

Real Border Security: Investments in the Coast Guard Provide Mobile and Agile Border Security at Half the Cost of a Static Southern Border Wall

In Fiscal Year 2017, the Coast Guard seized at sea 223 metric tons of cocaine and detained over 600 criminal smugglers in over 25 separate interdictions – a record-breaking year for drug interdiction. The reality is that Coast Guard seizures at sea account for more than 50% of drug seizures by the US government. In other words, the CG interdicts more drugs than all other U.S. law enforcement combined. Despite this outstanding mission performance, the Service admits that due to shortages in cutters, aircraft and other assets, the Service can only put “steel on target” on approximately 20 percent of all potential targets identified by actionable intelligence.

Investments made now to increase Coast Guard operating capabilities offshore potentially offers far greater returns than investing in a static border wall. For example, if the Coast Guard were able to increase its rate of drug interdictions by 5 percent, the Service could seize an additional 11.2 metric tons of illegal drugs. If the interdiction rate were increased by 10 percent, an additional 22 metric tons of illicit contraband would be eliminated from reaching U.S. streets. Moreover, as a multi-mission military maritime law enforcement agency, investments made to improve Coast Guard drug interdiction capabilities have the collateral benefit on enhancing Coast Guard operational readiness and response capabilities in all other mission areas, such as search and rescue and other law enforcement.

Several practicable, cost-effective investments could be undertaken immediately were the Congress to appropriate the funds. All of these options would provide the Coast Guard better maritime domain awareness and allow it to increase the amount of smuggling activities it could target. Please note that all of these costs are just the acquisition cost and do not include the follow-on costs of manning and operating the assets over the long-term.

- Additional Coast Guard HC-130J aircraft to provide consistent aerial coverage for border security operations, as maritime domain awareness is key to effective targeting. In addition to direct border security operations, these aircraft also provide deployable heavy lift capability to respond to contingency operations, such as mass migrations or other border security surge events. **~\$95 million/plane**
- Land-based unmanned aircraft to conduct surveillance and monitoring of the maritime border, enabling the identification of targets of interest and assessment of disaster damage along 3000 miles of coastal waters surrounding Florida, Texas, Puerto Rico and southern California. **~\$30 million/asset**
- Additional Coast Guard helicopters conduct direct border security support operations including Land Based Airborne Use of Force (AUF). Aircraft could be stationed at Air Stations in California, Florida, Texas, and Puerto Rico to provide necessary interdiction capabilities and deter migrant and drug smuggling activities along the border. **~\$20 million/aircraft**
- Establish a second Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) on the west coast to mirror the one in Jacksonville, Florida. Coast Guard Airborne Use of

Force sharpshooters are critical to successful endgame interdictions of migrant and drug smugglers. Facility cost unknown. May include additional aircraft at **\$20 million each**.

- Establish Coast Guard Station Rio Vista to patrol navigable portions of the Rio Grande and provide essential border security where a land wall is not possible. **~\$35 million**
- Establish forward operating base for Coast Guard Fast Response Cutters. Base could be established at the southern end of Texas or in Central America (on either coast) significantly reducing the distance vessel will need to travel to receive support, enabling enhanced border security focus and longer patrols to mitigate threats far from the US border. **~\$25-\$100 million depending upon location.**
- Invest in Coast Guard cybersecurity, information technology, and communications. The Coast Guard operates on DOD networks and uses DOD communications platforms but due to it falling under DHS, it does not receive the same funding and support as other Armed Forces. This investment would enable mission critical operations and ensure reliable communications between Coast Guard assets and with DOD assets. **Scalable \$50-\$200 million**
- Additional National Security Cutters (NSCs). These vessels are Coast Guard's most capable assets, with the endurance, intelligence, and end-game capabilities to provide unparalleled operational effectiveness across all missions, including border security, drug interdiction, and national defense. Due to contract constraints and the current status of the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) acquisition, it is unlikely that OPC production could be accelerated. However, NSC production is ongoing and could be accelerated if funding were provided. **~\$790 million/vessel (includes missionization and shore side infrastructure).**
- Additional Fast Response Cutters (FRCs). These patrol vessels are the Coast Guard's workhorse for border security operations of the U.S. coast. Additional vessels would allow the Coast Guard to provide better coverage of the border at all times. **~\$75 million/vessel (includes missionization and shore side infrastructure)**

The table below provides a capsule summary of these investments. Investments in the Coast Guard that will provide flexible, mobile and adaptive border security can be made for half the \$5.7 billion cost requested by the Trump administration for a static border wall.

Example: For less than half the cost of the wall, Congress could make significant investments in the Coast Guard that would pay huge dividends for years to come.

Investment	# Assets	\$K
HC-130J Aircraft	6	\$ 570,000
Land-Based Unmanned Aircraft	3	\$ 90,000
Accelerate Ship-Based Unmanned Aircraft		\$ 20,000
Helicopters for Land-Based Airborne Use of Force	8	\$ 160,000
West Coast Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron		\$ 200,000
Boat Station on the Rio Grande		\$ 35,000
FRC Forward Operating Base in South TX		\$ 25,000
FRC Forward Operating Base in Central America on Each Coast		\$ 200,000
Cybersecurity		\$ 200,000
National Security Cutter	1	\$ 790,000
Fast Response Cutters	6	\$ 450,000
	Total	\$ 2,740,000