

U.S. Department
of Transportation

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

ADMIRAL THOMAS H. COLLINS

ON

**COAST GUARD TRANSITION TO THE
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND
THE MARITIME HOMELAND SECURITY STRATEGY**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE, AND FISHERIES

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

U.S. SENATE

FEBRUARY 12, 2003



Admiral Thomas H. Collins **Commandant** **United States 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, Madame Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the Coast Guard's operations across our full spectrum of missions and our smooth transition to the Department of Homeland Security.

I am pleased to report that we are making excellent progress in this transition; and we look forward to becoming an integral member of the new Department of Homeland Security.

Coast Guard Role in the Department of Homeland Security

The Coast Guard is the lead federal agency for Maritime Homeland Security and we have a well-defined strategy to protect America's waterways and ports. The Coast Guard's multi-mission assets, military role as an Armed Force, and maritime presence and authorities bridge security, safety, and response capabilities between federal, state, local and private organizations, and the other military services. We have been the leader in providing for the maritime security needs of our nation since 1790...it was the reason we were formed almost 213 years ago.

The Coast Guard possesses extensive regulatory and law enforcement authorities governing ships, boats, personnel, and associated activities in our ports, waterways, and offshore maritime regions. We are a military service with around-the-clock command, control, communication, and response capability. We maintain, at the ready, a network of coastal small boats, aircraft, and deep-water cutters, and expert personnel to prevent and respond to safety and security incidents. We have geographic presence throughout the navigable waters of our country, both in large ports and small harbors, along the coasts, on the Great Lakes, and on the inland rivers. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 reaffirms the Coast Guard's status as a military service and branch of the armed forces of the United States, and it preserves the Secretary's role as a military service chief. The Coast Guard is now a statutory member of the national foreign intelligence community, and brings extensive intelligence gathering and coordination to the new department.

We have established a long history of partnerships with other government agencies and the private sector to multiply our effectiveness. The Coast Guard remains the recognized leader in the world regarding maritime safety, security, mobility, and environmental protection issues. These multi-mission, military, and maritime attributes form the core of our organization and maximize our ability to prevent or respond to incidents.

It is also important to recognize the threats to the security of our homeland extend beyond overt terrorism. Countering illegal drug and contraband smuggling, preventing illegal immigration via maritime routes, preserving living marine resources from domestic and foreign encroachment, preventing environmental damage and responding to spills of oil and hazardous substances are all critical elements of national and economic security and they are all Coast Guard responsibilities. As we transition to the new Department, we will accomplish our safety and security missions, both of which must be adequately funded to maintain our high standards of operational excellence in meeting America's future maritime needs.

Maritime Strategy for Homeland Security

Our *Maritime Strategy* balances the Coast Guard's responsibility for upholding America's maritime security against terrorist threats while preserving our fundamental liberties and economic well-being. It defines the Coast Guard's lead role for Maritime Homeland Security, as a supporting agency to other designated lead federal agencies for specific events, or as a supporting or supported commander for military operations. The Coast Guard will pursue five strategic objectives to achieve the maritime strategy: prevent terrorist attacks within and terrorist exploitation of the U.S. Maritime Domain; reduce America's vulnerability to terrorist attacks within the U.S. Maritime Domain; protect population centers, critical infrastructure and key assets; protect the Marine Transportation System; and minimize damage and promote rapid recovery from attacks.

Integral to the strategic elements of the Maritime Strategy for Homeland Security will be fulfilling the increased responsibilities of the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 (MTSA). In particular, implementing and enforcing a security regime aligned with international standards is of paramount importance to port security. The Coast Guard is embarked on an accelerated implementation of the elements of MTSA. The Coast Guard recently held seven public meetings across the country to discuss the envisioned MTSA regulations. We will incorporate public feedback and continue to work with affected stakeholders.

This strategic approach also places a premium on identifying and intercepting threats well before they reach U.S. shores by conducting layered, multi-agency, maritime security operations and by strengthening the port security posture of strategic economic and military ports. This is why an organic intelligence and command and control capability is so critically important. The *Maritime Strategy* also supports the Coast Guard's multi-mission responsibilities regarding the array of other dangerous threats in the U.S. Maritime Domain – drug smuggling, illegal migration, international organized crime, resource exploitation, infectious diseases, and environmental degradation.

Preparing for the Future

With the increases in the President's fiscal year 2004 budget, the Coast Guard is well positioned to respond to the Nation's future maritime homeland security and safety needs.

The Integrated Deepwater System project will re-capitalize the Coast Guard's aging cutters, aircraft, and offshore Command and Control network to help push out the U.S. borders and increase our Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). It is a flexible program, able to meet emerging requirements for maritime security.

Our Rescue 21 project will serve as a maritime 911 system that provides both a distress network, and an integrated coastal command and control system, which will aid communication among agencies responding jointly to emergencies. Further both Deepwater and Rescue 21 will be interoperable. We will soon award contracts to replace our small and medium response boats. These programs are at the heart of providing a ready Coast Guard with the competencies and capabilities to respond to both our traditional maritime safety missions and to our recently enhanced homeland security missions. Rescue 21 will be complete in FY 2006.

Managing the Transition

The Coast Guard maintains a complex web of interdependent and mutually beneficial functions with the Department of Transportation and its agencies that support national policy objectives. This complex relationship, built over the past 35 years, will change, but not end. As the Coast Guard moves to the Department of Homeland Security, interdependent functions will be sustained and strengthened in DOT, eliminated, or transferred to DHS. The Coast Guard has engaged in deliberate planning with DOT and others to ensure continuity of essential services to the Nation, while improving homeland security functions.

Conclusion

The changes that I have described, although extensive, will not change the Coast Guard's essential character as a maritime, multi-mission, military service. Instead, our role in the Department of Homeland Security will ensure the Coast Guard is capable of carrying out elements of the President's National Security Strategy and National Strategy for Homeland Security, while sustaining non-homeland security missions.

Every single mission of the Coast Guard remains important. With your steadfast commitment and support, I am confident the Coast Guard will remain Semper Paratus, "Always Ready." Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Coast Guard's homeland security efforts with you today. I am pleased to answer any questions you may have.