



**TESTIMONY OF
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ON THE
COAST GUARD RESERVE PROGRAM
BEFORE THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
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Good afternoon, Chairman Wilson, Congresswoman Davis, and distinguished members of the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee. It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Coast Guard Reserve; its contribution to national defense and homeland security; the issues that face the men and women of our Coast Guard Reserve; and the Coast Guard's ability to sustain our current high quality workforce.

As one of the five Armed Forces of the United States, the Coast Guard has a long and distinguished history of safeguarding our Nation's maritime interests and natural resources on our rivers, ports, littoral regions, high seas, and in theaters around the world. Because of its broad legal authorities, capable assets, geographic diversity and expansive partnerships, the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to serve as the lead federal agency for maritime homeland security and response to natural and other disasters, while serving as a key element of our national defense.

Founded in 1941, the Coast Guard Reserve is the force multiplier for the operational Coast Guard. During the last decade, we completely integrated our Selected Reserve force into active component units. More than 80 percent of our 8,100-member Selected Reserve force is directly assigned to active duty Coast Guard shore units, where reservists hone readiness skills through classroom instruction and on-the-job training side-by-side with their active duty counterparts. The remainder of our Selected Reserve force is dedicated primarily to conducting Defense Operations while assigned to our eight deployable Port Security Units (PSUs). The principal mission of the PSUs, which are staffed by both Active and Reserve personnel, is to support the Combatant Commanders in strategic ports of debarkation overseas, providing waterside protection of key assets. The remaining personnel are assigned to Department of Defense (DoD) units, such as the Maritime Expeditionary Security Squadrons and Combatant Commanders' staffs.

DEEPWATER HORIZON

Last year, during the Coast Guard's unprecedented response to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, more than 2,500 reservists were mobilized under Title 14, representing the largest Title 14 mobilization in U.S. history. The response to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill presented a novel and dynamic operation that affirmed the Service's flexibility and value of the Coast Guard Reserve. It also highlighted a limitation in recall capability when unusual demand for Reserve mobilization under Title 14 U.S.C. 712 exceeded the law's authorized time limits of:

- Not more than 60 days in any 4-month period, and
- Not more than 120 days in any 2-year period.

Given these parameters, the Coast Guard was unable to retain reservists on involuntary active duty beyond 60 days. We addressed the situation by issuing Active Duty for Operational Support of the Active Component (ADOS-AC) orders to more than 400 reservists who volunteered and were approved for voluntary active duty upon completion of their 60-day Title 14 orders. Today, approximately 100 reservists continue to support BP Deepwater Horizon and the efforts to document this extraordinary event.

Together with mobilizations for Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) and its subsequent dwell time constraints, the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill response activities reduced the force available for other contingencies, such as hurricanes and floods, to less than 45 percent of the total Coast Guard Reserve. Had it not been for the voluntary response by mobilized reservists to remain on active duty, the Deepwater Horizon event would have reduced the available force to less than 35 percent of strength.

OPERATION UNIFIED RESPONSE

Over the past two decades the Coast Guard has focused on developing an integrated workforce with deployable force packages. Following the magnitude 7.0 earthquake that struck Haiti in 2010, the Coast Guard Cutter FORWARD arrived on scene within 24 hours of the earthquake; and PSU 307, augmented by individuals with select specialties from several other PSUs, deployed for approximately eight weeks as a unified force to provide port safety and security in Port-Au-Prince and nearby Haitian ports. The Coast Guard Reserve's PSU force package was vital to ensuring the safe passage of relief supplies and shipping commerce in the port and surrounding waters of Haiti.

SURGE CAPABILITY

The Coast Guard's 8,100 operational reserve personnel act as a surge capability ready and able to respond to any national or domestic contingency, including the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Since 2001, there have been more than 7,800 cumulative recalls of Coast Guard reservists under Title 10 of the United States Code. Reservists have served at home as part of the Coast Guard's Maritime Homeland Security mission—usually as part of PSUs—and overseas in direct support of the Combatant Commanders. In early 2003, at the height of Operation Iraqi Freedom, approximately half of the Coast Guard personnel deployed overseas were reservists.

POST 9/11

Since September 2001, when we embarked on the largest mobilization of Coast Guard reservists since World War II, we redoubled our efforts to develop a Reserve force with the appropriate skills and training for the missions of the 21st century. We have examined our systems for recruiting, training, mobilizing and demobilizing reservists to identify and close readiness gaps. More significantly, we undertook a comprehensive review of the Coast Guard Reserve and in 2008 implemented the Reserve Force Readiness System (RFRS), which is designed to increase readiness of Coast Guard Reserve forces. Under RFRS, many Full Time Support billets have been realigned at the operational level providing improved day-to-day oversight as well as administrative and readiness management of our Reserve forces. To complement RFRS, we are developing a Concept of Reserve Employment, which establishes doctrine to guide reservists toward attaining and maintaining competencies that ready them to meet surge and contingency operations requirements.

TITLE 14

This post-9/11 activity represents an affirmation of the vital role our Reservists play as the Coast Guard's operational surge force. As with members of the other Reserve Components, our men and women are subject to involuntary mobilization under Title 10 for national security contingencies. However, unlike members of the other Reserve Components, Coast Guard Reservists can also be involuntarily mobilized for up to 60 days at a time for domestic contingencies, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks. This unique authority provided under Title 14 has been used more than a dozen times since the 1970s to mobilize Coast Guard Reservists for a wide range of emergencies ranging from the 1980 Mariel Boat Lift to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, as well as floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters.

In 2005, this unique authority was used by the Secretary of Homeland Security to allow the Coast Guard to mobilize approximately 700 reservists for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, providing a ready force for rescue and recovery operations in New Orleans and other stricken areas of the Gulf Coast. It was used again in 2008 for nearly 70 members in response to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. In all, Coast Guard reservists mobilized under Title 14 for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita performed nearly 20,000 person-days of duty in support of Coast Guard rescue and recovery operations. Most served alongside their active-duty counterparts as individual augmentees. For instance, several reservists assigned as Coast Guard Investigative Service special agents were mobilized to augment active-duty and civilian agents deployed to New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Gulfport, LA where they provided armed security for senior officials and personnel disbursing cash to Coast Guard staff. In addition to individual augmentees, the Coast Guard also activated two PSUs to provide physical security in New Orleans and Gulfport and to aid in the distribution of relief supplies. These activities are a testament to the ability of our reservists to mobilize when and where needed to increase Coast Guard forces responding to an emergency.

The Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2006 expanded the Secretary of Homeland Security's Title 14 recall authority to permit mobilization of Coast Guard reservists "to aid in prevention of an imminent serious natural or manmade disaster, accident, catastrophe, or act of terrorism." Other language included in the bill extended the limits on the period of recall to not more than 60 days in any four-month period and to not more than 120 days in any two-year period. This significantly enhanced our ability to mitigate major natural disasters and thwart terrorist attacks by enabling us to bring Coast Guard reservists on active duty even before disaster strikes. That said, the Service is mindful that mobilization under Title 14 does not entitle Coast Guard reservists to the credits and benefits that they would earn under Title 10 orders.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

A major component of the Coast Guard's success in responding to disasters is the Coast Guard's decentralized command and control structure. The authority and responsibility to move forces—including reservists—establish response readiness levels, and direct operations are vested in District and Area Commanders. This provides operational commanders in the field with the reserve personnel resources they need, and avoids delays in executing our missions. The most important factor contributing to the Coast Guard's effectiveness in disaster response is the fact that our forces are engaged in this type of mission on a daily basis. As the nation's maritime first responder, Coast Guard men and women—active, reserve, civilian and auxiliary—plan for, train and execute law enforcement, maritime security, environmental response, search and rescue, and humanitarian aid missions every single day.

AN ARMED FORCE

The Coast Guard possesses several unique features that enable integration with DoD, other federal agencies, the National Guard, and state and local authorities. As an armed force, our communications systems, planning processes, personnel training and even our command structures have much in common with the DoD services. Coast Guard commanders can be either supported or supporting commanders for military operations, with extensive experience working in and with DoD Joint Task Force Headquarters. This capability allows for easy integration of forces and unity of effort when working together during major disasters. Currently, the Coast Guard has approximately 800 reservists in support of Overseas Contingency Operations.

JOINT FORCES

The Coast Guard maintains excellent working relationships with all of the armed forces, providing support and leveraging expertise through mutual agreements. At Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, the Coast Guard has partnered with the Marine Corps to develop the Coast Guard Special Missions Training Center, which is tasked to provide training, doctrine, and testing/evaluation in support of mission requirements of the Coast Guard, Navy and Marine Corps operational forces. The Special Missions Training Center offers specialized courses for Coast Guard Reserve deployable units, and inclusion of Coast Guard personnel in formal training conducted by the Navy and Marine Corps.

And, as I report to you here today, one hundred and twenty-three members of PSU 313 are deployed to Southwest Asia as an integral part of the Navy's Maritime Expeditionary Squadron, providing vital water and shore-side security for ports of strategic importance in the Middle East.

INTERAGENCY

In addition to our work with DoD, the Coast Guard works on a daily basis with other federal, state and local partners. The Coast Guard's ports, waterways and coastal security mission requires the Coast Guard to interact with state and local law enforcement and emergency response organizations, exercising command structures and building the trust critical to effectively executing an emergency response. Coast Guard Captains of the Port provide a critical link through Local Emergency Planning Committees, Area Maritime Security Committees, Harbor Safety Committees, Area Planning Committees, Regional Response Teams and other venues that allow the Coast Guard to build close relationships with key partners in disaster response. Because of the integrated nature of the Coast Guard, individual reservists play a key role in these efforts. Their dual status as Coast Guard members and residents of their local communities frequently enables them to leverage organizational and personal relationships that yield immeasurable benefits during a crisis situation.

COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE (CNGR)

The Coast Guard has participated from the start of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserve process, providing both a dedicated staff member as well as testimony to the Commission, and participating in each of the fact-finding sessions. Upon completion of the study, the Coast Guard worked with the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Reserve Affairs in evaluating the impact of the Commission's 95 recommendations. The Coast Guard continues to participate in follow-on work groups with the other reserve components as well as the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Reserve Affairs as the services work to implement many of the Commission's recommendations.

WORKFORCE

The Coast Guard takes a unique approach to staffing a Reserve force by performing both Reserve and Active component recruiting through a single Recruiting Command. The Coast Guard Reserve supplements recruiting offices with reservists on active duty (Temporary Active Reserve Recruiters), believing that reservists are best suited to recruit reservists. In addition to the Reserve recruiters, the Recruiting Command has found success in the use of In Service Transfer Teams to ensure that all active duty personnel being released from active duty are briefed on the benefits of the Coast Guard Reserve and offered an opportunity to affiliate.

IMPROVED BENEFITS

The Post 9/11 GI Bill, implemented in 2009, offers our reservists who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001, an important benefit that will improve the education and professionalism of our already stellar workforce. This benefit has also contributed to current retention rates, which remain high and virtually unchanged from fiscal year 2010. Retention in the Coast Guard Reserve is at 88 percent for officers and 90 percent for enlisted personnel in fiscal year 2010. These retention rates indicate that once members join the Coast Guard Selected Reserve, they want to continue serving.

The 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, along with changes to DoD and Coast Guard policy, provide continued improvements in benefits for members of the Coast Guard Reserve. Authority was extended to the service secretaries to provide our dedicated reservists with legal assistance for an extended period of time following their release from mobilization orders, which assists them in resolving issues that may have occurred while they were deployed. Early TRICARE benefits increased from 90 days to 180 days, providing early access to TRICARE medical and dental care when members are notified of upcoming mobilizations, and thereby improving reservists' readiness. The new TRICARE Retired Reserve benefit will provide our retirees with health care options during the period where they do not yet qualify for TRICARE Reserve Select or TRICARE Standard at age 60.

Admiral Papp designated 2011 as the "Year of the Coast Guard Family," highlighting the Coast Guard's vision of having strong, resilient Active and Reserve component families capable of meeting the unique challenges associated with being a military family. I am happy to report that we have actively woven our Yellow Ribbon Program, as part of the DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, into the Reserve deployment process. The program connects reservists and their families or designated others, with the resources they need to meet the unique challenges associated with deployment not only while deployed, but also before and after deployment. To date we have held numerous Coast Guard Yellow Ribbon events, participated in other services events and coordinated with other services to conduct more efficient and economical joint service events, with more scheduled in the coming months. The Coast Guard received one-time funding support from the DoD Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program to establish and operate our Yellow Ribbon program through fiscal year 2012.

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act authorized early retirement benefits for eligible reservists who serve on active duty during a period of war or national emergency, including active service under various sections of Title 10, and Title 32 in the case of National Guard reservists, for incidents or a National Special Security Event as designated by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

EMPLOYER SUPPORT/JOB SECURITY

The Coast Guard is actively engaged with Employer Support of the Guard and the Reserve (ESGR). Each year, the Coast Guard Reserve encourages reservists to nominate their employers for the Secretary of Defense Freedom Award. These efforts have resulted in a substantial increase in nominees over previous years.

NEXT STEPS

The Coast Guard has demonstrated its ability to prepare for and respond to a wide range of contingencies, including natural disasters and terrorist attacks, while executing more routine missions, such as maritime law enforcement and search and rescue. To continue to meet these challenges, the Coast Guard continuously examines best practices and takes steps to adapt. Under the RFRS organizational construct additional leadership opportunities were created for senior reservists (officer & enlisted), providing increased mentorship and training for junior personnel, and optimizing the placement of Full Time Support personnel.

Our experiences over the past year have clearly demonstrated the value of the Coast Guard Reserve Component in the defense and security of our nation not only in the homeland, but overseas. Our 8,100 Coast Guardsmen serving in the Reserve Component proudly continue to stand the watch, and remain Semper Paratus (Always Ready). On behalf of the men and women of the Coast Guard, thank you for your continued support of the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Reserve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.