

U. S. Department of  
Homeland Security

United States  
Coast Guard



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**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

**U. S. COAST GUARD**

**STATEMENT OF**

**VADM PAUL F. ZUKUNFT**

**ON THE**

**NOMINATION OF PAUL F. ZUKUNFT**

**TO BE COMMANDANT OF THE U.S. COAST GUARD**

**BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,**

**SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION**

**U.S. SENATE**

**APRIL 8, 2014**

## **Introduction**

Good afternoon, Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Thune and distinguished members of the Committee. It is a privilege to appear before you today. I am humbled by the opportunity and grateful for the confidence of President Obama and Secretary Johnson in nominating me to be the 25th Commandant of the United States Coast Guard. I would also like to thank Admiral Bob Papp, our current Commandant, for the opportunity to serve as the Coast Guard's Pacific Area Commander.

In my nearly 37 years in the Coast Guard, I have had the privilege of serving alongside a remarkable team of dedicated public servants. I have held command in nearly every pay grade, in addition to leading the front-line response to the largest oil spill in U.S. history. I have responded to mass migrations in the Caribbean, interdicted drugs on the high seas, and saved commercial fishermen in the Bering Sea. These experiences have taught me the importance of decisive action in harsh conditions, and have also prepared me to serve as Commandant. I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss my priorities and objectives, as well as to provide a brief overview of how, if confirmed, I will lead the Service.

## **Overview of the Coast Guard**

The United States Coast Guard is America's maritime first responder. This year will mark our 224th year of protecting those on the sea, protecting the nation from threats delivered by sea, and protecting the sea itself. With important authorities for maritime safety, security, and environmental protection, today's Coast Guard is a versatile, adaptive organization that provides tremendous service to the public. Every day, Coast Guard operations include search and rescue, safeguarding and facilitating maritime commerce, protecting against and preparing to respond to maritime acts of terrorism, interdicting drug and migrant smugglers, enforcing fisheries laws, responding to oil and hazardous material spills, maintaining aids to navigation, screening commercial ships and crews entering U.S. ports, inspecting U.S.-flagged vessels, examining cargo containers, investigating marine accidents, training international partners, credentialing merchant mariners, and supporting defense operations. These critical functions promote environmental stewardship while keeping our Nation secure and economy vibrant.

America is a maritime nation. More than 90 percent of all U.S. trade enters or leaves this nation through our ports and waterways as part of the global supply chain. With broad responsibility for maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship, the Coast Guard's work is a fundamental part of security, resilience, and economic growth throughout the nation and the world. Across the nation, the Coast Guard is on watch in our ports, along our coasts, on our major rivers and the Great Lakes, and far offshore with an agile mix of aircraft, cutters, small boats, and shore-based units which are crewed by highly trained, proficient, and motivated Coast Guard men and women. We are locally based, nationally deployed, and globally connected.

## Vision for the Future

The Coast Guard's success is made possible by the personal support of the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), comprehensive collaboration with other DHS components, and unity of effort across all levels of our Service. Under the leadership of Secretary Johnson, the Department has five enduring missions:

- Preventing terrorism and enhancing security;
- Securing and managing our borders;
- Enforcing and administering our immigration laws;
- Safeguarding and securing cyberspace; and
- Ensuring resilience to disasters.

I am fully committed to these priorities. If confirmed, I will work tirelessly with the Administration, DHS, Congress, and our interagency partners to continue pursuing excellence in these missions.

The maritime operating environment is increasingly dynamic and complex. We are facing adaptive transnational criminal organizations that, if left unchecked, will erode maritime governance, rule of law, and regional stability along maritime frontiers. The threat of a cyber attack on critical maritime infrastructure is real and growing. Meanwhile, international maritime trade is on the rise and competition for dwindling fish stocks and natural resources threaten the sovereignty of remote corners of our Exclusive Economic Zones. While it is impossible to predict when the next natural or manmade disaster such as Super Storm Sandy, Hurricane Katrina, or BP Oil Spill will occur, the Coast Guard stands ready to surge forces to uphold homeland security objectives while mitigating the impact of a disaster and facilitating recovery.

I believe that in order to meet current and future mission requirements, the Coast Guard must continually and efficiently build upon our network of joint service, international, federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial partnerships while maintaining dynamic and transparent interactions with stakeholders in the private sector. If confirmed, I am committed to ensuring that we leverage the Maritime Operational Threat Response protocols, memorandums of agreement, bilateral agreements and treaties, combined operating guidelines, and DHS policies to instill unity of effort in planning and executing maritime operations for safety and security. We must emphasize and demonstrate proficiency in the Incident Command System as the universal language among first responders for establishing unity of effort and coordinating operations during crises. Finally, it is imperative we exploit existing and emerging technologies, such as unmanned aerial systems, to bolster operational effectiveness and efficiency.

If confirmed, I will continue to have the Coast Guard maintain operational focus on search and rescue, illicit narcotics and human trafficking interdiction, illegal fisheries enforcement, maritime homeland security, preparedness, prevention, and crisis response. We will promote the efficient flow of legitimate commerce while protecting and securing American interests across the global supply chain. Our efforts will enhance the ability of our Nation to manage maritime risks by strengthening our layered defense, addressing threats as early as possible, and bolstering a system that can prevent and respond to disruptions caused by natural and manmade disasters.

## **Sustaining Operational Excellence**

Sound fiscal management will underpin Coast Guard and DHS operational planning and execution over the course of the next four years. I believe we must lead decisively to continue delivering critical services to the public. As our missions grow more complex and competencies more specialized, we must continually assess the proficiency of our forces and resist short-term measures that might weaken the Coast Guard of the future. I am committed to executing front-line operations in a manner that maintains the requisite experience among our junior members who will be our senior leaders of tomorrow. Likewise, we must critically assess and measure the readiness of our platforms and resources, and eliminate inefficiencies that detract from readiness.

The condition and serviceability of the Coast Guard's surface fleet, maintaining our air assets, and the projected timelines to replace these assets necessitate continued investment in major recapitalization programs. In order to operate efficiently and to ensure our workforce has the tools they need to do their jobs, we are acquiring new National Security Cutters, and Fast Response Cutters, while concurrently performing significant depot level maintenance projects on Medium Endurance Cutters. Our Medium Endurance Cutter fleet is approaching the half century mark, making these vessels increasingly expensive to maintain and operate. Cost control and best business practices are essential on our part. We must leverage commonality of systems among DHS and Department of Defense partners to the maximum extent possible. The next critical phase of modernization is the development of the Offshore Patrol Cutter. And if confirmed, I am committed to working with DHS, the Administration, and the Congress to ensure we can achieve the Coast Guard's critical recapitalization needs in an affordable and efficient manner.

Moreover, as stewards of public funds, the Coast Guard must stay the course in sustaining a clean audit opinion while continually infusing efficiencies across all lines of mission support and execution. In 2013, the Coast Guard achieved the first clean unqualified audit opinion in our history, and we were the first Armed Service to do so. We will continue to make the most out of every dollar we receive to care for our people, and give them the ships, aircraft, training, and shore facilities they need to do the jobs that the American people have asked of them.

## **Leading the Workforce**

If confirmed, I look forward to working with each of you to continuously improve front-line service to the public. I especially thank you for your personal commitment to our workforce and their families who represent the Coast Guard's most valuable asset - our people. The men and women of the Coast Guard are the heart and soul of our Service. The Coast Guard consists of 42,380 active duty uniformed personnel and 7,861 Reservists, 32,633 volunteer auxiliarists, and 6,816 civilians - some 89,690 people engaged in the work of our Service. These dedicated men and women enable front-line success across our numerous and diverse statutory mandates.

Sexual assault is a scourge among all of the armed services, including the Coast Guard. As the current Operational Commander for more than 13,000 men and women, I have taken proactive measures that have been hailed as best practices to drive this abhorrent behavior out of the Service.

This includes highly interactive workshops that have elicited those who have been assaulted to submit unrestricted reports; a climate that engenders open reporting while protecting survivors against retaliation; and uncompromising standards of accountability against those who do not ascribe to our core values –*Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty*. If confirmed, I will continue to emphasize a sustainable Sexual Assault Prevention and Response program focused heavily on prevention and accountability, while ensuring the advocacy, support, and resiliency of our survivors. I am committed to developing clear measures of effectiveness, and a climate and culture befitting our Nation’s trust and confidence.

The Coast Guard is analogous to a woven rope that grows stronger with each strand of diversity, culture, experience, and point of view. While we have made great strides in growing a more diverse workforce, much more remains to be done in order to reflect the public we serve. If confirmed, I will take measures to recruit a more diverse pool of candidates at our accession points, develop strategies to improve retention, and continue to uphold the meritocracy of our advancement and promotion processes. We must create a workplace that offers every individual the opportunity to attain their personal goals, grow within the service, and fully contribute to the accomplishment of our missions. Diversity enables improved mission performance and is critical to operational excellence and efficiency.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, I again offer my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Admiral Bob Papp who has served the Coast Guard with highest distinction as the 24<sup>th</sup> Commandant and throughout his four decade career. He began his tenure as Commandant in the middle of the worst environmental disaster in United States history. Yet, as Admiral Papp stated in his confirmation hearing, “Serving our country is more than a job – it is a calling.” He met that calling head on and his leadership poised the Coast Guard for the challenges ahead.

There is no way to predict the next major crisis, but our operating environment is profoundly harsh and unforgiving. The Coast Guard will succeed, as it has for over two centuries, because of our skilled, courageous, and dedicated workforce. If confirmed, I will ensure the Coast Guard remains “Semper Paratus – Always Ready” to serve the public and our partners in a manner that embodies our core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I look forward to your questions.