

PREPARED STATEMENT
OF
ADMIRAL PAUL A. YOST
COMMANDANT, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
BEFORE THE
HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON
NARCOTICS ABUSE AND CONTROL

OCTOBER 3, 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, I am pleased to have the opportunity to meet with you today to provide an overview of the Coast Guard's drug law enforcement program.

The Coast Guard has been tasked with maritime law enforcement since the birth of our nation over two hundred years ago. Our activity in this area, especially the drug law enforcement mission is our highest priority mission.

In the 1970's traffickers had little fear of Coast Guard enforcement activities; loads of marijuana were stacked on the decks of vessels and in every available space, and smuggling tactics were very unsophisticated. Through the years, though, as law enforcement pressure in the maritime region has increased, there has been some shift by drug smugglers to other modes and methods of transportation. As you know, there has been a substantial increase in drug smuggling on our Southwest Border. There has been an increase in airdrop activity, the use of hidden compartments incorporated into the design of a boat or ship, the use of tug and barge combinations, and attempts by smugglers to circumnavigate our interdiction resources through counter-intelligence and the use of their own surveillance aircraft. These smuggling tactics are the result of our law enforcement effort. We are causing drug smuggling to become more difficult and expensive. In view of the more varied and complex tactics used by smugglers, the operational efforts to stem the overall flow of drugs have become increasingly dependent on the coordination of all law enforcement agencies' interdiction and intelligence gathering activities.

One of the most important elements of our surface maritime law enforcement mission is boarding vessels to determine if they are smuggling drugs. Analysis shows that while we must keep pressure on all facets of the maritime drug scenario, interdiction of "motherships", which deliver contraband to smaller boats well off our coast or fast contact boats near shore, has the greatest potential for disrupting the maritime flow of drugs. One mothership seizure may remove as much marijuana from the market as would 10-20 contact boat seizures. Therefore, Coast Guard surface drug interdiction operations have continued to concentrate on these large motherships. In addition to large quantities of marijuana, large quantities of other drugs (primarily cocaine) are being found, indicating a distinct shift in trafficking trends. Previously, we were rarely able to seize these higher value, low volume, drugs because they were usually disposed of "over the side" prior to the boarding of the vessel. However, last year we seized over 6,500 pounds of cocaine, up from the 1,967 pounds seized in 1984, and well above the high of 46 pounds in previous years. This year, as of August 31, we have seized 5,379 pounds of cocaine.

The Coast Guard's traditional drug interdiction strategy has been mainly directed toward intercepting vessels as they transit the major Caribbean passes. Starting in the fall of 1984, new tactics were employed. Operation Wagonwheel, conducted in November and December, 1984, was the key element of a larger national and international operation, Operation Hat Trick, coordinated by the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS). Operation Hat Trick was the first of several multiagency, international operations to complement anti-drug operations being carried out by foreign in-country forces ashore and afloat. The operation involved two to three times the Coast Guard cutters used in previous efforts, and, among other DOD assets, included seven Navy ships under Coast Guard tactical control.

The latest Coast Guard effort provided a key element of Operation Hat Trick II and was very similar to Hat Trick I, but on a larger scale. Again, the Coast Guard, supported by the U.S. Navy, provided the primary maritime surface surveillance and interdiction forces. Air operations were also conducted by the Coast Guard and other agencies including the Customs Service, Navy, Air Force, Army and Marines. Maritime forces included more than 40 Coast Guard and Navy ships and many aircraft. In addition to the crews permanently assigned to the cutters and aircraft, personnel were temporarily reassigned from their regular duties to function as law enforcement teams aboard the Navy ships, to augment intelligence staffs, to provide in-country liaison, and to be on the squadron commander's staff.

The successes of these operations point out the advantage of occasional offensive tactics against trafficking organizations, and they also show the value of DOD assistance to these operations. A similar type of cooperative effort, the Southwest Border Initiative, is currently being undertaken to gain control of the Southwest Border.

The Southwest Border Initiative is primarily focused toward the interdiction of narcotics coming by land or air across the land border with Mexico. The U.S. Coast Guard, as the nation's primary maritime law enforcement agency, has been active in its planning. Smugglers may try to circumvent the land and air interdiction system which would increase maritime trafficking near the southwest border. Therefore, the Coast Guard will conduct drug interdiction operations in support of the Southwest Border 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. In addition, Coast Guard vessels 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 other agencies in support of this mission.

The President has proclaimed that drug abuse is a matter of national security. Legislation that has passed Congress contains two important proposals for the Coast Guard's ability to detect, arrest, and prosecute drug smugglers. First, the legislation modifies the Mansfield Amendment, which has inhibited the Coast Guard's ability to conduct coordinated law enforcement efforts with coastal states and the Coast Guard's ability to enforce U.S. law in coastal territorial seas despite the consent of the coastal state. This is particularly important when the suspected "mothership" is located in the territorial seas of a country near the United States, such as the Bahamas. Second, it amends the Biaggi-Gilman Bill, 21 USC 955a. The amendment will eliminate defensive ploys during trial unrelated to the issue of whether the individuals were trafficking in controlled substances.

Mr. Chairman, before I offer to answer questions, I'd like to discuss my personal concerns regarding cocaine trafficking and what I feel will be necessary to combat this worsening problem.

As you are aware, cocaine abuse, particularly crack, is becoming a major epidemic of disastrous proportions. Although we are finding instances of

major loads of cocaine being smuggled by sea, we feel the bulk of the cocaine is still entering the U.S. by air on a daily basis.

The air interdiction problem has major "time and distance" factors to solve, requiring a major concerted, cooperative effort of all agencies to effectively resolve. The Coast Guard has a major responsibility for drug interdiction, but the cooperative efforts of all involved agencies, i.e., Customs, DEA and DOD are now being focused on the problem. We have a long way to go to stem the some 2 ton/week cocaine habit that the people of the United States now have.

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