

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT THOMAS R. REILLY

FOR PRESENTATION TO

HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND NAVIGATION

14 JULY 1981

GOOD AFTERNOON MR. CHAIRMAN, I AM LIEUTENANT THOMAS R. REILLY OF THE MARINE INSPECTION OFFICE IN NEW YORK WHERE I HAVE BEEN STATIONED SINCE OCTOBER 1978. PREVIOUSLY, FROM JULY 1976 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1978, I WAS STATIONED ABOARD THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD CUTTER MELLON (WHEC-717), A 378 FOOT HIGH ENDURANCE CUTTER HOMPORTED IN HONOLULU, HAWAII. THOUGH MY PRIMARY DUTY ABOARD MELLON WAS DECK WATCH OFFICER, I WAS ALSO TASKED AS A BOARDING OFFICER. I UNDERSTAND, MR. CHAIRMAN, THAT THE COMMITTEE IS VERY MUCH INTERESTED IN THE COAST GUARD PRACTICES IN THE PERFORMANCE OF CARRYING OUT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FISHERY CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT ACT. THIS STATEMENT WILL BRIEFLY TOUCH UPON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS: MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS A JUNIOR OFFICER ABOARD MELLON; HOW I WAS DESIGNATED AS A BOARDING OFFICER AND SUBSEQUENT TRAINING, PREPARATIONS FOR A BOARDING; AND A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE BOARDING PROCESS ABOARD FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS. ALSO, I WILL ONLY DISCUSS THE PERIOD OF TIME FROM JULY 1976 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1978 WHEN I WAS STATIONED ABOARD MELLON AND ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN FCMA BOARDINGS ABOARD MELLON.

ON JUNE 2, 1976 I GRADUATED FROM THE COAST GUARD ACADEMY AND AFTER 30 DAYS OF LEAVE AND A 4 WEEK COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER COURSE IN SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, I REPORTED ABOARD MELLON IN HONOLULU, HAWAII ON JULY 29, 1976. AS CAN BE INFERRED, MY FIRST SHIPBOARD TASK WAS THAT OF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, A JOB I HAD FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE YEAR. DURING THIS PERIOD OF TIME, HOWEVER, MY PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY WAS TO BECOME QUALIFIED AS A DECK WATCH OFFICER BOTH AT SEA AND IN PORT. QUALIFICATION AS DECK WATCH OFFICER IS A RIGOROUS SHIPBOARD FAMILIARIZATION PROCESS REQUIRING THE JUNIOR OFFICER TO COMPLETE THE JUNIOR OFFICER TRAINING PROGRAM AND A SERIES OF ON THE JOB APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS TO THE SATISFACTION OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER. I PERSONALLY BECAME QUALIFIED TO STAND MY OWN DAY WATCHES AT SEA IN NOVEMBER 1976, AT THE TAIL END OF MY FIRST PATROL. SOON AFTER, IN JANUARY 1977, I WAS QUALIFIED TO STAND IN PORT WATCHES, BUT IT WAS NOT UNTIL MARCH 1977 THAT I WAS QUALIFIED TO STAND NIGHT WATCHES AT SEA. SO, IN ESSENCE, FROM JULY 1976 THROUGH MARCH 1977 I WAS IN TRAINING AS A DECK WATCH OFFICER. IT WAS ALSO DURING THIS PERIOD THAT THE FCMA WAS PASSED BY CONGRESS, GOING INTO EFFECT IN MARCH 1977.

IN FEBRUARY 1977, AND IN PREPARATION FOR ENFORCEMENT OF THE FCMA, I WAS SENT TO THE INLINGUA SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN SAN FRANCISCO FOR A FOUR WEEK INTENSIVE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE COURSE. AFTER THE INLINGUA PROGRAM I MET MELLON, ALREADY ON ALASKAN PATROL, IN ADAK, ALASKA AND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY TRAINED BY THE CAPTAIN AND OPERATIONS OFFICER IN THE CONDUCT OF FCMA ENFORCEMENT BOARDINGS. IN MARCH 1977 I OBSERVED SEVERAL FISHERIES BOARDINGS, AND BY APRIL 1977 I HAD CONDUCTED MY FIRST FISHERIES BOARDING AS THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF THE BOARDING. UPON RETURN TO HONOLULU I CONTINUED TO

STUDY THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE EVENINGS WITH A PRIVATE TUTOR. DURING THIS TIME FRAME MELLON WAS ALSO CONDUCTING NUMEROUS INTERNAL SEMINARS ON FCMA ENFORCEMENT. BOTH THE PRIVATE LANGUAGE STUDIES AND FCMA ENFORCEMENT PREPARATIONS CONTINUED UNTIL MELLON'S NEXT ALASKAN PATROL IN JANUARY 1978. THE REASON FOR SO LONG A DELAY BETWEEN ALASKAN PATROLS IS THAT MELLON HAD BROKEN DOWN ENROUTE ALASKA IN JULY 1977, AND WAS DRYDOCKED IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON FOR THREE MONTHS. THE BULK OF MY FCMA ENFORCEMENT BOARDING EXPERIENCE TOOK PLACE DURING MELLON'S JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1978 AND JUNE-AUGUST 1978 ALASKAN PATROLS, DURING WHICH TIME I ESTIMATE HAVING CONDUCTED APPROXIMATELY 30 SUCH BOARDINGS.

SHIFTING EMPHASIS TO THE ACTUAL BOARDING ACTIVITIES AS I HAVE EXPERIENCED, MELLON WAS GIVEN GENERAL AREAS TO PATROL AND OFTEN HAD A HELICOPTER ON BOARD TO ASSIST WITH INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION. THROUGH THE USE OF THE HELICOPTER SEARCHES AND OTHER INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION, THE AREAS OF FOREIGN FISHING VESSEL ACTIVITY WERE DETERMINED. ONCE IN AN AREA OF FOREIGN FISHING VESSEL ACTIVITY, THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF MELLON DECIDED WHICH VESSEL TO BOARD. MY SPECIFIC PREPARATIONS PRIOR TO AN FCMA ENFORCEMENT BOARDING INCLUDED THE FOLLOWING: COMMUNICATING WITH THE VESSEL TO BE BOARDED VIA VHF-FM RADIO; OUTFITTING MYSELF FOR SMALL BOAT PASSAGE AND BOARDING WHICH INCLUDED A WET SUIT, .45 CALIBER PISTOL, BOARDING KIT, VHF RADIO, CHANGE OF CLOTHING; AND A FINAL BRIEFING BY THE CAPTAIN AND THE OPERATIONS OFFICER. DURING THIS TIME FRAME, MELLON'S DECK FORCE PREPARED TO LAUNCH THE SMALL BOAT, WHILE MELLON WAS MANEUVERING FOR OPTIMAL LAUNCH POSITION. WHEN ALL ADVANCE PREPARATIONS HAD BEEN COMPLETED, WHICH LASTED APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES TO AN HOUR, THE SMALL BOAT WAS LAUNCHED ENROUTE THE VESSEL

AT HAND.

AS I AM SURE YOU ARE WELL AWARE, THE PURPOSE OF THESE BOARDINGS IS TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH THE FISHERIES CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS PROMULGATED BY THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION. FROM MY EXPERIENCE, A NORMAL BOARDING INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING: CLIMBING THE JACOBS LADDER, PROCEEDING TO THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN, CHANGING INTO THE WORKING UNIFORM, DISCUSSING FISHING OPERATIONS WITH THE CAPTAIN, INSPECTING THE VESSEL'S LOGS, INSPECTING THE FISH HOLDS, INSPECTING THE GALLEY, FINAL DISCUSSION WITH THE CAPTAIN, AND DEPARTURE FROM THE FISHING VESSEL. THE BULK OF THE BOARDING ENCOMPASSES TWO AREAS, INSPECTION OF THE LOGS TO ENSURE PROPER RECORD KEEPING AS REQUIRED BY THE REGULATIONS, AND INSPECTION OF THE CARGO HOLDS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE CATCH IS ACCURATELY REFLECTED BY WHAT IS LOGGED. IN MOST CASES, THE NECESSARY LOG ENTRIES AND OTHER REQUIRED PAPERWORK ARE OBTAINED WITH MINIMAL EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE BOARDING OFFICER. INSPECTING THE CARGO HOLDS REQUIRES KNOWLEDGE IN FISH IDENTIFICATION AND A TAPE MEASURE USED TO ESTIMATE THE VOLUME OF FISH IN THE CARGO HOLDS. IN MY OPINION, THESE TWO KEY AREAS ARE WELL HANDLED BY THE COAST GUARD BOARDING OFFICERS.

THE ONE AREA THAT I FELT THAT I, AS A COAST GUARD BOARDING OFFICER, WAS DEFICIENT IN, WAS IN COMMUNICATING WITH THE PERSONNEL OF FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS. SPECIFICALLY, THERE EXISTS A VERY REAL LANGUAGE BARRIER WHENEVER A FOREIGN FISHING VESSEL IS BOARDED. A COMMON MISUNDERSTANDING IS THAT ALL OCEAN GOING VESSELS HAVE ENGLISH SPEAKING CAPABILITIES. IT HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE THAT THE ENGLISH SPEAKING CAPABILITY OF THESE FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS IS, FOR THE MOST PART, LIMITED TO RUDIMENTARY NAUTICAL TERMINOLOGY NECESSARY TO

NAVIGATE A VESSEL IN AND OUT OF PORT. HEREIN LIES THE COMMUNICATIONS PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED BY BOARDING OFFICERS. FURTHER COMPLICATING MATTERS, AS HAS OFTEN BEEN MY EXPERIENCE, PERSONNEL ABOARD THE FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS WILL LEAD ON TO KNOWING LESS ENGLISH THAN THEY IN FACT DO. IF I, AS A COAST GUARD BOARDING OFFICER, HAD A BETTER FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAPABILITY, I FEEL THAT COMMUNICATIONS DURING FOREIGN FISHERIES BOARDING WOULD HAVE IMPROVED BY EASING THE INHERENT TENSIONS FROM BOTH THE VESSEL'S POINT OF VIEW, CREATED BY BEING BOARDED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS FROM A FOREIGN NATION, AND ON THE PART OF THE BOARDING PARTY ITSELF, KNOWING FULL WELL THAT COMMUNICATION WAS LIKELY TO BE A PROBLEM. ALONG WITH THE PROBLEM OF INHERENT TENSIONS, A COMMON BETTER FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAPABILITY WOULD ENABLE BETTER EXPLANATIONS IN THE EVENT OF MAJOR AND MINOR VIOLATIONS OF THE FCMA AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE FOREIGN VESSEL'S CREWMEMBERS. ASIDE FROM THESE OBVIOUS ADVANTAGES, THERE ARE ALSO CERTAIN LESS OBVIOUS ADVANTAGES THAT GO ALONG WITH BETTER LANGUAGE CAPABILITY. TWO OF THE MORE SUBTLE BENEFITS ARE BAD WEATHER BOARDINGS AND FUEL SAVINGS. IF WEATHER CONDITIONS ARE POOR ENOUGH TO PREVENT SMALL BOAT BOARDINGS, COAST GUARD PRESENCE COULD BE EFFECTIVELY ESTABLISHED BY CONDUCTING THE BOARDING OVER THE VHF RADIO. IN THE AREA OF FUEL SAVINGS, IF A CUTTER ENTERS AN AREA CONTAINING MANY FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS, BOTH TIME AND FUEL CAN BE CONSERVED BY SETTING UP A BOARDING SCHEDULE WITH THE FISHING VESSELS. AS HAS BEEN MY EXPERIENCE, WHEN ONE FISHING VESSEL IN AN AREA IS BOARDED, THE OTHERS TEND TO SCATTER, THEREBY CREATING A SITUATION WHERE THE CUTTER WASTES TIME AND FUEL TRACKING THEM DOWN.

AS A CLOSING NOTE, IT IS MY OPINION THAT THE COAST GUARD'S

PRESENCE HAD A VERY STRONG IMPACT UPON THE FOREIGN FISHING FLEETS, AND THAT MELLON ENFORCED THE FCMA TO THE BEST OF HER ABILITY. THE SINGLE POINT THAT I AM ATTEMPTING TO MAKE IS THAT, IF THE QUALITY OF THE FCMA ENFORCEMENT BOARDINGS IS TO IMPROVE, THE AREA TO START IMPROVING IS THE COMMUNICATIONS BARRIER BETWEEN THE BOARDING OFFICER AND THE FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS. A STRONGER FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAPABILITY ON THE PART OF THE COAST GUARD BOARDING OFFICERS IS THE LOGICAL STARTING POINT.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THAT CONCLUDES MY OPENING STATEMENT, AND I STAND READY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS FROM THE COMMITTEE.