

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

STATEMENT OF

REAR ADMIRAL ALFRED P. MANNING JR.

CHIEF, OFFICE OF COMMAND, CONTROL AND COMMUNICATIONS

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

NATURAL RESOURCES AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & ENVIRONMENT

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCERNING

SEARCH AND RESCUE

SATELLITE AIDED TRACKING

(SARSAT)

SEPTEMBER 18, 1984

MR CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS YOUR SUBCOMMITTEE AND DISCUSS THE SEARCH AND RESCUE SATELLITE AIDED TRACKING (SARSAT) PROJECT. WITH ME IS CAPTAIN GREGORY A. PENNINGTON, CHIEF OF THE COAST GUARD'S SEARCH AND RESCUE DIVISION.

I WILL FOCUS ON THE COAST GUARD'S INVOLVEMENT AND INTEREST IN THIS PROGRAM. THE COAST GUARD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) FOR THE MARITIME REGION OF THE UNITED STATES, WHICH ENCOMPASSES OVER 23 MILLION SQUARE MILES.

OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH NASA, NOAA AND THE AIR FORCE IN THE SARSAT PROJECT WAS FORMALIZED IN A 1977 INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT. THE COAST GUARD OPERATES AND MAINTAINS TWO GROUND STATIONS, CALLED LOCAL USER TERMINALS (LUTS), ONE AT KODIAK, ALASKA AND ONE AT POINT REYES, CALIFORNIA.

SINCE THE DEMONSTRATION AND EVALUATION PHASE BEGAN, THE COMBINED COSPAS/SARSAT SYSTEM HAS-BEEN CREDITED WITH SAVING 278 LIVES - 134 OF THOSE HAVE BEEN IN THE UNITED STATES. THE COAST GUARD HAS PROUDLY PARTICIPATED IN MANY OF THESE SAVES.

THE COAST GUARD WAS INTIMATELY INVOLVED IN THE FIRST MARITIME RESCUE ATTRIBUTED TO COSPAS/SARSAT, WHICH, INCIDENTALLY, WAS THE

FIRST CASE WHICH OCCURRED IN THE UNITED STATES. I AM REFERRING TO THE RESCUE OF THE SAILING VESSEL GONZO, TWO OF WHOSE SURVIVORS HAVE ALREADY ADDRESSED THIS SUB-COMMITTEE. I'D LIKE TO TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO FILL IN SOME OF THE DETAILS OF THAT CASE. ON OCTOBER 10, 1982, SARSAT HAD NOT YET OFFICIALLY BEGUN ITS EVALUATION PHASE. ONE SATELLITE WAS IN ORBIT; THE GROUND SYSTEM HAD RECENTLY BEEN BUILT AND WAS STILL BEING CHECKED OUT. A COMMERCIAL AIRLINER ENROUTE FROM NEW YORK TO SPAIN PICKED UP THE DISTRESS SIGNAL FROM THE GONZO AND REPORTED IT TO THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION NEW YORK OCEANIC CENTER. THE FAA THEN ALERTED THE COAST GUARD RESCUE COORDINATION CENTER (RCC) IN NEW YORK. SUCH AIRCRAFT REPORTS PROVIDE AN ALERT BUT NOT A LOCATION OF THE DISTRESS. THE BEACON COULD BE ANYWHERE WITHIN A 300 MILE RADIUS. THE RCC TELEPHONED THE SARSAT MISSION CONTROL CENTER AT SCOTT AFB WHERE ALL COSPAS/SARSAT DATA WERE BEING MONITORED. BASED ON THE SATELLITE DATA, THE POSITION OF THE BEACON WAS PINPOINTED TO WITHIN A 20 MILE RADIUS. A COAST GUARD AIRCRAFT WAS DISPATCHED TO THE SITE AND LOCATED THE GONZO. THE THREE CREW MEMBERS WERE LATER RESCUED BY THE COAST GUARD CUTTER VIGOROUS. IT IS WORTH NOTING THAT THE SATELLITE FIRST DETECTED THE BEACON SIGNAL SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE IT WAS HEARD BY AN AIRCRAFT.

AS YOU CAN SEE, THE USE OF SATELLITES TO ASSIST IN SEARCH AND RESCUE HAS GREATLY ENHANCED OUR ABILITY TO SAVE LIVES. FROM THE COAST GUARD'S POINT OF VIEW, THE DEMONSTRATION AND EVALUATION PHASE OF COSPAS/SARSAT HAS BEEN AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS. WE ARE AGERLY LOOKING FORWARD TO THE TIME THAT THE SYSTEM BECOMES FULLY

MATURE. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT IT WILL SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THE SAFETY OF TRANSPORTATION ON THE SEAS.

THIS CONCLUDES MY FORMAL STATEMENT, MR CHAIRMAN. I WILL BE PLEASED TO ADDRESS ANY QUESTIONS THE SUBCOMMITTEE MIGHT HAVE.