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United States
Coast Guard



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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF REAR ADMIRAL PAUL J. PLUTA

ON

HOMELAND SECURITY: PROTECTING STRATEGIC PORTS

BEFORE THE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, VETERANS AFFAIRS,
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JULY 23, 2002



REAR ADMIRAL PAUL J. PLUTA
Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety,
Security and Environmental Protection
United States Coast Guard



Rear Admiral Paul J. Pluta assumed the duties of Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety, Security and Environmental Protection at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, DC in May 2001. In that capacity, he directs national and international regulatory programs for commercial vessel safety, port safety and security, waterways management, and marine environmental protection. RADM Pluta came to Coast Guard Headquarters after serving as the Commander of the Eighth Coast Guard District and Commander of Maritime Defense Command Eight, headquartered in New Orleans. As District Commander, RADM Pluta was responsible for U.S. Coast Guard operations covering 26 states, over 1,200 miles of coastline, and 10,300 miles of inland waterways from Florida to Mexico.



Rear Admiral Paul J. Pluta is a 1967 graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. He holds an M.S.E. degree in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering from the University of Michigan. He first served as an assistant engineering officer aboard the cutters CHINCOTEAGUE & MINNETONKA. Following these assignments, he attended postgraduate training and was then assigned to staff engineering tours at the Eighth District Merchant Marine Technical (MMT) Office in New Orleans, LA, and in the MMT Division at Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC, where he specialized in plan review of commercial vessels for service in petrochemical, cargo, and passenger carriage. He returned to operations ashore, as Chief of the Inspection Department at Marine Safety Office, Baltimore, MD. RADM Pluta was then assigned to Coast Guard Headquarters as Chief, Engineering Branch and Chief, Compliance & Enforcement Branch, Merchant Vessel Inspection Division, where he represented U.S. maritime interests at the International Maritime Organization.

From July 1988 - July 1991, he served as Commanding Officer, Marine Safety Office, Wilmington, NC, where his command played a key role in support of OPERATION DESERT STORM. RADM Pluta assumed command of the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve Training Center (RTC), Yorktown, VA, in August 1991, home of the Marine Safety and other schools, where he led the first military-to-military assessment team to Kazakhstan to help this former Soviet republic form its own Maritime Force, patterned after the U.S. Coast Guard. In June 1994, RADM Pluta was reassigned as Chief of Staff, Ninth Coast Guard District, Cleveland, OH, where he was responsible for the day-to-day Coast Guard activities throughout the entire Great Lakes region, including the training and deployment of the Coast Guard Port Security Units to Haiti during OPERATION UPHOLD DEMOCRACY and negotiation of regional bilateral mutual support agreements with the Government of Canada.

In July 1996, RADM Pluta achieved flag rank and was appointed Director, Office of Intelligence and Security in the Department of Transportation. He served as the Secretary of Transportation's principal liaison to the Intelligence Community and held policy responsibility for transportation and national security issues in all modes of transportation.

Personal decorations: Legion of Merit (four awards), Meritorious Service Medal, and two Coast Guard Commendation Medals. A native of Carteret, NJ, RADM Pluta is married to the former Jane M. Oakley of Weeksville, NC. They have three children, Christine, Kevin, and Brian.

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Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss the Coast Guard's efforts in protecting our nation's strategic seaports from terrorist attacks in the wake of September 11th.

The Coast Guard is the lead federal agency for reducing, preempting, deterring and defending against security threats targeting ports, waterways and the coastal areas of the United States and its territories. The Espionage Act of 1917 and the Magnuson Act of 1950 provide the Coast Guard with the authority to safeguard all vessels, ports and facilities from acts of sabotage or other subversive acts. As a unique instrument of national security, the Coast Guard is the only military service with civil law enforcement authority, regulatory and safety responsibilities, and Captain of the Port authorities.

These unique authorities prompted a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) signed in 1995, by the Secretaries of Transportation and Defense, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commandant of the Coast Guard, to provide inter-departmental recognition of the use of Coast Guard capabilities in support of the National Military Strategy. This important MOA establishes Port Operations, Security and Defense as a mission of the Coast Guard. This mission includes the use of Coast Guard forces to provide antiterrorism /force protection (AT/FP) for military forces in the United States and overseas. Thus, the Coast Guard is primarily responsible for ensuring the U.S. Marine Transportation System and its major shipping channels are open and marked, and that military transport ships are provided safe and secure passage from U.S. harbors to open ocean.

It is through a well-defined command and control structure consisting of the Coast Guard Captains of the Port (COTP's) and Group Commanders that the Coast Guard is able to accomplish these missions and provide a blanket of protection. However, in addition to its own resources, the Coast Guard depends heavily on its many Federal, State and local partners who have a significant stake in maximizing the protection of maritime infrastructure and military outloads in U.S. Strategic Seaports. Guided by the National Port Readiness Network (NPRN) as set forth in the 1985 and recently revised Port Readiness Memorandum of Understanding between the Departments of Transportation and Defense, the Captain of the Port is the lead agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local resources and private entities in the port region for executing AT/FP responsibilities during any mobilization or national defense contingency operation. This is accomplished primarily

through port readiness, harbor safety, and port security committees at the local level. The Captains' of the Port coordination function would receive a significant boost through the passage of the comprehensive port security legislation currently in conference. With a well developed hierarchy of port security plans, federal, state and local security activities and resources will be more effectively aligned in addressing AT/FP responsibilities and overall Homeland Security. The Coast Guard's integral partners and force providers in carrying out its security role, include but are not limited to the Department of Defense, Department of Justice (FBI, INS, DEA), Department of State, Office of Homeland Security, Department of Agriculture, U.S. Customs, Office of National Drug Control Policy, Military Sealift Command, Military Traffic Management Command, Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Maritime Administration, the intelligence community, and the maritime industry.

During times of war or national emergency and to protect against asymmetric and terrorist threats, two Maritime Defense Zone (MARDEZ) Commanders are assigned, each with a robust command structure and access to a wide variety of Navy and Coast Guard capabilities. Maritime Defense Zones are Navy commands responsible to their respective fleet Commanders for Naval Coastal Warfare and are headed by Coast Guard Atlantic and Pacific Area Commanders. MARDEZ Commanders are responsible for deploying forces to conduct Coastal Security, Port Security, and Harbor Defense operations along the U.S. coast. Coast Guard and other military forces and government agencies available to carry out these missions are equipped with patrol craft, cutters, and aircraft. An additional capability will be provided by the new Maritime Safety and Security Teams (MSSTs), a deployable force with AT/FP expertise currently being stood-up in a number of locations throughout the country. The Department of the Navy and the Coast Guard are also partnering through the Navy/Coast Guard (NAVGARD) Board. Coast Guard and Navy AT/FP working groups led by Area/Fleet Commanders have promulgated interservice guidance on Coast Guard support to Navy ships

In support of the MARDEZ Commanders, the Naval Coastal Warfare (NCW) program provides a joint force package that provides a layered defense for port operations and security. The program is currently staffed by active and reserve Navy and Coast Guard personnel in leadership and operational positions within the NCW Program. In the aftermath of the attack on USS COLE and particularly post-11 September, the role, structure, and utilization for the NCW program has changed and continues to evolve with developing world events. NCW Groups and Units and Coast Guard Port Security Units have been mobilized to perform force protection missions at different levels in all combatant commanders' areas-of-responsibility and within the continental United States in support of Maritime Homeland Security.

The attacks of September 11th and on the USS Cole, while not changing the authority of the Coast Guard, have required a new look at clearly delineating security responsibilities during military loadouts. AT/FP requirements have expanded from a reserve-centered contingency support model to a more constant presence supporting the movement of all military resources from domestic Seaports of Embarkation. This is a far more resource intensive effort. In an effort to close gaps that might exist, the Coast Guard has been working closely

with the Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), Military Sealift Command (MSC) and Military Traffic Management Command (MTMC), to validate security requirements and establish a scheduling process for coordinating Coast Guard waterside security during hazardous materials, explosives, and military equipment outloads. The new MSST's will provide additional resources for security activities during military loadouts.

A key initiative in closing security gaps has been the completion of Port Security Assessments (PSA's) in several strategic U.S. seaports. These PSA's were conducted by TRANSCOM's Critical Infrastructure Protection (CIP) Group through a partnership with the Coast Guard and DoD's Defense Threat Reduction Agency. Since last fall, assessments in Baltimore, Guam, Honolulu, Charleston, and Savannah were conducted and are the foundation for the broader Coast Guard PSA program underway in additional seaports throughout the country. Under the PSA program, militarily strategic ports will be given priority. The PSA is a comprehensive analysis of U.S. seaports to make federal, state, and local governmental agencies and other appropriate port stakeholders aware of the susceptibility of maritime critical infrastructure to negative consequences from intentional acts of terrorism. Based on the results of the assessment mitigation strategies are then recommended to the local maritime community for further action to protect the public, the environment, and U.S. economic interests as required for national security.

As we move forward, we must change our approach to seaport security. Although the principles of AT/FP for strategic seaports are built around the prevention of a terrorist event, it is the element of awareness of the potential threats around us that is key in helping focus limited resources on prevention. Safeguarding our strategic ports against a broad spectrum of threats requires comprehensive Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). Essentially, a robust MDA will provide national leaders, operational commanders, and maritime stakeholders the knowledge base needed to frame the optimum policies, decisions, and operations that will protect strategic seaports. Ultimately, the success of MDA will depend on unprecedented information and intelligence sharing among federal, state and local agencies, international partners, industry, non-governmental organizations, and citizens.

In summary, the importance of protecting and supporting the movement of military forces and supplies through U.S. Seaports is never more critical than it is today. Protecting military loadouts in the Continental U.S. and its territories is a longstanding mission of the Coast Guard that requires a well-coordinated effort with our government and industry partners. Ultimately it is incumbent upon our government agencies and military services to balance the resources and meet the challenge of protecting our critical military assets and infrastructure. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.