

U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**United States  
Coast Guard**



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

Washington, DC 20593  
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STATEMENT

OF

ADMIRAL PAUL A. YOST  
COMMANDANT, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

BEFORE THE

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON  
NARCOTICS ABUSE AND CONTROL

JULY 22, 1986



## Admiral Paul A. Yost Jr. Commandant United States Coast Guard



Admiral Paul Alexander Yost, Jr. became the 18th Commandant of the United States Coast Guard on May 30, 1986. He was nominated to that position while serving as Commander of the Atlantic Area, Commander Maritime Defense Zone Atlantic, and Commander Third Coast Guard District in New York City where he was assigned in 1984.

In these roles, the Admiral was responsible for Coast Guard operations in the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Gulf of Mexico including drug interdiction, maritime law enforcement, and search and rescue, as well as maritime coastal defense under the authority of the Commander Atlantic Fleet, United States Navy.

Prior to his Third District assignment, Admiral Yost was Chief of Staff of the Coast Guard for three years at Headquarters in Washington, DC, where he managed planning, programming, and budgeting for the service. He was promoted to flag rank in 1978 and served as Eighth District Commander in New Orleans, Louisiana for three years.

Admiral Yost's management and operational positions included Chief of Staff and Chief of Operations for Seventeenth Coast Guard District in Alaska (1975), and Commander Task Group 115.3, a combat command in Vietnam (1969). In addition, he served as Special Assistant to the Deputy Secretary Department of Transportation and an Alternate Delegate on the U.S. Law of the Sea Delegation.

Admiral Yost was Captain of The Port, Seattle, Washington (1974), Special Assistant to the Chief Counsel, Coast Guard Headquarters (1972), and Chief, Bridge Branch, Aids to Navigation Division, Headquarters (1970). Seagoing duty included command of the cutter *Resolute* in San Francisco, California (1966).

Admiral Yost graduated from the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, in 1964. He received master's degrees in international affairs from George Washington University (1964) and in mechanical engineering from the University of Connecticut (1959). He also completed course work toward a master's in business administration. Admiral Yost received a Bachelor of Science Degree from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, in 1951.

The Commandant's awards include The Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Legion of Merit with combat "V", a gold star in lieu of a second Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Korean Service Medal, and United Nations Service Medal. He also received The Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star (RVN), Presidential Unit Citation, Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation, and the Distinguished Service Medal (RVN).

A native of St. Petersburg, Florida, Admiral Yost is active in church, school, and community affairs. He was awarded the Silver Beaver Award by the Boys Scouts of America. Admiral Yost is married to the former Jan Worth of Wakefield, Massachusetts. Mrs. Yost earned a degree in communications from the University of Maryland. They have five children: Linda L., Paul A. III, David J., Lisa J., and Christopher J. The Yosts reside in Chevy Chase, Maryland.



Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, it is a pleasure to appear before you today to provide an overview on the Coast Guard's role in drug law enforcement along the southwest border of the United States.

As you know, there has been a substantial increase in drug smuggling on our Southwest Border, which is probably, at least partly, a reaction to the successful multiagency interdiction efforts in the Caribbean over the last two years. This same type of cooperative effort, the Southwest Border Initiative, is currently being taken to gain control of the Southwest Border. To do otherwise would be pointless. Unless all these avenues of drug trafficking are successfully blocked, our interdiction efforts in other areas are to no avail.

The Southwest Border Initiative is primarily focused toward the interdiction of narcotics coming by land or air across the land border with Mexico. However, the U.S. Coast Guard, as the nation's primary maritime law enforcement agency, has been active in its planning. If the initiative is successful, we expect there will be some spillover to maritime trafficking and we stand ready to interdict these vessels. Therefore, we will conduct drug interdiction operations in support of the initiative on the high seas in the Gulf of Mexico and off the coast of southern California.

Coast Guard aircraft will conduct surveillance flights in these areas to assist Coast Guard cutters in locating and identifying vessels carrying contraband en route to the United States. We also expect to deploy Coast Guard law enforcement teams aboard U.S. Navy ships transiting or operating in these areas as the ships are made available. In addition, Coast Guard small boats at our stations near the U.S./Mexican border will be available to assist Customs Service marine modules intercept drug laden vessels nearer our southern shores.

Coast Guard aircraft, cutters, boats and personnel will be made available to assist the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Customs Service, Border Patrol and other agencies in support of this worthwhile initiative. Coast Guard personnel assigned to the Southwest Region of the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS) and to the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) will continue to provide direct intelligence coordination and support to the interdiction forces along the border. A Coast Guard officer has been assigned to the Regional Commissioner of Customs for the Southwest Region, the overall coordinator of the initiative, to assist in operational planning and coordination. In the course of normal Coast Guard operations, our units will continue to provide real-time intelligence on maritime smuggling activity which might assist in identifying and responding to shifting narcotics trafficking patterns along the border and offshore.

The very nature of drug trafficking makes it a multinational venture. It is an international problem that requires the full cooperation of foreign government forces to stop. To be effective, operations along the Southwest Border will require the full cooperation of Mexico. In our maritime activities, we have been working toward that goal.

In the summer of 1984, the commanding officer of CGC ACUSHNET established a very productive working relationship with local Mexican Navy officials during a port visit in Cozumel. This working relationship has endured. In November and December, 1984, in three separate cases, drug smuggling vessels were pursued by

CGC ACUSHNET. All three were intercepted and seized by Mexican Navy vessels in Mexican territorial waters, resulting in the interdiction of over 77,000 pounds of marijuana. In July, 1985, CGC VALIANT consensually boarded a Mexican flag vessel 35 miles north of the Yucatan Peninsula and located seven tons of marijuana in hidden compartments. The Government of Mexico was notified of the discovery through our Embassy in Mexico City. Two Mexican Navy patrol boats were immediately dispatched and, at the request of the Mexican Government, CGC VALIANT detained the vessel until the patrol boats arrived. In March, 1986, CGC DURABLE consensually boarded a sinking Mexican flag vessel in the Gulf of Mexico and discovered six tons of marijuana aboard. The five Mexican crewmen were evacuated to CGC DURABLE, which contacted a Mexican Navy frigate patrolling in the area. The five crewmen and evidence obtained from the sinking vessel were then transferred to the Mexican frigate.

These incidents point to a good relationship with the Mexican Navy on the unit level. We are making every effort to nurture this high level of cooperation between our units and the local Mexican Navy commanders through continuing port visits and other initiatives. During a patrol this last June, CGC VENTUROUS made port calls in La Paz, Mazatlan, and Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Warm and hospitable, the Mexican Navy Officials were receptive to developing mutual working relationships further.

We are also seeking ways to continue to improve our relationship with the Government of Mexico. On February 18, 1986, Admiral Ramirez de Arellano, then Chief of Naval Operations of the Mexican Navy, visited Washington, D.C., met with Admiral Gracey, then Commandant of the Coast Guard and held day-long meetings with high level members of the Commandant's staff. In April, Vice Admiral Stabile, then Vice Commandant, and Rear Admiral Robbins, Chief, Office of Operations, accompanied the Attorney General to the Mexican-American Law Enforcement Summit in Cancun to discuss law enforcement matters of mutual concern. Just last week, Rear Admiral Robbins met with the recently appointed Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Mauricio Schleske Sanchez, and his staff. We believe these meetings have led to even closer relationships with local Mexican Navy commanders and increased cooperation from the Mexican Government.

This concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman. I will be happy to answer any questions you or the members of the Committee may have.