

U. S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

ADMIRAL THOMAS COLLINS

ON THE

**COUNTERNARCOTICS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND
SECURITY: HOW WELL ARE ANTI-DRUG TRAFFICKING OPERATIONS
BEING SUPPORTED AND COORDINATED HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE GOVERNMENT REFORM, SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL
JUSTICE, DRUG POLICY, AND HUMAN RESOURCES**

AND THE

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, SUBCOMMITTEE
ON INFRASTRUCTURE AND BORDER SECURITY**

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 22, 2004



Admiral Thomas H. Collins Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard



Admiral Thomas H. Collins assumed the duties of Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard on May 30th, 2002. His leadership priorities are readiness, people and stewardship. He is personally committed to making effective use of emerging technologies and developing innovative methods to improve Coast Guard mission performance.

Prior to becoming Commandant, he served as the Coast Guard's Vice Commandant from 2000 - 2002 where he created the Innovation Council, spearheaded service-wide process improvement initiatives and directed system enhancements as the Coast Guard Acquisition Executive. From 1998 – 2000 he served as Commander, Pacific Area and Eleventh Coast Guard District, where he developed the successful Coast Guard response to the increase in illegal drug and migrant smuggling traffic in the Eastern Pacific. His other flag assignments include serving as Commander, Fourteenth Coast Guard District in Honolulu, HI and Chief, Office of Acquisition at Coast Guard Headquarters where he managed the acquisition of twelve major systems worth nearly \$3 billion and laid the foundation for the Integrated Deepwater System project, which will modernize the ships, aircraft and sensors that the Coast Guard uses to perform its many open ocean missions.



Prior to his promotion to Flag Officer in 1994, he served as the Chief, Programs Division at Coast Guard Headquarters, and then the Coast Guard's Deputy Chief of Staff.

Admiral Collins began his Coast Guard career as a deck watch officer and first lieutenant aboard the cutter VIGILANT. Following that assignment, he served a two-year tour as Commanding Officer of the cutter CAPE MORGAN, a patrol boat homeported in Charleston, SC. His shore operational assignments include Deputy Commander, Group St. Petersburg, FL, and Commander of Coast Guard Group and Captain of the Port, Long Island Sound, in New Haven, CT.

Admiral Collins graduated from the Coast Guard Academy in 1968 and later served as a faculty member within the Humanities Department. He earned a Master of Arts degree in Liberal Studies from Wesleyan University and a Master of Business Administration from the University of New Haven.

The Admiral is the recipient of the Coast Guard Distinguished Service Medal, the Legion of Merit (three awards), the Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), and the Coast Guard Commendation Medal (three awards).

A native of Stoughton, MA, Admiral Collins is married to the former Nancy Monahan of New London, CT. They have two daughters, Christine and Kathryn.

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Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's counter drug operations and how well anti-drug trafficking operations are being supported and coordinated with our partners in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

It has been over a year since DHS was created and I am happy to report that fiscal year 2004 has been an enormous success in our counter-narcotics mission area. In fact, this year is the manifestation of the most successful drug interdiction year in the history of the Coast Guard—netting the seizure of over 68 metric tons of cocaine valued at nearly \$4.8 billion. This high performance trend reflects increases over fiscal year 2003, when we seized over 62 metric tons of cocaine—over 54 percent of the total cocaine seized by federal agencies, as reported to the federal drug seizure system. In fiscal year 2002, we seized over 53 metric tons of cocaine equating to 52 percent of the federal total. As the empirical data reveals, the transition to DHS has increased the counter-narcotics performance of the Coast Guard.

In addition to our successes in drug interdiction, our assimilation into DHS is going as planned and increasing the degree of the Coast Guard's integration with other DHS agencies—greatly increasing departmental efficiency. The Coast Guard has preserved its essential qualities as a military, multi-mission and maritime service, and retains the full range of our missions, which are complementary. Threats to the security of our homeland extend beyond overt terrorism. Countering illegal drug smuggling, preventing illegal migration at sea, protecting living marine resources from foreign encroachment, and implementing the provisions of the Maritime Transportation Security Act are all critical elements of national and economic security, and they are all Coast Guard responsibilities.

Furthermore, the Coast Guard provides DHS extensive regulatory and law enforcement authorities governing ships, boats, personnel and associated activities in our ports, waterways and offshore maritime regions. We are one of the five-armed military services, with a robust, around-the-clock command, control, communications and response capability. We patrol and respond with a network of coastal small boats, aircraft, deepwater cutters, and expert personnel in the homeland security and safety

environment. These capabilities are further enhanced in DHS since the Coast Guard is a statutory member of the national foreign intelligence community, and brings extensive intelligence gathering, analysis and coordination experience to the new department. These attributes, which served our law enforcement and other missions well in the past, plays a significant part in maintaining maritime domain awareness and enables us to be the lead federal agency for Maritime Homeland Security.

The Coast Guard's Intelligence Program collects and analyzes information to support both Intelligence and Law Enforcement Community Counterdrug activities. Given the fixed number of counterdrug interdiction forces, intelligence acts as a critical force multiplier, enhancing the Coast Guard's and Joint Interagency Task Force South's (JIATF-S) ability to position assets to best protect the nation's maritime borders through deterrence, detection and interception. The intelligence threat estimates are a key consideration in operational planning in all mission areas.

National level intelligence is used, in combination with the Coast Guard's and other agencies' law enforcement intelligence and information, to plan operations and cue interdictions. All source intelligence received from national-level signals, imagery and human intelligence networks support daily Coast Guard and JIATF-S detection, monitoring and interdiction resources. The Intelligence Community is actively involved in supporting the Coast Guard's counterdrug mission. The Coast Guard's Intelligence Coordination Center works closely with area and field units as well as intelligence partners to coordinate national-level intelligence collection, analysis and reporting. These fused intelligence products are used to support strategic and tactical operations and planning.

The Coast Guard's Intelligence Program has a strong union between its law enforcement and foreign intelligence portions that provide a model of information sharing, which is a critical asset for DHS, not only within the Coast Guard but with various entities within the Department. We strive towards a better intelligence information flow related to all aspects of homeland security and defense, such as border control, alien migration, and counterdrug activities.

Our Intelligence Program does quite a bit to support DHS counterdrug operations. For example, the Intelligence Coordination Center participates in and provides ICC-generated products in support of the various strategic level counterdrug working groups, and the Coast Guard's Attaché Program continues to provide a vital link in supporting the myriad of counterdrug initiatives and activities at various locations in the Caribbean, South and Central American ports. Within the Coast Guard's Intelligence Program is the Coast Guard Investigative Service (CGIS), whose agents support counterdrug activities through various activities and programs with agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), specifically to Operation Panama Express a key counterdrug smuggling task force comprised of DEA, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); within ICE - assigned as the Coast Guard representative to the Maritime Smuggling Directorate; agents are co-located within the Coast Guard's Field Intelligence Support Teams and these personnel are actively engaged within other Federal, State and local agencies at numerous regional and local ports. CGIS also participates in the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), including a senior agent as the Coast Guard's

representative at its Washington Agency Representative Group, facilitating information, and setting policies and procedures with regards to counterdrug operations.

The Coast Guard directly participates in the daily counterdrug operations of several interagency/interdepartmental organizations with experienced personnel assigned at: throughout DHS, operations and planning staffs; within Joint Interagency Task Forces South and West (JIATF-S and JIATF-W), in their respective intelligence, operations and strategic planning directorates; at DEA's El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) and Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Fusion Center; and in ICE's Air and Marine Operations Center (AMOC) as well as liaisons at ICE headquarters, for example. Additionally, the Coast Guard provides the necessary counterdrug endgame with our Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) program, during which specialized boarding teams embarked on U.S., British, Dutch, and Belgian naval vessels board suspected drug smuggling vessels.

Similar to our law enforcement partners, the Coast Guard is capitalizing on the synergies available through organizational relationships within the Department of Homeland Security. We have worked with many of these entities on law enforcement operations for decades, but we have capitalized on new opportunities to improve those working relationships by our common mission focus, which transitioned seamlessly as we all moved into the new department.

We are already participating in a department-wide effort to develop information exchange requirements. We have begun the process through an exchange of personnel at the U. S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) National Targeting Center and the Coast Guard Intelligence Coordination Center (part of the National Maritime Intelligence Center) to coordinate information on cargo and crew on commercial vessels. This will ultimately lead to a system in which every agent in the Department of Homeland Security has access to the same law enforcement information in real time. Consolidating our information will ensure legitimate people and cargo are screened more quickly, and allow more time for our enforcement agents to focus on higher threat targets.

Let me give you an example of an increasingly common success story that is a direct result of our integration. In mid-May, a joint USCG-CBP crewed patrol craft was on routine patrol near the Akwesasne Mohawk Indian Reservation on the St. Lawrence Seaway (this reservation straddles the U.S.-Canadian border). During this evening patrol a crewman observed a fast moving vessel leaving Cornwall Island (Ontario, Canadian portion of the reservation) heading towards St. Regis Village. After the vessel crossed the international boundary into the U.S., the crew of the patrol craft witnessed four suspects unloading hockey bags from the vessel into a waiting vehicle. When the law enforcement team identified themselves, the two suspects loading the vehicle fled the scene in the vehicle; however, our DHS team apprehended the two suspects in the vessel. In this case, we seized 29 pounds of hydroponically grown marijuana along with a 20-foot "Hydra-Yacht" pleasure craft.

Another recent example of interagency coordination also occurred in May. A 110-foot USCG cutter located a French flagged sailing vessel 30 miles east of Florida during a routine patrol. The vessel's master granted a consensual boarding, during which 24 persons claiming Singapore nationality, but suspected as being Chinese nationals, were

located hidden below deck. The 24 illegal migrants were removed from the vessel for their safety, since no life rafts or life jackets were on board. The U.S. Government (following an interagency conference involving several DHS components, the Department of Justice, and the State Department) approached the Government of France and obtained permission to board, search, and detain persons if any evidence of illegal activity was discovered. Coast Guard Investigative Services (CGIS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) investigators interviewed the migrants plus the two French suspected smugglers. Both agencies worked together to collect evidence discovering a suspected human trafficking operation. The migrants and suspected smugglers were later transferred to French authorities in Fort de France, Martinique along with a case package to assist the French authorities in prosecution.

Consolidating these agencies into DHS has allowed us to integrate these relationships more deeply and capitalize on each other's strengths. These strengths, together with our Deepwater program and other multi-year resource efforts, will enable the Coast Guard to achieve our multi-mission goals while also executing the enhanced Maritime Homeland Security (MHS) missions that are a major part of our responsibilities.

Fellow agencies within DHS are also forging strong relationships in regards to acquisition management. DHS has established a Strategic Sourcing Group and a series of commodities councils. The purpose of the Strategic Sourcing Group is to assist in the successful development, deployment and maintenance of sourcing strategies to enhance the DHS acquisition system and ensure commodities are acquired in the most efficient and effective manner. The purpose of each council is to develop long-term strategies for acquiring commodities across the department. Some councils that exist include Weapons & Ammunition, Boats, Aviation, Training, Facilities, and Information Technology.

Additionally, we continue to pursue innovative operational capabilities to increase our drug interdiction effectiveness. For example, we are equipping helicopters with Airborne Use of Force (AUF) and vertical insertion capabilities. This will enhance the Coast Guard's ability in drug interdiction, as well as helping to secure our oceans, ports and waterways against illegal migrant and terrorist activity, by providing capability to fire warning shots and disabling fire, and rapidly/covertly deploying boarding teams aboard vessels at sea. The Coast Guard currently has eight armed MH-68 helicopters operating out of Jacksonville, Florida and four HH-60J armed helicopters out of Elizabeth City, North Carolina. We intend to expand these AUF capabilities within the resource constraints of future budget requests.

The homeland security mission reaches well beyond U.S. borders, requiring strong international and interagency partnerships. Effective maritime interdiction of the myriad threats encountered requires reliable and well-established operational communications between regional partners, operational flexibility, respect for territorial integrity, and mutual trust. The overarching U.S. Coast Guard initiatives in the Caribbean and Eastern Pacific region involve the conclusion and implementation of 26 bilateral and regional maritime law enforcement agreements, which establish protocols, procedures, and points of contact for the key maritime law enforcement activities including shipboarding, pursuit and entry into territorial sea and airspace, shipriding exchange, air-space overflight, order-to-land, and technical assistance. I am pleased to report the United States just signed the Comprehensive Maritime Agreement with the Bahamas on June 29, which

consolidates and strengthens the patchwork of agreements we have worked under for so many years. Implementation of these agreements includes the ongoing deployment of training teams, planned and unplanned bilateral and multilateral enforcement operations, information sharing, and maintenance support.

The Coast Guard has participated at several recent international senior and working level conferences and meetings with Mexico and Colombia, among others: finding strengths, addressing potential operational improvements, and opportunities for cooperation and coordination of effort - synergy. For example, our bilateral agreement with Colombia has yielded over 45 nationality or registration confirmations, leading to 14 Colombian vessels seized, 91 arrests and over 60,000 pounds of cocaine seized in fiscal year 2004 alone.

I recently returned from Colombia, where I met with President Uribe and Colombian Navy Admiral Soto. We agreed to continuing our strengthening of counter-drug operations by assisting the Colombians with Maritime Patrol Aircraft support, officer exchange programs and developing a new tactical initiative to render fuel unusable, aimed at disrupting the logistical/fuel support to Colombian drug smugglers. The development of these initiatives and strengthening of the U.S.-Colombian relationship will yield additional coordinated counter-narcotic successes.

While conducting our drug interdiction and other law enforcement missions, the Coast Guard continues to provide direct and indirect support to combatant commanders executing Operations Iraqi Freedom and Liberty Shield.

Looking ahead, it is clear that attaining additional capacity and capability is critical to the Coast Guard's ability to achieve the levels of future readiness needed to perform its expanded homeland security tasks while concurrently carrying out our other responsibilities. The Deepwater Program is the centerpiece of our efforts to improve current and future readiness for all our missions. It will deliver the platforms and systems needed to close the capability gaps found in today's Coast Guard.

Deepwater's comprehensive system of systems will recapitalize our entire inventory of aging cutters and aircraft, as well as C4ISR systems at sea and ashore - all supported with integrated logistics. Deepwater will provide the means to extend our layered maritime defenses from our ports and coastlines many hundreds of miles to sea, increasing maritime domain awareness. When Deepwater is fully implemented, our cutters and aircraft will no longer operate as independent platforms with only limited awareness of their surroundings in the maritime domain. Instead, they will have improved capabilities to receive information from a wide array of mission-capable platforms and sensors-enabling them to share a common operating picture as part of a network-centric force operating in unison with other cutters, boats, and both manned aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles.

I appreciate your recent support of the DHS and the Coast Guard as seen in the passing of HR 4567 (The Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill, 2005) in the House and we ask for your continued support as this bill goes to conference.

I don't want to suggest for a moment that successful homeland security and non-homeland security mission execution is without its challenges. We are working our

capital assets—and our crews—harder than ever, and the stress is very apparent. The President addresses capacity and capability improvements for the Coast Guard in his Fiscal Year 2005 budget request, which I ask you to support. Deepwater, our plan for major asset recapitalization has never been more relevant and I ask your support for the President's funding request.

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