But our criminal investigations that have been conducted in courts, along with Department of Justice, show strong

ties between some of these groups that move the cocaine and other groups that are producing fentanyl.

So, we see the interdiction of cocaine, that's a cash crop for many of these cartels that funds their ability to produce and move fentanyl.

Senator DUCKWORTH. But you're not seizing massive amounts of fentanyl when you're doing these interdictions. with vehicles that are leaving Venezuela?

Admiral LUNDAY. Well, in my experience, Senator, the fentanyl we see, given its size and how it's moved, is traditionally moved by other means, not in bulk amounts like cocaine at sea.

Senator DUCKWORTH. I think that's a clear point, that most of the cocaine that passes through Venezuela to the United States arrives by air, and that sea routes departing Venezuela are mostly headed to Europe. Is that correct?

Admiral LUNDAY. I'm sorry, Senator, your question was about cocaine to Europe?

Senator DUCKWORTH. Well, yes. So, my understanding is that cocaine is a major illegal narcotic that's—we agree that cocaine is the major narcotic that is transiting through Venezuela, and that most of it that's coming through Venezuela arrives in Venezuela by air. Is that correct?

Admiral LUNDAY. I'd have to go back and look at how it gets into Venezuela, Senator. But when we see it move out of Venezuela through the Caribbean toward Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and other parts of the U.S., we see that move by sea, cocaine move by sea.

Senator DUCKWORTH. OK. And just to be precise, last year, roughly how many pounds of fentanyl did the U.S. Coast Guard interdict that was arriving from Venezuela to the United States by sea?

Admiral LUNDAY. I'm not aware of interdictions of any fentanyl. I see that cocaine is the principal commodity or drug that's moved by sea.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Aware of any in the last 5 years?

Admiral LUNDAY. I'm not aware of any from Venezuela that we have seized as the Coast Guard in the last 5 years, Senator.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. Are a majority of individuals that the Coast Guard apprehends when it interdicts a vessel running drugs into the United States, senior cartel leaders, or important DTO members, or often do you find cartels hire individuals who know how to operate a vessel and are desperate for a job to operate those vessels?

Admiral LUNDAY. Well, Senator, in our experience, the people that operate the drug smuggling vessels that we interdict in our maritime law enforcement role are connected with the cartels. They're part of the broader network.

Senator DUCKWORTH. But they're not the leaders of the cartel?

Admiral LUNDAY. Not in my experience. They're not the leaders of the cartels.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you. That's what I thought. The intelligence community and drug enforcement agencies in this country have known that the PRC is the true source of fentanyl pre-

cursor chemicals, which are bought by customers in Mexico and then smuggled into the United States.

Bottom line, beyond alarm over the legality of these boat strikes, I fear that our country has grown distracted from the true threat vectors, whether it's fentanyl arriving from Mexico or countering the PRC in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly Southeast Asia.

Indo-Pacific Theater poses a unique challenge and effectively countering the PRC and building robust and stable relationships with partners and allies requires a stable presence and predictable investments, especially in the Indo-Pacific. The last thing the Coast Guard should be forced to do is reroute resources and assets away from the Indo-Pacific to support President Trump's reckless foreign campaign to run Venezuela and enrich big oil corporations.

Admiral, how has the pivot to SOUTHCOM operations impacted the Coast Guard's ability to reassure partner nations that the Coast Guard is committed to countering the PRC's role in maritime disputes, especially in the South China Sea?

Admiral LUNDAY. Senator, we continue to maintain a trajectory of growth of Coast Guard posture in the Indo-Pacific with the addition of more cutters and more personnel, including in the pending 2026 budget that will place additional personnel and capability in the Indo-Pacific.

So, the Coast Guard is not diminishing our footprint and presence in the Indo-Pacific, because for us that's part of the U.S. homeland too, with Hawaii and the three territories there.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Absolutely. I hope that continues to be true, but it is imperative that if the Coast Guard is forced to maneuver assets in a manner that jeopardizes its ability to fulfill statutory obligations, that you as Commandant report that deficiency to Congress immediately.

So, will you report back to Congress should your ability to maintain the commitments in the Indo-Pacific start to degrade?

Admiral LUNDAY. Yes, Senator, we will.

Senator DUCKWORTH. Thank you so much. Thank you for being here.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Senator Duckworth. We're going to go into a couple more questions. I think Senator Cantwell is on her way and she wants to—and I also have the opportunity to engage. So, I'm going to broaden the aperture here a little bit, Admiral, beyond Alaska.

I want to get a sense of how Force Design 2028 is progressing. I want to compliment you, and Secretary Noem, and the Coast Guard leadership for laying out a vision. It's a really good document. I've read it. It has got a lot of big, ambitious goals. I think you're on the right path.

But can you give just a quick update in how you are seeing the work of Force Design 2028, and what's the next phase of Force Design 2028 that you're focused on?

Admiral LUNDAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have been moving at speed to implement the Secretary's direction to transform the Coast Guard through Force Design 2028. In fact, the Secretary just released on the 15th of January, the interim update, progress update, which is now posted on our website and is publicly avail-

able, and gives an outstanding summary and some detail on where we're going.

Senator SULLIVAN. And I'm assuming the budget reconciliation \$25 billion investment will help supercharge and have you guys be able to achieve the goals, the ambitious goals, that you put out in 2028 Force Design?

Admiral LUNDAY. Budget reconciliation does exactly that. And supercharge is exactly the right word, Mr. Chairman. It is what is fueling the success of Force Design 2028.

And so, we've been able to do the four primary campaigns, enabling campaigns, which is streamlining our decisionmaking, streamlining our organization to remove consensus-based decision-making from the headquarters to move faster, delegate authority lower in the organization, closer to the front lines, and move people closer to the front lines, to be able to streamline and create an acquisition and contracting superhighway. And then bring, technology to bear to make the Coast Guard a leader, not a follower, in the Federal Government on adopting and applying technology.

That supports our three enabling or outcome tables; control, secure, and defend the border, facilitate commerce, and respond to crisis. Those outcome tables, our mission delivery, is part of Force Design. That's also what makes this unique. We have found that for the investment the American people make in the Coast Guard, we provide a six times return.

So, for about a \$12 billion 2025 investment in the Coast Guard, it's an over \$70 billion return on investment in lives saved, property protected, border protected. And so, that's all part of the Force Design effort. But what we require to be successful is that continued top-line growth in our annual appropriations.

Mr. Chairman, we're a \$20 billion organization that is still only funded at about the \$13 billion, \$14 billion level. And so, that will be an important part of our success in Force Design 2028.

Senator SULLIVAN. And how about on the recruiting side? My ranking member here mentioned that, but you know, there's a big goal of growing the force. And how do you see that going?

Admiral LUNDAY. Mr. Chairman, it's going very well. And we're going to need to build on that success to keep moving forward and grow the workforce to meet the intent of growing it by 15,000 by the end of 2028, which was the Secretary's goal and direction in Force Design 2028.

But we've also hit it from the retention side. We've seen improved retention in our military workforce. We need to do more work to improve our civilian retention because they are a critical part of our workforce as well. But that's all part of building a strong workforce, and getting and keeping the best talent because our people are our greatest treasure.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. Let me switch gears to another topic you and I have talked about. Senator Cantwell's here now. I know she cares about this topic as well. And that's the enforcement as it relates to IUU fishing. That's Illegal, Unreported, Unregulated Fishing.

I was proud to work with all my colleagues, but Senator Whitehouse in particular. We had my FISH Act legislation, which passed this committee, then passed the whole Senate. We attached it to

the NDAA at the end of the year. Unfortunately, it got stripped out in the conference, which was a bit of a disappointment.

But how is the Coast Guard using its assets, authorities, technology, to combat IUU fishing? There was a big, I think, *New York Times* article just a couple weeks ago about these Chinese gray fleets in the hundreds and hundreds that fish in the high seas. They ravage the ocean. You know, countries in Africa and Latin America can't stop them. They are really aggressive.

They're everything from a national security threat to a humanitarian crisis because they use slave labor. I mean, it's the worst of the worst, let alone destroying sustainable oceans and fisheries. My FISH Act is an aggressive response that would include the Coast Guard and even the U.S. Navy to go after these big gray fleets that are conducting IUU fishing.

But you're already doing a lot of that. This bill would give you more authorities. But can you talk about some of the good work the Coast Guard's doing that, and what a threat this is, not just to sustainable fisheries and human rights, but it's a national security threat.

The AFRICOM Commander, two years in a row when I was at the Munich Security Conference, talked about IUU fishing as one of the top threats to AFRICOM and countries in Africa because of the Chinese just taken over the fishing capabilities of small African countries and kind of treating them in a way that China does with most small countries like bullies.

So, how are you doing on that? What more authority do you need from us to combat IUU fishing, especially against the Chinese and Russians?

Admiral LUNDAY. Thanks for the question, Mr. Chairman, because countering IUU fishing is a top priority mission for the Coast Guard. It is about national security. First, it's about controlling and securing our border and maritime approaches through our Exclusive Economic Zone to protect our sovereign fisheries in those areas.

But even beyond that, in the international space, reinforcing the international frameworks that prevent IUU fishing because those impact our ability and our partner nation's ability to protect their own fish stocks and livelihood and this key protein source. So, it is about national security.

It's important for us in terms of authority and capability in two ways going forward. We need more ability to have maritime domain awareness, actually maritime domain dominance, so we can see what these illegal, these IUU fishing fleets, these distant water fleets are up to, what they're doing, we can share that information with partners so we can be better at enforcement.

And then, we also need the at-sea cutter, and air capability, and other technology to be able to be effective in patrolling, deterring, and then enforcing not only U.S. law, but the international frameworks that prevent IUU fishing.

Senator SULLIVAN. Good, that's great. Thank you for that. We'll continue to work on that, and hopefully, I can get my bill passed and signed into law, which again, had widespread bipartisan support on this committee, in the Senate, and now we just got to get

it over the goal line and it'll give you more authorities on a really important issue. Senator Cantwell.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARIA CANTWELL,
U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON**

Senator CANTWELL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I agree with you and definitely want to work with you and also agree with what Admiral Lunday just said that we need to have this domain expertise.

What I really worry about the Arctic, writ large, is that without the capacity and without the resources that people think that we're missing, and as fish move further north, people think that those are their fish. And I definitely think that we have to have the capacity to address the issue, and certainly want to work with Senator Sullivan on this important issue as we share a fishing fleet that is challenged every day over this problem.

So, Admiral, again, good to see you. I wanted to ask you about Slip 36 at Seattle. You guys have updated the aging facility plan and the workforce there. The reconciliation bill, I think, had some resources. Is Seattle part of your prioritization plan for the infrastructure plan for the future?

Admiral LUNDAY. It is, Ranking Member Cantwell. The critical part of the work there is to rebuild and build out the capability for our polar security cutters that will be homeported there, as well as Healy, which continues to be homeported there.

Senator CANTWELL. And so, that's like part of an ongoing commitment, that the resources are there, right, committed?

Admiral LUNDAY. Yes, Ranking Member, we had resources through annual appropriations before for some of that work, and reconciliation adds additional resources to advance and complete that work.

Senator CANTWELL. OK. Yes, I think \$323 million. Is that right?

Admiral LUNDAY. I believe that's correct, Ranking Member.

Senator CANTWELL. And then what about, when would we expect to see the Polar Security Cutter construction? When would we expect to see ships arriving in Puget Sound?

Admiral LUNDAY. The first Polar Security Cutter, number one, being built in Mississippi, is currently on track for completion and delivery to the Coast Guard in 2030. And so, I can get back to you with a specific projected date on when it will arrive at its home port, but it'll be delivered to the Coast Guard right now on track in 2030.

Senator CANTWELL. OK, thank you. Appreciate that. And then, we've talked about Cape Disappointment, and the repair to damages for home port and new surf boats being built. I think it's in our state. We want you to come and visit, and—sorry, I'm missing actually a page here somehow.

Cape D obviously is a very important part of our plan. And so, we're trying to help dedicate, you know, the maritime sector with the incredible exports that come out of the Columbia River. You agreed to work with us on a long-term plan to help fix the problems there at Cape D, so particularly accommodating new surf boats. So, will you come visit, and will you help us continue to get this plan for Cape D?

Admiral LUNDAY. We will, Ranking Member Cantwell, not only the improvements at Cape Disappointment, but also the long-term dredging challenge there at Cape Disappointment. And actually, if the government is funded, my current plan is to travel out to the Pacific Northwest in mid-February, including a visit to Station Cape Disappointment and the Motor Lifeboat School.

Senator CANTWELL. Good. I'm happy to join you at that. Might be better to come later in the year, but that's OK. We will take the early visit.

Admiral LUNDAY. I'll look forward to returning when you can join.

Senator CANTWELL. Yes, thank you. Thank you so much. You know, this issue of, you know, our fishermen and the Coast Guard and the C-130s. Earlier this month, when a vessel ran aground, it was a C-130 that was first on the scene. We understand the C-130s, including at times one from Kodiak, that our fishermen rely on, have been routinely transporting migrants to detention centers.

Is that correct? Have the Coast Guard aircraft or personnel been used for transporting detained individuals on behalf of CBP or ICE?

Admiral LUNDAY. Yes, Ranking Member, the Coast Guard has a unique capability within the department of heavy lift that enables us to move people and equipment. Mostly, that's our C-27 medium range aircraft, although we have used C-130s in some cases to do that support to ICE or CBP, at their request.

Senator CANTWELL. So, how is that helping us meet our other mission of dealing with our fishermen that desperately need it in these treacherous waters?

Admiral LUNDAY. Ranking Member Cantwell, I've given direction to our operational commanders that those type of support operations to other agencies are not to interfere with our primary national security or search and rescue missions. And we do that kind of balancing against mission priorities frequently. That's part of the nature of what we do and operational commanders do. And so, that has not impeded our ability to conduct our other primary statutory missions.

Senator CANTWELL. I see my time has expired, but I'm going to ask some follow-up questions to that and also on the Jones Act. But thank you, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate it.

Senator SULLIVAN. Thank you, Senator Cantwell. And Admiral, you've done a great job here. Very full hour and a half hearing. A lot of good questions. I'm going to end with one final question, and I'm sure Senator Cantwell will be interested in it as well.

You know, Alaska's waters are some of the harshest in the world. Yet, only 19 percent of our coastline is currently covered by the Coast Guard's Rescue 21 System. The Marine Exchange of Alaska has proven critical in closing these coverage gaps, extending VHF, DSC, and AIS capabilities to areas Rescue 21 cannot reach, and has already saved lives during incidences of vessels that are in distress and the Wrangle landslide that we had.

So, the question is, the budget reconciliation bill with the historic investment in the Coast Guard has \$170 million dedicated to maritime domain awareness. How is the Coast Guard planning to utilize that and leverage, continue to leverage, partnerships like the

Marine Exchange that I mentioned, to rapidly expand coverage for communications and the Coast Guard's rescue system to ensure real-time safety communications across Alaska and high-risk maritime environments?

Admiral LUNDAY. Mr. Chairman, so the Coastal Sentinel, which is a framework that is part of Force Design 2028, the concept there is to use sensors, not only Coast Guard and other Federal Government centers, but those from partners, including the private sector, to bring that together to have a full picture. And have not just maritime domain awareness, but give us maritime domain dominance for all of our border, including in Alaska.

And so, partnerships with groups or entities, organizations like the Alaska Marine Exchange, are vital to our ability to gather and use their sensor data, and then be able to share appropriately data back with them and then have a common data architecture. That partnership or those partnerships are vital to our ability to be successful with achieving maritime domain dominance through Coastal Sentinel.

Senator SULLIVAN. Great. Well, listen, I want to thank you. I want to thank your team. I want to thank all the members of the Coast Guard and their families. Please send them our regards, as the Chairman and Ranking Member of this subcommittee, on the great job that they're doing for our country. And hopefully, we're going to get through this budget funding event in the next 24 hours and fund the Coast Guard. I can't think anything more damaging to have a shutdown that would hurt our Coast Guard members and their families.

I also want to have the Ranking Member Cantwell's request for her statement to be included for the record. To happen without objection.

[The information referred to follows.]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. MARIA CANTWELL, U.S. SENATOR FROM WASHINGTON

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Admiral Lunday, thank you for testifying today.

Yesterday, you issued an Action Order to strengthen oversight and accountability of sexual assault and sexual harassment in the Coast Guard.

I appreciate that you are prioritizing these issues, and acting on the commitment you made to this Committee.

As you move forward with implementation, I ask that you keep the Committee fully informed, including with respect to the reforms we authored in the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025.

The Coast Guard plays a unique and indispensable role in national security, economic security, environmental protection, and maritime safety.

The Pacific Northwest is a strategic hub for some of the Coast Guard's most important missions. Washington is home to a \$45.9 billion dollar maritime economy that connects American farmers, fishermen, and manufacturers to global markets.

It is also central to our Nation's Arctic strategy. Seattle is the homeport for the Coast Guard's current icebreaking fleet and the future heavy icebreakers, called the Polar Security Cutters.

These ships are essential to American leadership and security in the Arctic, as well as opportunities for tourism and sustainable economic development.

As sea ice recedes, shipping lanes are opening, commercial activity is increasing, and strategic competition in the region is intensifying.

That is why Congress has already appropriated \$100 million dollars, with the Coast Guard proposing additional funds for the icebreaker homeporting project in Seattle.

This investment strengthens U.S. sovereignty, supports scientific research, enables emergency response, and ensures the Coast Guard can operate in some of the most challenging environments on Earth.

Arctic security is not a future concern—it is a present reality. I look forward to hearing from you today about how we can finish the Base Seattle homeporting project.

The Coast Guard's importance to Washington extends well beyond the Arctic and Antarctic.

Station Cape Disappointment and its surfmen ensure the Columbia River is safe, and open for business. The Columbia River is one of the most economically vital waterways in the country, supporting \$21 to \$35 billion dollars in annual commerce, including 56 percent of all U.S. grain exports.

When the Coast Guard keeps that river safe and navigable, it protects American farmers, global supply chains, and international trade.

More broadly, Washington's maritime sector supports more than 174,000 direct and indirect jobs. Those jobs—from shipbuilding and fishing to port operations and logistics—depend on safe navigation, environmental protection, and a reliable Coast Guard presence.

This Committee has long worked in a bipartisan manner to support the Coast Guard. In December, the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2025 was signed into law as part of the National Defense Authorization Act.

That bill reflected a shared commitment to strengthening the Service, improving accountability, and investing in its workforce.

The legislation addressed serious failures identified in Operation Fouled Anchor by strengthening reporting requirements, oversight, and accountability for senior leaders.

The law strengthened environmental protections such as extending the Cetacean Desk in Puget Sound that protects orcas and other whales. And, it authorized the Coast Guard to collaborate with Tribes on conservation and mitigation activities near Coast Guard installations, so we can grow our icebreaking fleet while protecting salmon habitat and fishing grounds.

The bill also invested in the Coast Guard workforce. For the first time, it established a Vice Admiral focused exclusively on personnel—creating senior-level accountability for housing, medical care, and childcare for the 40,000 Coast Guard members and their families.

We also took steps to protect U.S. shipbuilding by strengthening safeguards around overseas construction of Coast Guard vessels—ensuring transparency and giving American shipyards a fair opportunity to build these ships here at home.

Overall, Admiral, this legislation sent a clear signal: the Coast Guard needs more resources to meet its expanding missions. That is why Congress increased authorized funding by 30 percent.

But clearly, the service faces serious challenges. I am concerned that the Coast Guard temporarily closed 29 search and rescue stations due to staffing shortages, with no plan to reopen them. These closures have real consequences for response times and public safety.

At the same time, Coast Guard personnel and assets are being redirected to support Customs and Border Protection and ICE missions.

The Committee has repeatedly requested information about how Coast Guard assets and personnel are being used—both within the Coast Guard and in support of other agencies. Those requests have not been adequately answered, and that lack of transparency is frankly, unacceptable.

I am particularly troubled by reports that Coast Guard C-130 aircraft, among your most critical search-and-rescue long range assets, are being used to transport ICE and CBP detainees—while missions like search and rescue and illegal fishing patrols in the Bering Sea are being deliberately deprioritized.

Admiral, the Coast Guard must chart a better path forward. Today, I want to hear how you plan to grow the service to maintain vital Coast Guard missions, including reopening search and rescue stations.

Clearly, new ships and aircraft, including icebreakers, are essential. But those assets are meaningless without the people to operate them.

You cannot build ships without also building a system of housing, healthcare, and childcare that takes care of the people who serve on those ships.

We agree the Coast Guard needs resources. But those resources must come with transparency, mission discipline, and accountability.

I look forward to your testimony and to discussing how we ensure the Coast Guard can continue its life-saving missions.

Thank you.

Senator SULLIVAN. And Admiral, thank you for your important testimony today. You did an outstanding job. I'm amazed that you answer all these questions with such detail without any notes. That's like great work, great staff work, by the way, behind you.

Admiral LUNDAY. I have a great staff.

Senator SULLIVAN. Senators will have until the close of business on Thursday, February 5, to submit questions for the record for this hearing. And we respectfully ask you, Admiral, to try to respond to those QFRs by Thursday, February 19.

And with that, this concludes today's hearing. Thank you again. The Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:30 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. ERIC SCHMITT TO
ADMIRAL KEVIN E. LUNDAY

REFORMING COAST GUARD ACQUISITIONS PROCESS

Background: A key element of the U.S. Coast Guard's "Force Design 2028 Initiative" is reforming the acquisition process to deliver critical capabilities faster and create clearer accountability across programs.

Question Part-1. Where in the Coast Guard's acquisition lifecycle is the most significant bottlenecks today that slow the delivery of operational capability: requirements, contracting, testing and certification, or sustainment?

Answer. Bottlenecks that slow the delivery of operational capability include industrial base limitations (such as labor for shipbuilding) and the increasing quantity of reports, briefs and audits, which come at a cost to our program management workforce. Most notably, relief from pre-acquisition requirements, such as those waived for acquisition of a commercially available polar icebreaker (*i.e.*, CGC *Storis*), have been shown to eliminate two years of schedule.

Question Part-2. Do current procurement rules adequately value the strategic importance of maintaining a trusted, U.S.-based maritime manufacturing industrial base, or are reforms needed to better reflect that priority?

Answer. Yes. However, seeking to broker what is best for industry, what is best for the Service, and what is best for the taxpayer has made these rules overly burdensome at a cost to all three entities. The Coast Guard supports reforms to eliminate redundant, obsolete, and burdensome regulations, as well as the streamlining of compliance processes, as laid out in America's Maritime Action Plan.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. MARIA CANTWELL TO
ADMIRAL KEVIN E. LUNDAY

ARCTIC SECURITY CUTTERS

Background: The Administration announced last year that Arctic Security Cutters ("ASCs") would be acquired under a dual-construction model, with cutters built in Finland and U.S. shipyards. I understand that the Coast Guard may be using a foreign classification society for the first cutters that are being built in Finland.

Congress created a preference for the American Bureau of Shipping to class government vessels in 46 U.S.C. § 3316 by establishing agency authority for this function. Classing these complex vessels with a U.S.-headquartered classification society ensures that the U.S. maintains and sustains these essential classification functions, as well as safeguards sensitive ship design data, limits exposure to foreign influence, and ensures that mission critical platforms remain reliable key element of the U.S. Coast Guard's "Force Design 2028 Initiative" is reforming the acquisition process to deliver critical capabilities faster and create clearer accountability across programs.

Question Part-1. Does the Coast Guard intend to use American-owned classification society services during construction and before delivery of ASCs?

Answer. Yes.

Question Part-2. Does the Coast Guard support scientific capability on ASCs, such as cranes, laboratory facilities, berthing for researchers, and other scientific support needs?

Answer. The Coast Guard is working with the Administration to refine the plan for Arctic Security Cutters.

JONES ACT AND DOMESTIC SHIPBUILDING

Background: There is bipartisan agreement we must build more ships in the United States to support our economy, increase international trade, and strengthen our national security. Despite this, the Coast Guard is planning to build two Arctic Security Cutters in Finland, as my previous question on Arctic Security Cutters (“ASCs”) discussed.

Question Part–1. Does the Coast Guard support the Jones Act and other build-America requirements that apply to the Coast Guard under U.S. law?

Answer. Yes, the Coast Guard supports and complies with all U.S. law.

Question Part–2. Does the Coast Guard support the construction of any additional Coast Guard cutters or any other boats overseas beyond the two ASCs already under contract with Rauma Marine Construction in Finland?

Answer. Yes. President Trump’s October 8, 2025 Memorandum on the Construction of Arctic Security Cutters directed the construction of up to four Arctic Security Cutters abroad. On February 10, 2026, the Coast Guard awarded an additional contract to Davie Defense, which allows for up to two additional Arctic Security Cutters to be built in Finland.

COAST GUARD MIGRANT FLIGHTS & FULL ACCOUNTABILITY OF ASSETS

Background: As we briefly discussed in the hearing, Coast Guard aircraft have been used to transport individuals who have been detained by CBP and ICE to detention centers.

Question Part–1. Please provide a full account of aircraft hours and tail numbers used to conduct flights on behalf of ICE, CBP, or any another DHS component by month over the past year.

Answer. The Coast Guard flew 2,467.23 flight hours supporting other U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) components, detailed below. This is 2.9 percent of all aircraft flight hours flown in 2025.

CY 2025	Aircraft Hours	Tail Numbers
January	25.0	2010, 2017
February	207.35	2008, 2010, 2013, 2017, 2713, 2714
March	133.98	2010, 2013, 2017, 2714
April	94.78	2010, 2013, 2017
May	52.87	2016, 2017
June	160.27	2010, 2015, 2016, 2702, 2706, 2711, 2714
July	352.48	2015, 2702, 2705, 2706, 2709, 2711, 2713, 2714
August	349.7	2702, 2705, 2706, 2709, 2713, 2714
September	263.4	2013, 2705, 2706, 2709, 2711, 2713, 2714
October	306.9	2016, 2701, 2705, 2706, 2709, 2713, 2714
November	323.6	2701, 2702, 2705, 2706, 2711, 2714
December	196.9	2013, 2017, 2701, 2702, 2705, 2706, 2709, 2711

Question Part–2. Please also provide a full list of operations since January 1, 2025, that Coast Guard cutters or aircraft were initially requested for or scheduled to support, such as NORTH PACIFIC GUARD, where Coast Guard cutter or aircraft participation was either reduced or cancelled due to providing increased presence and operational focus on border control.

Answer.

- USCGC *Midgett* re-directed from IUUF patrol including from Operation NORTH PACIFIC GUARD
- USCGC *James* cancelled planned U.S. Navy exercise
- USCGC *Calhoun* cancelled support to the Arctic Coast Guard Forum
- USCGC *Tampa* re-directed from United States Africa Command
- USCGC *Seneca* re-directed from Operations NANOOK and FRONTIER SENTINEL
- USCGC *Harriet Lane* re-directed from Operation BLUE PACIFIC
- HC–130J re-directed from International Ice Patrol

COAST GUARD ASSETS SUPPORTING DHS AND ICE MISSIONS

Background: On December 30, then CBP Commander Bovino posted a video on his official CBP social media showing a Coast Guard C–130 moving CBP personnel,

vehicles and other supplies to Chicago as part of Operation Midway Blitz. The caption said, “[i]f you think we’re done with Chicago, you better check yourself before you wreck yourself.”

Question Part–1. Please provide a full account of where Coast Guard facilities, such as stations and bases, have been used by ICE, CBP, or another DHS component since January 2025. Please include numbers of personnel, duration, location, and purpose of the support.

Answer.

Location	Personnel	Duration	Purpose
Oceania District	Varies	Ongoing	Office Space
Base Los Angeles-Long Beach	Varies	Ongoing	Incident Command Post, pier space
Base Ketchikan	Varies	Ongoing	Facilities
Base Kodiak	Varies	Ongoing	Facilities
Sector San Diego	0	Ongoing	Boat mooring
Sector Puget Sound	1	Ongoing	Office space
Sector Mobile	2–3	Ongoing	Boat storage/launch
Sector Corpus Christi	4	Ongoing	Intelligence support
Sector Eastern Great Lakes	0	Ongoing	Autonomous Surveillance Tower
Sector Northern Great Lakes	0	Ongoing	Autonomous Surveillance Tower
Station Dauphin Island	3	1 day	Boat mooring
Station Destin	2–3	2 days	Boat launch
Station Gulfport	4–6	Ongoing	Boat storage/launch
Station Chicago	45	27 days	Immigration processing
Station Sault St. Marie	0	1 day	Boat mooring
Station Marblehead	6	1 day	Immigration processing
Station St. Clair Shores	0	Ongoing	Autonomous Surveillance Tower
Station Port Huron	0	Ongoing	Autonomous Surveillance Tower
Station Belle Isle	0	Ongoing	Autonomous Surveillance Tower
Station Bellingham	0	Ongoing	Boat staging
Station Port Angeles	Varies	Ongoing	Office Space
Air Station Sacramento	Varies	Ongoing	National Transport of Illegal Aliens missions
Air Station Barbers Point	Varies	Ongoing	National Transport of Illegal Aliens missions, logistics
Air Station Detroit	Varies	Ongoing	Border Control Territorial Integrity missions
Maritime Security Response Team-West	Varies	Ongoing	Joint training/Operations
Marines Safety & Security Team-Seattle	Varies	Ongoing	Office Space
Port Security Unit (PSU) 307	Varies	Ongoing	Hosts training
PSU 308	Varies	Ongoing	Operation River Wall
PSU 312	Varies	Ongoing	Host canine units

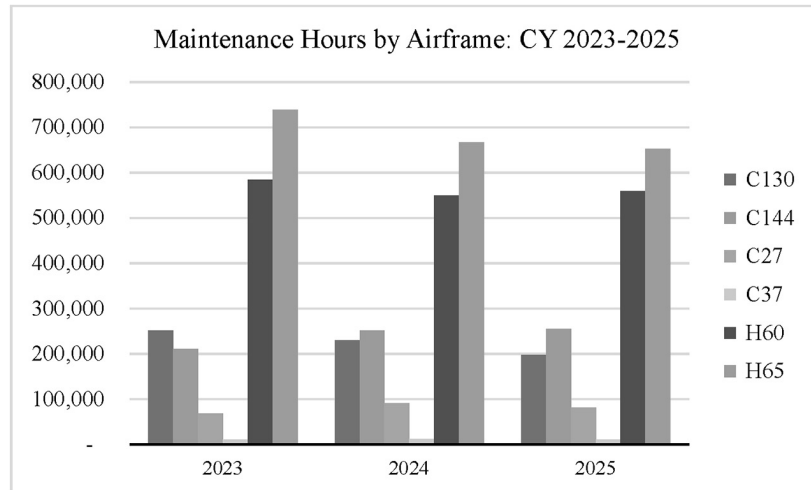
Note: Many of the “ongoing” activities represent long standing and enduring partnerships with other DHS components not specifically related to new operations since January 2025.

Question Part–2. Please provide statistics on how many Coast Guard flights have been used to transport ICE or CBP personnel to U.S. cities for immigration enforcement.

Answer. The Coast Guard has conducted 32 flights to transport U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel to U.S. cities for immigration enforcement.

Question Part–3. How is the service managing the necessary maintenance and flight hours of Coast Guard airframes with aircraft deployed in support of ICE, CBP and other DHS missions? Please provide a graph comparing total aircraft maintenance hours by air frame organized by year from 2023 through 2025.

Answer. The Coast Guard allocates flight hours to each operational aircraft to support all missions as determined by operational commanders. Unit-level and depot-level maintenance of all aircraft is managed in accordance with Coast Guard policy to ensure aircraft availability to perform Coast Guard missions. The requested graph is below.



Question Part-4. Is the Coast Guard getting reimbursed by DHS, CBP, or ICE for the immigration related support activity outlined in the previous questions? If so, how much and for what missions? Please provide an account of all Coast Guard funding that has been spent in support of ICE, CBP, and other DHS missions by support type (*i.e.*, flight hours, personnel support, use of Coast Guard facilities, etc.)

Answer. Since January 2025, the Coast Guard has provided fixed-wing aviation transportation in support of CBP and ICE. The estimated reimbursable rate for this support is \$47,983,071.

COAST GUARD SPEND PLAN INFORMATION

Background: I appreciate the Coast Guard's commitment to invest an additional \$323 million in infrastructure upgrades at Coast Guard Base Seattle to support homeporting the first three Polar Security Cutters.

Question Part-1. Please provide a spend plan for the entirety of the Coast Guard OBBB funding.

Answer. The Spend Plan was delivered and briefed to Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation staff on February 18, 2026.

Question Part-2. Please provide a detailed list and project breakdown of how the Coast Guard intends to spend the \$4.4 billion for shore infrastructure, training facilities, and homeports, as well as the current status of each listed project.

Answer. Initial Shore Facility Project Plan: The proposed initial allocations, which are subject to change, for shore facility funding in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Reconciliation includes:

- Enlisted Boot Camp (\$425 million)
 - Funds projects at Coast Guard Training Center Cape May, NJ, including multiple barracks, a multi-purpose facility, and other projects.
 - Status: Design—Pending Contract Award
 - Projected Construction Complete: March 2028
- Coast Guard Yard (\$500 million)
 - Funds projects at the Coast Guard Yard, in Baltimore, MD, including a floating drydock, dredging, and other infrastructure/industrial investments.
 - Status: Design—Pending Contract Award
 - Projected Construction Complete: December 2028.
- CGC Storis Homeport (\$300 million)
 - Funds land acquisition and Phase 1 waterfront improvements in Juneau, AK.
 - Status: Design—Pending Contract Award
 - Projected Construction Complete: May 2028

- Hangars and Homeports for New Assets (\$1.871 billion)
 - Kodiak, AK (\$120 million)
 - Funds the replacement/repair of Base Kodiak's potable water system
 - Status: Design—Pending Contract Award
 - Projected Construction Complete: August 2028
 - Charleston, SC (\$368 million)
 - Funds facility and pier construction necessary for the Base Charleston buildout.
 - Status: Design—Pending Contract Award
 - Projected Construction Complete: August 2028
 - Newport, RI (\$230 million)
 - Funds improvements required to homeport major cutters.
 - Status: Design—Pending Contract Award
 - Projected Construction Complete: April 2029
 - Guam (\$300 million)
 - Funds infrastructure project and shore ties to homeport Fast Response Cutters.
 - Status: Design—Pending Contract Award
 - Projected Construction Complete: TBD
 - Seattle, WA (\$323 million)
 - Funds waterfront improvements required to homeport Polar Security Cutters.
 - Status: Phase 1A Contract Awarded: August 2025
 - Projected Construction Complete: February 2029
 - Other Hangars and Homeports (\$530 million)
 - TBD
- Other Shore Projects: (\$1.283 billion)
 - Coast Guard Academy, New London, CT (\$280 million)
 - Funds projects from IDP Phase 1, to include the STEM building and Chase Hall Annex A, and other projects.
 - Status: Design—Pending Contract Award
 - Projected Construction Complete: May 2029
 - Station South Padre Island, TX (\$250 million)
 - Funds recapitalization of Station South Padre Island, meeting infrastructure requirements sufficient to enable joint operations and support inter-agency partners.
 - Status: Design Development In Progress; Contract Awarded December 2025
 - Projected Construction Complete: April 2027
 - Station Cape Disappointment, WA (\$115 million)
 - Funds station recapitalization and waterfront construction.
 - Status: Design—Pending Contract Award
 - Projected Construction Complete: March 2028
 - National Coast Guard Museum, New London, CT (\$70 million)
 - Minor Shore Construction projects (\$50 million)
 - Funds facility procurement, construction, and improvement projects less than \$2 million.
- Other Projects (\$518 million)
 - TBD

COAST GUARD PERSONNEL SUPPORT INVESTMENT

Background: The One Big Beautiful Bill Act provided nearly \$25 billion for cutters, aircraft, infrastructure, and technology. The bill does not, however, invest in the workforce, despite it being a top concern I hear directly from Coast Guard service members. Ships are critical, but do not mean anything without the crews to operate them. To recruit and retain a world class workforce, you will need housing, medical clinics, childcare, and other support services.

Question Part-1. In the past, the Coast Guard has taken an uncoordinated approach to investment in housing projects. What are your top priority regions in need of new or recapitalized housing?

Answer. Coast Guard men and women and their families deserve quality, affordable housing. The Coast Guard's top priority regions for new family housing include: Alameda, CA; Astoria, OR; Grassy Key, FL; Guam; Islamorada, FL; Juneau, AK; Ketchikan, AK; Kodiak, AK; Martha's Vineyard, MA; North Bend, OR; La Push, WA; Sault Ste. Marie, MI; Staten Island, NY; and Valdez, AK. Additionally, the Service's top priority housing areas to recapitalize include: Aguadilla, Puerto Rico; Cape Cod, MA; Cape May, NJ; Humboldt Bay, CA; Petersburg, AK; Santa Barbara, CA; Sault Ste. Marie, MI; and Sitka, AK.

Providing appropriate accommodations for our unaccompanied Coast Guard men and women is also critical to meet this end. Our top priority locations for unaccompanied housing or barracks projects include: Astoria, OR; Alameda, CA; Cold Bay, AK; Islamorada, FL; Juneau, AK; Ketchikan, AK; Kodiak, AK; North Bend, OR; Portsmouth, VA; Sault Ste. Marie, MI; and Staten Island, NY.

Question Part-2. What are your plans over the next two years to address the significant gap in personnel investment required to operate the new assets funded by the OBBB?

Answer. The personnel required to operate and maintain these new platforms must be funded through significant and sustained growth in our annual Operations and Support appropriation.

Over the next two years, we will build on our recent, historic recruiting successes. In 2025, we recruited more than 5,200 enlisted members—the highest number since 1991—and we will continue this momentum by expanding our recruiting infrastructure with new offices and more recruiters to attract the Nation's best talent.

Question Part-3. What is the Coast Guard doing in the next two years to grow its medical infrastructure and capacity to provide care to the increased workforce contemplated under FD28?

Answer. Service readiness starts with our Coast Guard men and women and their families. Through Force Design 2028, the Coast Guard will grow the Service's medical corps by at least 500 medical professionals to address critical staffing gaps at our training centers and mission support units.

The FY 2026 President's Budget includes 31 positions and over \$3.7 million for medical care. Additionally, the FY 2026 Unfunded Priority List includes 332 additional medical personnel and \$6 million for eight mobile medical clinics.

COAST GUARD STATION PASCAGOULA REOPENING

Background: On December 23, 2025, the Coast Guard announced that it will return Station Pascagoula, Mississippi, to full response operations after temporarily reducing capabilities in 2023 as part of the Force Alignment Initiative ("FAI"). In November of 2025, the Coast Guard submitted a written response to Senate Commerce Committee questions about the current status of the FAI and indicated that there was currently no plan to reopen stations impacted by the FAI, but that Coast Guard would communicate any decisions to Congress.

Question Part-1. What is the current status of each of the stations that were temporarily closed or had reduced capacity or missions under the FAI?

Answer. The following unit has been reconstituted for full response operations:

- Station Pascagoula (Pascagoula, MS)

The following units are being used as forward operating locations:

- Station-small Scituate (Scituate, MA)
- Station-small East Moriches (East Moriches, NY)
- Station-small Beach Haven (Beach Haven, NJ)
- Station-small Great Egg (Ocean City, NJ)
- Station-small Townsends Inlet (Sea Isle City, NJ)
- Station-small Fortescue (Fortescue, NJ)
- Station-small Stillpond (Worton, MD)
- Station-small Sodus (Sodus Point, NY)
- Station-small Ashtabula (Ashtabula, OH)
- Station-small Lorain (Lorain, OH)
- Station-small Harbor Beach (Harbor Beach, MI)
- Station-small Frankfort (Frankfort, MI)

- Station-small Ludington (Ludington, MI)
- Station-small Muskegon (Muskegon, MI)
- Station-small DuSable Harbor (Chicago, IL)
- Station-small Wilmette Harbor (Wilmette, IL)
- Station-small Two Rivers (Two Rivers, WI)
- Station-small Washington Island (Sturgeon Bay, WI)
- Station-small Green Bay (Green Bay, WI)
- Station-small Alpena (Alpena, MI)
- Station-small Santa Cruz (Santa Cruz, CA)
- Station-small Rogue River (Rogue River, OR)
- Station-small Coquille River (Coquille River, OR)

The following units are operating as scheduled mission stations:

- Station Eatons Neck (Northport, NY)
- Station Lake Charles (Lake Charles, LA)
- Station Vallejo (Vallejo, CA)
- Station Fairport (Grand River, OH)
- Station Kenosha (Kenosha, WI)
- Station Cape Cod Canal (Sandwich, MA)
- Station Jones Beach (Freeport, NY)
- Station Wachapreague (Wachapreague, VA)
- Station Oxford (Oxford, MD)
- Station Crisfield (Crisfield, MD)
- Station Milford Haven (Hudgins, VA)
- Station Toledo (Toledo, OH)
- Station St. Clair Shores (St. Clair Shores, MI)
- Station Saginaw River (Essexville, MI)
- Station Michigan City (Michigan City, IN)
- Station Boston (Boston, MA)
- Station Castle Hill (Newport, RI)
- Station Kings Point (Kings Point, NY)

The following units are not currently operating:

- Station Pittsburgh (Pittsburg, PA)
- Station St. Louis (St. Louis, MO)
- Station Louisville (Louisville, KY)
- Station Paducah (Paducah, KY)
- Station Memphis (Memphis, TN)
- MSU Huntington—Boat Operations (Huntington, WV)

Question Part-2. Will you commit to updating Congress in writing of any changes to the status of any of the stations impacted by the FAI, as those changes in status are determined?

Answer. Yes.

Question Part-3. Are any of the other stations which were operating as scheduled mission stations (such as Station Pascagoula) scheduled to return to full response operations? If so, which stations, and what is the timeline?

Answer. The Coast Guard has not made final decisions on any additional stations.

Question Part-4. Are there any stations that the Coast Guard does not plan to return to pre-FAI levels or that the Coast Guard plans to close? If stations are planned to be closed, which ones and when?

Answer. There are currently no plans to permanently close any Coast Guard stations.

Question Part-5. Was the return of Station Pascagoula to full response operations a singular decision, or were the capabilities of other stations also modified around the time of the Station Pascagoula announcement?

Answer. The reconstitution of Station Pascagoula to full response operations was a singular decision.

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY HON. TAMMY DUCKWORTH TO
ADMIRAL KEVIN E. LUNDAY

RESTORING COAST GUARD SAR STATIONS

Background: The Coast Guard has reported it has exceeded recruiting goals for the first time since the 1990s. During the hearing, you told Senator Wicker that the Coast Guard will be restoring Station Pascagoula from scheduled missions only to fully operational in 2026 (and confirmed in a Coast Guard Press Release published on December 23, 2025).

Question Part-1. What criteria was used to determine to restore Station Pascagoula?

Answer. The decision to restore Station Pascagoula to full response operations was based on the local application of the national strategy in achieving full operational control of the border and facilitating commerce. The recent recruiting success provided the necessary personnel to allow the Coast Guard to realign resources with these standing mission priorities.

Question Part-2. What other stations that had previously been downgraded due to personnel shortages will be restored in 2026?

Answer. The Coast Guard has not made final decisions on any additional stations.

Background: Every summer, thousands flock to the Chicago waterfront, yet the Coast Guard inexplicably shifted Station DuSable to a seasonal station. This station is only manned on weekends in the summer, yet there were two fatalities on the waterfront during the summer of 2025.

Question Part-3. Will Station DuSable be restored to fully operational?

Answer. The Coast Guard has not made a final decision on Seasonal Station DuSable Harbor.

Question Part-4. If not, can the Coast Guard commit to manning Station DuSable every day—including weekdays—from Memorial Day to Labor Day weekend?

Answer. Seasonal Station DuSable Harbor's area of responsibility will continue to be fully covered by its parent station, Station Chicago

Background: During our meeting before your nomination hearing, you stated that decisions would be made based on the data and wouldn't be political.

Question Part-5. Will you provide the metrics used in determining which FAI impacted stations are restored or not restored?

Answer. Yes.

Question Part-6. Will you provide the metrics used when determining if a station will be restored from scheduled missions only to fully operational?

Answer. Yes.

Question Part-7. Were all stations closed under FAI completed in accordance with 14 USC 910?

Answer. The Coast Guard did not permanently close any stations under the operational adjustments made in 2024 and there are currently no plans to do so.

VESSEL ACQUISITIONS

Background: President Trump signed an agreement with the government of Finland to deliver icebreakers to the Coast Guard, waiving the domestic-built requirements for U.S. military vessels. Part of the agreement includes onshoring expertise in the United States.

Question Part-1. What steps will be taken to onshore expertise? Workforce exchange program? Technology transfers?

Answer. The Coast Guard developed a plan, as directed by the President's memorandum, to phase ASC construction and build domestic expertise. This plan remains under review with the Administration.

Background: Industry needs a consistent demand signal to keep shipyards operational.

Question Part-3. What actions is the Coast Guard taking to ensure U.S. shipyards and component manufacturers remain competitive and open to meet the demands of future vessel acquisitions?

Answer. The Coast Guard regularly conducts industry days, outreach events, and meetings in addition to Requests for Information, Sources Sought Notifications, and Requests for Proposal to maintain open communication with industry, shipyards and suppliers, and provide industry with early descriptions of the Government's needs. The Service often awards multiple year contracts, contract options for addi-

tional vessels, and offers other contractual incentives for performance and innovation. Additionally, the Coast Guard adheres to Federal requirements such as the Buy American Act, which prioritizes U.S.-based manufacturing and shipbuilding for government vessels, and provides technical guidance and shares best practices with industry to develop and update standards for vessel construction and component manufacturing

Background: In 2023, the inaugural Government Shipbuilders Council (GSC) was convened by then-Secretary of the Navy Del Toro at the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore, Maryland.

Question Part-4. How active has the Coast Guard been in the Government Shipbuilders Council (GSC) since its inception?

Answer. The Coast Guard remains active in the GSC. Coast Guard representatives participate in GSC meetings, workshops, and working groups. The Coast Guard has also participated in joint initiatives, including efforts to improve shipyard productivity, workforce development, and supply chain resilience

Question Part-5. What efficiencies or process improvements, if any, have been realized by the GSC?

Answer. The Coast Guard shares lessons learned, technical standards, and acquisition approaches with other GSC members.

Question Part-6. What other organizations is the Coast Guard working with to address its delayed vessel delivery schedule in order to provide much needed assets to the fleet?

Answer. The Coast Guard works with: the Department of Homeland Security for program oversight, acquisition support, and funding prioritization for Coast Guard vessel acquisition programs; the U.S. Navy on major acquisition programs (e.g., Polar Security Cutter) through integrated program offices to leverage Navy expertise, contracting mechanisms, and technical support, and to coordinate on shipyard capacity, technology transfer, and lessons learned from Navy shipbuilding programs; the Government Accountability Office to review acquisition challenges and implement recommendations; shipbuilders and component manufacturers to monitor progress, resolve technical issues, and improve production schedules; and with industry associations like the Shipbuilders Council of America to help understand and address industry-wide challenges affecting delivery timelines.

