

U.S. Department
of Transportation

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

Washington, D.C. 20593-0001
Staff Symbol:
Phone:

PREPARED STATEMENT

OF

REAR ADMIRAL WALTER T. LELAND
CHIEF, OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND DEFENSE OPERATIONS
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

BEFORE THE

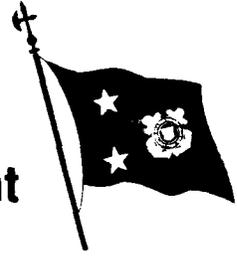
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

25 JULY 1989



Rear Admiral W. Ted Leland Chief, Office of Law Enforcement and Defense Operations United States Coast Guard



Rear Admiral W. Ted Leland became Chief, Office of Law Enforcement and Defense Operations, United States Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, DC in March 1989. As such, Admiral Leland is responsible to the Commandant for establishing the program requirements for surface and aviation operations.

Prior to this assignment, Admiral Leland was the first commander of the Maintenance and Logistics Command Pacific, located in Alameda, California. There, he was responsible for the maintenance support of the Coast Guard ships and shore establishments in the Pacific Basin, including all major contracting support.



Admiral Leland has a broad operational afloat and ashore experience, having commanded two of the six cutters that he has been assigned to. His two shore commands involved duties in aids to navigation and search and rescue. As a staff officer, he directed the Atlantic Area law enforcement efforts and, as a new captain, he directed the Coast Guard's Defense Operations Division. Prior to his selection for flag rank, he was Chief of Operations for the Seventh Coast Guard District where the maritime war on drug smuggling is focused. His special staff assignments include a tour as Military Aide and later, Executive assistant to the Secretary of Transportation; and as a captain, Chief of Congressional Affairs for the Coast Guard.

Admiral Leland graduated from the United States Coast Guard Academy in June 1960. He holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Rhode Island, where he was inducted into the Political Science National Honor Society, Pi Sigma Alpha. He attended the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia and graduated with distinction from the Naval War College. Admiral Leland's military awards include receiving the Legion of Merit three times, being twice awarded the Meritorious Service Medal and one Coast Guard Commendation Medal.

Admiral Leland is married to the former Emily Rozwenc of Amherst, Massachusetts. They have two children, Leslie and Doug.

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REAR ADMIRAL WALTER T. LELAND, UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
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GOOD AFTERNOON, MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, IT IS A PLEASURE TO APPEAR BEFORE YOU TODAY TO DISCUSS THE COAST GUARD'S EFFORTS IN THWARTING NARCOTICS SMUGGLING IN THE VICINITY OF CUBA. THE INTENSE INTEREST IN THIS MATTER HAS LED TO SPECULATION OVER THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT OF SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS IN THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT. BEFORE ADDRESSING THE SPECIFICS LET ME GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF THE PROBLEM. I WILL TOUCH ON FOUR AREAS:

- THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM
- INFORMAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH CUBA
- COAST GUARD RESPONSE TO THE THREAT
- RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I WOULD NOTE THAT DUE TO THE UNCLASSIFIED NATURE OF THE HEARING, SOME OF THE SPECIFICS OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT CASES MUST BE OMITTED. ADDITIONALLY, THE COAST GUARD MUST BE CAREFUL TO PROTECT THE SOURCES OF SOME OF ITS INTELLIGENCE ON THIS SENSITIVE SUBJECT.

THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

THE AREAS SURROUNDING THE CAY SAL BANKS, THE OLD BAHAMA CHANNEL AND THE STRAITS OF FLORIDA ARE TRADITIONAL SMUGGLING AND

PIRACY AREAS GOING BACK TO THE DAYS OF EUROPEAN COLONIZATION IN THE AMERICAS. TODAY, THESE AREAS ARE STILL ACTIVE AND KEEP THE COAST GUARD BUSY, WITH BOTH TRADITIONAL MARITIME SMUGGLING, AND AIR DROPS OF NARCOTICS TO WAITING VESSELS. THIS AREA IS IDEAL FOR THE SMUGGLERS WHO USE THE UNOBSERVED ISLANDS AND COASTLINE TO COVER THEIR MOVEMENTS AND HIDE CONTRABAND. AS YOU HAVE SEEN WIDELY REPORTED, THE SMUGGLERS ALSO USE THE TERRITORIAL SEAS OF CUBA TO COVER THEIR MOVEMENTS, AND TO PREVENT U.S. INTERDICTION FORCES FROM REACHING THEM.

IN 1988, THERE WAS A SHARP UPTURN IN AIR DROPS TO THIS AREA, AS SMUGGLERS WERE DRIVEN AWAY FROM THE BAHAMAS AND OTHER AREAS COVERED BY AEROSTAT AND GROUND-BASED RADARS. THE COAST GUARD RESPONDED TO THIS SHIFT BY INCREASING THE DEPLOYMENT OF PATROL BOATS AND AIRCRAFT TO THE CAY SAL BANKS AREA. IT BECAME APPARENT THAT SHIPS WERE TRANSITING AND USING THE CUBAN TERRITORIAL SEA TO AVOID OUR CUTTERS. IT WAS ALSO APPARENT THAT SMALL GENERAL AVIATION AIRCRAFT WERE USING THE VFR CORRIDORS OVER CUBA TO MAKE AIR DROPS AND LAND NARCOTICS IN THE FLORIDA AND BAHAMAS AREA. THE SMUGGLING AIRCRAFT AND VESSELS GAVE THE APPEARANCE THAT THEY WERE OPERATING IN A MANNER THAT SHOWED COLLUSION ON THE PART OF CUBAN OFFICIALS AT SOME LEVEL. THE MEDIA AT THE TIME ALSO REPORTED THE INDICTMENTS OF SEVERAL CUBAN OFFICIALS BY U.S. ATTORNEYS IN FLORIDA.

IN 1989 THE LEVEL OF SMUGGLING CASES IN AND AROUND THE CUBAN TERRITORIAL SEAS, INCLUDING CAY SAL BANKS AND THE OLD BAHAMA CHANNEL, HAS BEEN APPROXIMATELY ONE TO THREE OPERATIONS PER WEEK.

INFORMAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH CUBA

THE COAST GUARD MAINTAINS AN INFORMAL MEANS OF COMMUNICATING WITH THE CUBAN BORDER GUARD. THIS IS DONE VIA A TELEX SYSTEM WHICH IS LOCATED IN THE SEVENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS IN MIAMI, FLORIDA. IT IS A WORKING LEVEL METHOD FOR COORDINATING SEARCH AND RESCUE, AND OPERATIONAL MATTERS WITH OUR COUNTERPARTS IN THE BORDER GUARD. SINCE THE UNITED STATES DOES NOT MAINTAIN OFFICIAL RELATIONS WITH CUBA, THIS LINK IS VERY IMPORTANT, BOTH IN PROSECUTING SEARCH AND RESCUE CASES, AND IN PREVENTING UNFRIENDLY INCIDENTS BETWEEN COAST GUARD AND BORDER GUARD UNITS. NATURALLY, THIS LINK IS A SENSITIVE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND IS USED SPARINGLY.

THE TELEX HAS SOME LIMITATIONS; IT DOES NOT ENSURE REAL TIME RESPONSE TO OUR QUERIES. SOME QUERIES ARE IGNORED...BUT RECENTLY SOME HAVE BEEN ANSWERED VERY PROMPTLY. IN THE PAST, SOME REPLIES CONTAINED INFORMATION THAT APPEARED TO BE INCORRECT, OR UNRELATED TO OUR QUERY. SOME OF THESE ANSWERS WERE RETURNED SEVERAL DAYS AFTER OUR CABLE. THIS DELAY INDICATES TO US THAT THE MESSAGES MAY HAVE BEEN PASSED THROUGH DIFFERENT LEVELS OF BUREACRACY. BUT THIS SYSTEM DOES ENSURE THAT, AT A WORKING LEVEL, THE CUBANS CAN BE ALERTED THAT WE KNOW THERE IS SMUGGLING ACTIVITY GOING ON IN THEIR TERRITORY.

RECENT TRIALS AND REPORTED EXECUTIONS INDICATE THAT SOME CHANGE IN ATTITUDE BY THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT CAUSED THEM TO VIEW THIS PROBLEM DIFFERENTLY, AND TO TAKE IT MORE SERIOUSLY. RECENT TELEX'S SENT BY THE COAST GUARD MAY HAVE PLAYED A SMALL PART IN THIS CHANGE OF ATTITUDE.

COAST GUARD RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM

THE COAST GUARD HAS DONE SEVERAL THINGS TO ADDRESS THIS THREAT. FIRST, WE HAVE FOCUSED INTELLIGENCE EFFORTS ON THIS AREA TO PROVIDE OUR OPERATIONAL COMMANDERS THE BEST INFORMATION POSSIBLE. SECONDLY, THE PACE OF OPERATIONS AND THE NUMBER OF COAST GUARD CUTTERS AND AIRCRAFT OPERATING IN THE AREA HAVE BEEN INCREASED. WE HAVE BEEN WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE STATE AND JUSTICE DEPARTMENTS, AS WELL AS WITH THE OTHER FEDERAL INTERDICTION AGENCIES, TO COORDINATE OUR EFFORTS TO MAXIMUM EFFECT AGAINST THE SMUGGLERS, AND TO ENSURE THAT THE COAST GUARD PRESENTS AN ACCURATE U.S. GOVERNMENT POSITION IN DEALING WITH THE BORDER GUARD. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME POSITIVE RESULTS IN THIS AREA.

ON 14 JULY 1989, THE CUBAN BORDER GUARD RESPONDED TO ONE OF OUR TELEXS THAT THEY WOULD BE WILLING TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST SMUGGLERS IF THEY ARE GIVEN TIMELY NOTIFICATION. THE COAST GUARD, ALONG WITH SEVERAL FEDERAL AGENCIES, IS STUDYING THIS POSITION TO SEE IF WE CAN WORK TOWARD THIS END. WE ARE ALSO CAUTIOUS BECAUSE OF THE WIDELY REPORTED DOUBTS BY MANY FORMER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AS TO THE SINCERITY OF THE CUBANS AT STOPPING THIS PROBLEM.

REGARDLESS OF THE ACTUAL SINCERITY OF THE CUBANS, THE COAST GUARD IS COMMITTED TO COUNTERING THE THREAT WITH ALL THE MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL. WE WILL WATCH CLOSELY TO SEE IF THE SMUGGLING PATTERNS SHIFT. WE EXPECT THEY WILL IF THE SMUGGLERS ARE DENIED ACCESS TO THE COVER OF CUBAN AIRSPACE AND TERRITORIAL SEAS. IF

THEY SHIFT, WE WILL MOVE WITH THEM AND TRY TO DENY THEM A NEW SANCTUARY.

ONE RECENT SUCCESSFUL CASE IN THIS REGION IS WORTH NOTING; ON 13 JULY 1989, AT ABOUT 0700, THE U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTER SEAHAWK BOARDED AND SEIZED THE 32 FOOT FISHING VESSEL MOHIGAN TOO, IN THE OLD BAHAMA CHANNEL, APPROXIMATELY 30 MILES NORTH OF CUBA. ON BOARD WERE 1089 POUNDS OF COCAINE. THE COCAINE HAD BEEN AIRDROPPED FROM A SMUGGLER AIRCRAFT THAT FLEW NEAR, BUT NOT OVER CUBA. THIS MAY INDICATE THAT THE WORD OF THE TRIALS AND EXECUTIONS, AS WELL AS THE THREATS OF SHOOTING DOWN SMUGGLERS BY CUBA, MAY BE REACHING THE SMUGGLING CARTELS. THE OUTLOOK FOR MORE SUCCESSES IS BOLSTERED BY THE ADDITION OF THE FOLLOWING INTERDICTION RESOURCES IN THE REGION:

- TWO ADDITIONAL E-2C AIRCRAFT TRANSFERRED FROM CUSTOMS
- ADDITION OF THE GEORGETOWN LAND-BASED AEROSTAT
- DELIVERY OF THE FIFTH SEA-BASED AEROSTAT TO THE SEVENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT
- INCREASED INTELLIGENCE SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY
- INCREASED DETECTION RESOURCES PROVIDED BY DOD (JTF4)

I WOULD BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS AT THIS TIME.