

U. S. Department of
Homeland Security

United States
Coast Guard



Commandant
United States Coast Guard

2100 Second Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20593-0001
Staff Symbol: G-ICA
Phone: (202) 366-4280
FAX: (202) 366-7124

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

REAR ADMIRAL KENNETH T. VENUTO

ON THE

**ROLE OF THE COAST GUARD RESERVE IN MARITIME
HOMELAND SECURITY AND HOMELAND DEFENSE**

BEFORE THE

COMMISSION ON THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES

MAY 3, 2006

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Commission. It is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the role of the Coast Guard Reserve in Maritime Homeland Security and National Defense.

As you know, the Coast Guard is one of the Armed Forces of the United States with a long and distinguished history of service at home and abroad as a military, maritime, multi-mission service. Because of its mix of military and civil law enforcement authorities, the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned to serve as the Lead Federal Agency for Maritime Homeland Security, while simultaneously acting as a supporting agency to the Department of Defense (DOD) for National Defense. Founded in 1941, the Coast Guard Reserve is the force multiplier for the Coast Guard, due in part to the complete integration of our Selected Reserve Force into active component units over the last decade. Over 85 percent of our 8,100-member Selected Reserve (SELRES) Force is directly assigned to active Coast Guard shore units, where Reservists hone mobilization skills through classroom instruction and on-the-job training with their active-duty counterparts. The remainder of our Selected Reserve Force is dedicated primarily to supporting Defense Operations. The majority are assigned to our eight deployable Port Security Units (PSUs), which are predominantly staffed by Reservists and whose principal mission is to support the Combatant Commanders in strategic ports of debarkation overseas. The rest are assigned to DOD units, such as the Navy's Naval Coastal Warfare Squadrons, or to Combatant Commanders' staffs.

Due to the success of integration, our Reserve Force responded magnificently to the attacks of September 2001 and the operations that have followed. Since 2001, cumulative recalls of Coast Guard Reservists under Title 10 of the U.S. Code have totaled over 6,800, with Reservists serving at home as part of the Coast Guard's Maritime Homeland Security mission and overseas in direct support of the Combatant Commanders. The majority of those recalled served domestically as members of Coast Guard units safeguarding ports and waterways alongside 95,000 miles of U.S. coastline or enforcing security zones in strategic outload ports on the Atlantic, Pacific and Gulf Coasts where supplies and equipment for combat forces begin their journey overseas. Coast Guard Reservists also have served overseas since September 2001 as members of Port Security Units operating in Iraq, Kuwait and Bahrain, and as individuals supporting Coast Guard units in the region, including cutters under U.S. Fifth Fleet operational control. At the height of IRAQI FREEDOM combat operations in early 2003, about half the approximately 1,250 Coast Guard personnel deployed overseas were Reservists.

Since Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM, when approximately 10 percent of our Selected Reserve Force was called to duty, we have attempted to optimize our force through careful analysis of the lessons learned each time we mobilized Reservists. Since September 2001, when we embarked on the largest mobilization of Coast Guard Reservists since World War II, we have redoubled our efforts to capture and capitalize on those lessons learned to further improve readiness and ensure a Reserve Force with the right people, skills and training for the missions of the 21st century. We examined our systems for recruiting, training, mobilizing and demobilizing Reservists to identify and close readiness gaps. More significantly, we undertook a comprehensive review of the Coast Guard Reserve that resulted in our Commandant, Admiral Thomas Collins, issuing a policy statement that embodies the three core strategic functions of the Reserve Force: *Maritime Homeland Security, Domestic and expeditionary support to National Defense, and Domestic man-made or natural disaster response and recovery.* The individual competencies required to support these core functions

center on boat operations, contingency planning and response, expeditionary warfare, law enforcement, marine safety and port security, with appropriate force levels invested in the administrative and logistical support our Reserve Force requires.

None of this represents a radical change for the Coast Guard Reserve, but rather an affirmation of the vital role our Reservists play as the Coast Guard's ready surge force. One key component of that ready surge force is availability and accessibility of individuals for mobilization. As with members of the other Reserve Components, our people are subject to involuntary mobilization under Title 10 for national security contingencies. Unlike members of the other Reserve Components, Coast Guard Reservists can also be involuntarily mobilized by the Secretary of Homeland Security under 14 USC 712 for up to 30 days at a time for domestic contingencies, including natural and man-made disasters and terrorist attacks. The unique authority provided under Title 14 has been used over a dozen times since the 1970s to mobilize Coast Guard Reservists for a wide range of emergencies ranging from the 1980 Mariel Boat Lift to floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters.

Most recently, that Title 14 authority was used last autumn by the Secretary of Homeland Security to recall approximately 700 members of the Coast Guard Reserve for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, mobilizing a ready force for rescue and recovery operations in New Orleans and the stricken areas of the Gulf Coast. In all, members of the Coast Guard Reserve mobilized under Title 14 for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita performed nearly 20,000 person-days of duty in support of Coast Guard rescue and recovery operations. The majority of them served alongside their active-duty counterparts as individual augmentees. For instance, several Reservists assigned as Coast Guard Investigative Service special agents were mobilized to augment active-duty and civilian agents deployed to New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Gulfport, where they provided armed security for senior officials and personnel disbursing cash to Coast Guard members. In addition to individual augmentees, the Coast Guard also activated two Port Security Units to provide physical security in New Orleans and Gulfport and to aid in distribution of relief supplies, which is a departure from their normal mission of deploying overseas in support of Defense Operations and a testament to the ability of our Reservists to surge when and where needed to plus-up Coast Guard forces responding to an emergency. Even to this day, Coast Guard reservists continue to serve on active duty as part of the hurricane recovery effort.

The Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2006, which has reported out of conference and is now awaiting floor action, contains language that expand the Secretary of Homeland Security's Title 14 recall authority to permit mobilization of Coast Guard Reservists "to aid in prevention of an imminent serious natural or manmade disaster, accident, catastrophe, or act of terrorism," would significantly enhance our ability and mitigate major natural disasters and thwart terrorist attacks by enabling us to bring Coast Guard Reservists on line before disaster strikes. Other language included in this bill will, if enacted into law, also extend the limits on the period of recall to not more than 60 days in any four-month period and to not more than 120 days in any two-year period. This would significantly enhance our ability to mitigate major natural disasters and thwart terrorist attacks by enabling us to bring Coast Guard Reservists on line before disaster strikes. We urge the House and the Senate to adopt the conference report expeditiously.

A major component of the Coast Guard's success in responding to disasters such as Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is our decentralized command and control structure. The authority and

responsibility to move forces, including Reservists, establish response readiness levels and direct operations is vested in the regional District and Area Commanders. This provides the most direct oversight of operations at the field level and avoids delays caused by unnecessary and time-consuming bureaucratic processes. However, the most important factor contributing to the Coast Guard's effectiveness in disaster response is the fact that our forces are engaged in this type of mission on a daily basis. As the nation's maritime first responder, Coast Guard men and women, active and reserve, plan for, train and execute rescue missions every day.

The Coast Guard also possesses several unique features that help to integrate its efforts with those of the DOD, other Federal agencies, the National Guard, and state and local authorities. Because the Coast Guard is at all times a branch of the military, our communications systems, planning processes, personnel training and even our command structures have much in common with the DOD Services. Coast Guard commanders can be either supported or supporting commanders for military operations, and we have extensive experience working in and with DOD Joint Task Force Headquarters. This allows for easy integration of forces and unity of effort when working together during major catastrophes.

In addition to our work with DOD, the Coast Guard works on a daily basis with other Federal, state and local partners. The Service's Ports, Waterways and Coastal Security mission requires the Coast Guard to interact daily with state and local law enforcement and emergency response organizations, exercising command structures and building the trust critical to effectively execute an emergency response. Coast Guard Captains of the Port provide a critical link through Local Emergency Planning Committees, Area Maritime Security Committees, Harbor Safety Committees, Area Planning Committees, Regional Response Teams and other venues that allow the Coast Guard to build close relationships with key partners in disaster response. Because of the integrated nature of the Coast Guard, individual Reservists play a key role in these efforts. Their dual status as Coast Guard members and residents of their local communities frequently enables them to leverage organizational and personal relationships that yield immeasurable benefits during a crisis situation.

The Coast Guard has built on these important relationships to improve our emergency response capability by actively working to implement the National Response Plan (NRP). Since 1996, the Coast Guard has trained thousands of personnel, including Reservists, on the Incident Command System, a central component of the National Response Plan. Since the NRP was issued last year, the Coast Guard updated its full range of contingency plans to reflect its guiding principles. Additionally, the Coast Guard has realigned and combined operational field units to provide full integration of emergency response capabilities and directly support staffing for Joint Field Offices, when those entities are in place.

As a military, maritime, multi-mission Service, the Coast Guard has demonstrated its ability to prepare for and respond to a wide range of contingencies, including natural disasters and the threat of terrorist attack, while continuing to execute more routine missions, such as maritime law enforcement, counter drug operations, and search-and-rescue. Our ability to meet these challenges is directly linked to having a well-trained, ready Reserve Force with the right people with the right skills in the right places to surge in support of an agile Coast Guard response along the spectrum of contingencies. In short, our Reservists help make this happen. Thank you once again for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.