

STATEMENT BY

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U. S. COAST GUARD

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SELECTED RESERVE STRENGTH AUTHORIZATION

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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am Rear Admiral Thomas T. Wetmore III, Chief, Office of Reserve, United States Coast Guard.

Thank you for the opportunity of appearing here today to speak in behalf of the Coast Guard's Selected Reserve strength authorization request.

The legislation now before this Committee proposes an average annual strength of 11,700 for the Coast Guard Selected Reserve during fiscal year 1980, which is the same level authorized for the current year.

During fiscal year 1978 we were able to attain an end-of-year strength (11,374) within 3% of the authorized level of 11,700. We do find that recruiting and retention are among our biggest challenges. Retention rates remained high at 60% overall in fiscal year 1978; however, recruiting has been down approximately 8% and, for the first few months of fiscal year 1979, our retention rate is slackening. For these reasons we are now developing a Coast Guard enlistment/reenlistment incentives program as authorized by Congress last year (PL 95-485) for implementation by 1 April 1979. Increased emphasis on recruiting and retention by all levels of management within the Coast Guard Reserve, when combined with the new incentives program is expected to enable us to meet end strength objectives by the end of FY 79.

During fiscal year 1978 the Coast Guard increased the number of non-prior service recruits entering the Selected Reserve to 800, an addition of 50 over 1977. This increase supports our continuing effort to achieve a desired balance between prior service and non-prior service reservists and represents one element in our efforts

to meet our early response officer and petty officer mobilization requirements with Selected Reservists.

Since the termination of the draft we have depended heavily upon veteran accessions to meet our strength needs. Because veterans normally enter the Coast Guard Reserve with their specialties already determined by prior training and experience, our ability to match skills of those personnel with mobilization requirements is reduced.

In addition, veteran accessions increase the average age, grade, and longevity of the force. We will continue to seek support for further increases in the number of non-prior service reservists. This will enable us to direct more reservists into specialties where vacancies exist, and to better manage the mix of skills needed to meet mobilization requirements. We will also be able to improve control of force aging and improve promotion flow.

To summarize, we are having to devote more attention than in the past to Selected Reserve strength management, but we believe we can meet the challenge.

The Coast Guard Reserve continues to provide a valuable peacetime service while fulfilling its primary mission of mobilization preparedness. Again during 1978 our reservists are devoting approximately 65 percent of available training time to augmentation training. This highly successful training mode provides reservists with important hands-on experience in mobilization-related skills, while contributing to the accomplishment of the statutory peacetime missions of the active service. By combining operational and formal training we are achieving significant success in attaining mobilization readiness.

Ninety-two percent of our Selected Reserve units are considered fully or substantially ready for mobilization.

Augmentation has also proven to be an excellent source of motivation for our reservists and has been instrumental in cementing the relationship between the active and Reserve forces, and enhancing a ONE COAST GUARD image. Augmentation training is presently performed in support of a number of mission areas, including Port Security, Marine Environmental Protection and Search and Rescue.

We continue to emphasize colocating Reserve units with active service commands; this has served to improve augmentation as a training tool and the quality of support provided to peacetime missions. Coupled with an intensive program of formal training, it provides our reservists with an effective, well-balanced training package.

As I noted last year, the major portion of Reserve augmentation involves supplementing active Coast Guard units. However, there are units located throughout the country which are wholly, or substantially, manned by reservists. For example:

- Since 1973 reservists have operated three Search and Rescue stations located on the Great Lakes.
- Similarly, Coast Guard Station Atlantic Beach, located on Long Island, NY, is manned by only four full time Coastguardsmen. During the heavy search and rescue season the remaining 21 personnel are provided by the Coast Guard Reserve.

In addition to augmenting the active service during normal and peak period operation, Coast Guard reservists also assist during domestic emergencies. They have responded voluntarily to a number of critical situations in the past year. For example:

July 1978 -- Eighty-five reservists on emergency active duty augmented Captain of the Port, New York, and USCG Group Rockaway in containment and clean up of 38,000 gallons of fuel onboard the dredge Pennsylvania which sank off Rockaway Inlet.

May 1978 -- Reservists in the state of Washington provided support of active Coast Guard units when a court decision instantly increased the Coast Guard's role in management of fisheries.

We believe the Coast Guard Reserve continues to prove itself as a contributing and cost-effective component of the Total Force. In supporting the peacetime missions of the Coast Guard, it accomplishes its responsibilities of preparing for wartime mobilization.