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United States
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**TESTIMONY OF
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**ON
“ILLEGAL, UNREGULATED, AND UNREPORTED (IUU) FISHING”**

**BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, & TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE, FISHERIES, AND COAST GUARD**

SEPTEMBER 18, 2018

Good afternoon Chairman Sullivan, Ranking Member Baldwin, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the Coast Guard’s role, authorities, capabilities, capacities, and recent experiences to deter, prevent, and enforce rules against Illegal, Unregulated, and Unreported (IUU) fishing within areas of U.S. jurisdiction, on the high seas, and in cooperation with partner nations.

Safeguarding living marine resources is vital to U.S. economic interests, and is an enduring Coast Guard mission. Beginning with 19th Century protection of the Bering Sea fur seal herds, and continuing through the post-World War II expansion of global fishing fleets, the Coast Guard has embraced and met its role as the principal federal at-sea law enforcement agency for the protection of U.S. living marine resources. Today, the Coast Guard maintains a law enforcement presence within our Nation’s Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); the largest in the world. Protection of the fisheries inside our EEZ is essential to the long-term health of vital fish stocks, being both an environmental and an economic concern. This is not just about holding the U.S. fishing industry accountable to U.S. laws; we provide a critical deterrent from foreign poachers targeting U.S. fish stocks.

However, IUU fishing activity is not just a national issue. The efficiency of contemporary fishing vessels has made strong management and enforcement of fisheries even more important. Fishing activity that does not respect rules adopted at either the national or international level threatens the sustainability of worldwide fish stocks and marine ecosystems, and adversely affects coastal communities by distorting the market and jeopardizing the economic survival of those whose livelihoods depend upon local fisheries. Actors engaged in IUU fishing often exploit the gaps between governance structures and operate in areas where there is little or no effective enforcement presence.

Coast Guard efforts to deter and combat IUU fishing bridge the Service's maritime security and stewardship goals. We partner with the Department of State (DoS), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), remote island nations in the Western Pacific Ocean, North Pacific Partners, and nations along the Atlantic Coast of Africa to combat IUU fishing across the world's oceans.

These goals are driven by national policy, laws (such as the *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act*), and international ocean governance structures (such as U.S. membership within international Regional Fishery Management Organizations (RFMOs)). RFMOs have proven to be effective, critical tools in managing fisheries resources beyond areas of national jurisdiction. For example, the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC), one of the first RFMOs in the world to employ a fully-developed boarding and inspection protocol for high seas enforcement based on the United Nations (UN) Fish Stocks Agreement, has produced a level of governance and cooperation for long-term resource management that was previously not feasible. The Coast Guard is proud to have been involved in the development and negotiation of the protocol, and as a leader in its continuing implementation. Enforcement at the outer reaches of the U.S. EEZ, and within high seas areas managed by RFMOs, is a mission largely conducted by Coast Guard offshore assets. The Coast Guard's aviation and offshore recapitalization program ensures that the service will continue to have the capability and capacity necessary to conduct these critical missions which require significant demands of time and distance, and are often impacted by challenging weather conditions. Since 2008 in the area managed under WCPFC, the Coast Guard has conducted more than 230 high seas boardings and inspections, issuing violations to 66 vessels. To date, in fiscal year 2018 alone, the Coast Guard conducted more than 39 boardings, documenting violations on 25 vessels.

Likewise, Coast Guard cutter patrols in support of the UN General Assembly resolution 46/215, which bans the use of large-scale high seas drift nets, also provides IUU fishing deterrence. This summer a Coast Guard cutter, while deployed in support of the annual Operation North Pacific Guard, and operating with support from assets and personnel from multiple partner nations, including China, Japan, Canada, Republic of Korea, and Russia, intercepted the Chinese fishing vessel RUN DA, which was carrying more than 80 tons of illegal catch resulting from high seas drift net fishing. Notably, the Coast Guard cooperated closely with Chinese officials to turn over the vessel, crew, and catch for case adjudication. The Coast Guard looks forward to continuing to lead the global fight against IUU fishing through its participation in a multitude of RFMOs.

Estimates of IUU activity vary, but at least one study found, based on regional surveys, global IUU catch may be valued in the tens of billions of dollars each year. These figures demonstrate the lucrative nature of this activity, and the attraction for transnational criminal organizations, menacing non-state actors, and foreign players to be linked to IUU activity and gray zone operations that may increase regional instability and maritime disorder. The Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to combat these destabilizing forces and uphold the rule of law through our role as a member of the intelligence community, our specialized capabilities, robust bilateral maritime agreements, and our law enforcement authorities. The myriad tools available through our intragovernmental partners position the United States as a global leader who can strengthen the international fisheries enforcement regime, and stop maritime threats to our national interest.

The more we strengthen the sovereignty of other nations, the greater their ability to resist foreign activity that negatively targets their economic resources.

In conclusion, the Coast Guard is an active and effective leader in the global effort to combat IUU fishing, and will continue to work closely with the DoS, NOAA, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), industry, and international partners, to achieve national and international objectives for managing sustainable fisheries worldwide, and for reducing the IUU fishing threat.

The world's oceans contain shared resources, and therefore require an internationally cooperative approach toward their conservation and management. In the face of increasing challenges to global food security and the growing demand for marine resources, the U.S. Coast Guard stands ready to confront IUU fishing to ensure the long-term strategic and economic viability of fish stocks that are fished by U.S. fishers. In doing so, we can increase Maritime Domain Awareness on the high seas, and more effectively respond to a range of transnational threats; upholding global order in the maritime domain and asserting American influence through presence.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.