



**TESTIMONY OF  
VICE ADMIRAL PAUL F. THOMAS  
DEPUTY COMMANDANT FOR MISSION SUPPORT**

**ON  
REBUILDING COAST GUARD INFRASTRUCTURE  
TO SUSTAIN AND ENHANCE MISSION CAPACITY**

**BEFORE THE  
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND MARITIME TRANSPORTATION**

**NOVEMBER 16, 2021**

Good afternoon Chairman Carbajal, Ranking Member Gibbs, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify today and thank you for your continued support of the United States Coast Guard.

The Coast Guard is a global maritime Service that provides capabilities to meet diverse and expansive national security needs. Possessing unique authorities that allow us to execute our organic missions, the Coast Guard operates daily with partner nations, local, state, and other Federal agencies to carry out law enforcement, regulatory, and emergency response missions. We maintain over 45,000 aids to navigation and oversee the Marine Transportation System, which accounts for more than \$5.4 trillion annually in American economic activity and supports over 30 million jobs. Additionally, as a member of the U.S. Armed Forces, the Coast Guard supports Department of Defense operations by providing Joint Force capabilities for the Homeland and around the globe.

The demand signal for the Coast Guard has never been higher. The Coast Guard serves on the front lines for a Nation whose economic prosperity and national security are inextricably linked to its maritime interests. In this capacity, the Coast Guard protects and defends more than 95,000 miles of U.S. coastline and inland waterways, saves thousands of lives per year, and safeguards America's 3.4 million square nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone, the world's largest. Our cutters and aircraft are operating around the globe to protect American interests. But to effectively and efficiently meet the increase in operational demands, the Coast Guard must rely upon a robust mission support element that ensures our men and women are ready to answer the call. Shore infrastructure is a vital component of that mission support because every Coast Guard mission begins and ends at a shore facility.

Managing the Department of Homeland Security's largest shore asset portfolio, the Coast Guard's sustainment of both new and aging facilities in a fiscally constrained environment presents unique challenges and requires strategic tradeoffs. We are making incredible headway on recapitalizing our operational assets such as cutters and aircraft, but that progress requires making hard decisions about our shore infrastructure.

As the Coast Guard modernizes into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must ensure that our infrastructure, like our assets and people, are literally prepared to weather any storm. As we work to build infrastructure resiliency, we must acknowledge this is not limited to only piers and buildings, but also servers, towers, and sensors that constitute our IT infrastructure system.

The Coast Guard is committed to ensuring the safety and resiliency of our facilities to meet mission demands. Based on the nature of our missions, Coast Guard facilities are located in areas prone to hurricanes, flooding, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. The Nation's reliance upon the Coast Guard to serve as a first responder after those disasters, underscores the importance of our facilities remaining ready for operations. Since the last Congressional hearing on the Service's shore infrastructure in 2019, the Coast Guard has proactively addressed climate related risks by engineering our new construction to be environmentally resilient. In alignment with the Department of Homeland Security Risk Management and Resilience Framework, the Coast Guard is working to identify critical missions and infrastructure at risk, assess vulnerabilities and liabilities, and determine solutions to execute resilience readiness. All new shore infrastructure projects follow configuration standards for new building design and construction, using updated International Building Codes to include seismic, wind loading, and flood resistant design and construction. For the Coast Guard, resilient infrastructure is not just simply maintenance and construction, it is about building shore plants that will enable the Coast Guard to fulfill its statutory responsibilities while protecting National interests.

Environmental stewardship is a hallmark of Coast Guard operations and a vital piece of addressing shore infrastructure needs. We are on the leading edge of integrating resilient and energy efficient projects and account for 92 percent of all facility energy reductions across the Department since 2003. We also lead the Department in leveraging Energy Performance Contracts, resulting in energy savings, onsite resilient energy generation, replacement of leaking roofs with solar power roofs, and the ability of sites to shelter-in-place while remaining operationally ready. As an example, in 2020, the Coast Guard Academy completed an infrastructure project funded through energy cost savings to increase the resilience and efficiency of the campus' 87-year old infrastructure, resulting in a 43 percent reduction in energy consumption, and a 15 percent reduction in water consumption. Despite these achievements, the Coast Guard continues to operate in and from aging and degraded shore facilities, over half of which are beyond their service life. When funded for critical repairs and recapitalization, the Service rebuilds to 21<sup>st</sup> century resiliency standards that ensure the Coast Guard can respond in crisis.

In addition to traditional shore facilities, the Coast Guard is also investing in modernized, reliable, and resilient IT infrastructure. In 2020, the Commandant announced the Service would embark on a "Tech Revolution," designed to bring the Coast Guard into the 21<sup>st</sup> century by empowering our people with reliable, mobile, and integrated technology. With Congress' support, we implemented a structured, "Whole-of-Service" approach to "deliver today's solutions today" and ensure that we have a mission-ready workforce. The 2020 Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided over \$85 million, which the Coast Guard used to make investments towards crucial modernization efforts, from hardware and network upgrades that facilitated remote work and telehealth capabilities, to modern data analytics tools. Additionally, our C5I Service Center is building modern software development infrastructure, to speed the deployment of mobile, secure applications. As we prepare for the future, the Coast Guard must maintain the momentum of the Tech Revolution's emphasis on IT infrastructure by modernizing enterprise network architecture and improving service delivery to government and industry stakeholders.

Currently, the Coast Guard is undergoing the largest recapitalization of its surface fleet since World War II. Our legacy cutters have served admirably but are well past their designed service lives. As we send new assets to sea, we must ensure that the logistics and support infrastructure is in place to sustain mission readiness. In cities like Seattle, Washington; Kodiak, Alaska; and Charleston, South Carolina; the Coast Guard is investing in strategic homeports that will support our modernized assets while taking advantage of commonalities across platforms. By clustering assets, the Coast Guard is able to provide a wider-range of depot-level maintenance and common repair activities necessary to field the assets of the future while reducing costs. We cannot rely on the buildings of the past to achieve the benefits of the future. From piers and runways, to unaccompanied personnel and family housing units, the shore infrastructure investments the Coast Guard is making today will ensure the Service's men and women remain at the highest levels of readiness to answer the Nation's call tomorrow.

As we modernize our fleet, we must also modernize our workforce. We must ensure that our training centers are equitable and capable of providing meaningful skills that translate to the fleet to meet the demands of a more technologically advanced workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the infrastructure limitations of the Coast Guard's sole enlisted accession point, Training Center Cape May, New Jersey. As a result, the Coast Guard recognized the need to accelerate planning for more resilient infrastructure that is capable of continuing recruit throughput necessary for workforce replenishment. Currently, Phase I of this project is undergoing survey and design efforts as current barracks and classroom facilities are in desperate need of recapitalization. As this project progresses, we will continue to add modern facilities that will house and train our future workforce. We are also recapitalizing barracks and industrial support facilities at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy to ensure the Coast Guard's future leaders can learn in a safe, accommodating environment. Additionally, at our training centers in Petaluma, Mobile, and Yorktown, we are building facilities capable of accommodating advanced training aids and simulators for our newest cutters, boats, aircraft, and IT systems.

Like all Federal Agencies operating within the reality of a constrained fiscal environment, the Coast Guard makes strategic tradeoffs each year to prioritize the most critical near-term operations and direct support activities while maintaining momentum on recapitalization efforts for capital assets and infrastructure. Operational facilities like bases, sectors, small boat stations, and aviation facilities, as well as family housing and support facilities are among the projects that we must balance based on mission demands. As we identify infrastructure projects, those determined to be the highest priority are incorporated into the Coast Guard's Annual Budget Submission. Until a few years ago, that budget submission was our only way to communicate infrastructure needs to Congress. However, in 2018, Congress authorized the Coast Guard's annual Unfunded Priorities List and provided the Service an additional medium to highlight vital projects that need our attention. Our Fiscal Year 2022 Unfunded Priorities List includes \$120 million in critical facility improvements to support new cutters, \$131 million in housing, family support, and training facility needs, \$158 million for improvements and recapitalization of operational facilities, and \$19.5 million to support operational assets and maritime commerce. As evident by recent budget and Unfunded Priorities List submissions, the Coast Guard is committed to addressing our shore infrastructure deficiencies.

The Coast Guard must also continue to seek strategic opportunities to divest infrastructure that no longer supports current mission needs. As our assets modernize, we are examining the future of the Service to make informed decisions about force laydown.

In 2021, Congress took a big step and helped us address one of our most pressing operational concerns; housing for our people, by allowing the proceeds from divested property and infrastructure to be reinvested back into Coast Guard unaccompanied personnel and family housing projects. This provides us the flexibility to address deficiencies and motivation to seek divestitures where possible. To date, over \$92 million has been reinvested in critical housing infrastructure that will benefit the work-life balance of our personnel. In doing so, the Service is pursuing an optimal shore facility inventory balance while simultaneously supporting our Service members and their families.

The Coast Guard's ability to address its shore infrastructure backlog would not be possible without the support of Congress. In 2018 and 2019, the Coast Guard completed \$152 million worth of shore infrastructure recapitalization projects, improving the physical condition and resilience of facilities in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, North Carolina, California, Oregon, and Hawaii. We awarded \$73 million in construction contracts for projects in Maine, Virginia, South Carolina, Texas, California, Alaska, and Guam. In 2020 and 2021, that amount more than doubled as the Coast Guard received \$350 million to begin the buildouts of operational hubs in Seattle and Charleston, move the National Capital Region Air Defense Base from Reagan National Airport to Joint Base Andrews, and recapitalize housing for Station Eastport in Maine. Again, much like with our asset recapitalization, the investments in shore infrastructure we are making today will pay dividends for the Nation for decades to come.

Coast Guard shore infrastructure readiness is a critical component of the Service's ability to execute our 11 statutory missions. As the Commandant has stated, "Every Coast Guard mission begins and ends at a shore facility." Your stalwart support of our shore infrastructure needs, and that of the Administration, ensures the Coast Guard will continue to be *Semper Paratus*, Always Ready, to answer the Nation's call.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and for all that you do for the men and women of the United States Coast Guard. I look forward to your questions.