DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U. S. COAST GUARD

Hearing Before

Subcommittee No. Two

of the Committee on Armed Services

House of Representatives

Coast Guard Witnesses

Admiral Chester R. Bender, Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard

Rear Admiral James W. Moreau, Chief, Office of Reserve, U. S. Coast Guard

10 May 1973

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STATEMENT BY

ADMIRAL CHESTER R. BENDER

COMMANDANT

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BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,

SUBCOMMITTEE NO. TWO

UNITED STATES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTIVES

IN SUPPORT OF H. R. 6722

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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
SUBCOMMITTEE NO. TWO

Mr. Chairman:

I appreciate the privilege of appearing before you today to support the Coast Guard Selected Reserve strength authorization request for Fiscal Year 1974. I am accompanied by Rear Admiral James Moreau, Chief of the Coast Guard's Office of Reserve.

The legislation now before the Committee proposes an average strength level of 11,300 for the Coast Guard Selected Reserve for the coming fiscal year, a 500-man average decrease from the present authorized level, but somewhat higher than our current actual strength, which is less than 11,000.

The major factor in our reduced Reserve strength is that during the current year, and especially the last several months, our performance in recruiting non-prior service personnel for our Selected Reserve has fallen off sharply. Even though we are enjoying significant success in our efforts to recruit veterans, and have also improved our retention rates in the Selected Reserve, the overriding impact of diminished success in non-prior service recruiting has been a reduction in our present and projected strength levels. Our Fiscal Year 1974 strength request reflects a continuing downward trend which at this point in time is considered commensurate with our ability to recruit.

Although we are making every attempt to reverse this downward trend by improving our recruiting performance, our present situation is such that the 11,300 figure contained in the bill represents the upper limit of our attainment goal for Fiscal Year 1974.

In essence, then, we are faced with the near-term prospect of a Selected Reserve which is substantially smaller than the force envisioned only a few years ago, while there has been no corresponding reduction in personnel requirements of the Coast Guard for the early phases of a mobilization. Our response to this situation is twofold: first to continue our efforts to insure that this smaller force is trained to the highest levels of skill and military readiness which we are capable of achieving, and secondly, to examine and evaluate alternate resources with which to meet our mobilization requirements.

Our existing mobilization manning requirements are in excess of 23,000. By the end of Fiscal Year 1974 we will have about 10,000 fully trained officers and enlisted personnel in our Ready Reserve Pool. This force, mobilized along with our Selected Reserve and rounded out with other personnel assets such as retired personnel, new veteran volunteer accessions, and increased output from our recruit and petty officer training commands, will permit us to meet most of our emergency manning requirements with a degree of timeliness which I consider acceptable, although not ideal.

Now with respect to training and readiness improvements, we have continued the implementation of the program I described last year, whereby the major portion of our reservists' training is spent in actual on-the-job training with Coast Guard operating forces. This shift of emphasis from classroom to on-the-job training has been very successful.

It has given many of our reservists, particularly our enlisted reservists, an enhanced sense of accomplishment and a higher degree of motivation by involving them directly with mission areas such as search and rescue, marine environmental protection, port security and boating safety. Moreover, the practical value of training received by our reservists is superior to that afforded in the typical classroom training situation. In the summer of 1972, more than half of available training time, both at unit drills and on active duty for training, was devoted to on-the-job training activities. Our goal is to increase this on-the-job training to 60-to-80%. I believe the training policy I have described is already paying dividends in terms of enhancing the skills required of our Selected Reservists upon mobilization. With respect to the readiness of our Selected Reserve, last March we tested our call-up system in the course of a Service-wide readiness exercise. The result was very good, with 35% of our Selected Reservists alerted and simulating reporting for duty within four hours, and 95% doing so within 24 hours. Several reservists from each of our organized units, amounting to 5% of the Selected Reserve, actually reported to their mobilization stations for processing onto active duty within 24 hours. These men had been given no prior warning that their call-up was imminent, and were selected at random. Also, 30 Selected Reserve personnel voluntarily came on active duty for training to augment our Headquarters and district staffs, which were heavily tasked by the requirements imposed by the exercise. Their function ranged from command post operation to the augmentation of existing communications staffs. These men were able to report for active duty and assume these

mobilization-connected tasks immediately, with little or no assistance from the Regular personnel involved. Their excellent performance is indicative of a high state of readiness.

In addition to these exercises, a portion of our Selected Reserve recently was mobilized in connection with the disastrous flooding which has occurred in the Mississippi River basin in recent weeks. Under the authority of Public Law 92-479, enacted last October, about 300 officers and men from Selected Reserve units were alerted for involuntary call to active duty for the purpose of augmenting our Regular forces involved in flood relief and rescue work on the Mississippi River and its tributaries. Those actually recalled to date have performed in a highly creditable manner, demonstrating the good state of personnel readiness in our Selected Reserve.

Finally, during the past year we have instituted a standardized readiness evaluation system for all of our Reserve units. Prior to implementation the system was reviewed and approved by officials of the Department of Defense Reserve components, and has much in common with the evaluation systems used by those components. Based on reports received since this system was implemented, and based on the results of the readiness exercise described earlier, I consider the overall personnel readiness of our Selected Reserve for mobilization to be good. The capability of these men to serve as the hard core around which we will build our required manpower expansion for mobilization has improved during the past year. We will continue to seek further improvement with particular emphasis being placed on Reserve participation in future readiness exercises.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my prepared statement. I will be glad to answer any questions which you or the other members might have.