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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

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ON

“NATIONAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF BORDER SECURITY ALONG
THE NORTHERN BORDER”

BEFORE THE

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Introduction

Good morning Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. It is a pleasure to be here today to discuss the Coast Guard's role in the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) charge to secure our nation's northern border. I'm pleased that the committee is concerned about our nation's northern border because it presents a very different set of challenges than those experienced along our southern border.

Every day, thousands of people try to enter our country illegally, many to work and provide a better life for their families. After all, in their home countries, they make only a fraction of what they could make in the United States. Our strong economy creates the demand for these workers, places tremendous pressure at the border and makes our job of securing the border, both at and between the ports of entry, very difficult.

To most effectively secure the border, we must reform our immigration system to relieve this pressure. We need comprehensive immigration reform that increases border security, establishes a robust interior enforcement program, creates a temporary worker program, and addresses the problem of the estimated 11 to 12 million illegal immigrants already in the country.

Maritime Security Challenges Along the Northern Border

Our nation's maritime border with Canada stretches for 2200 miles from the St. Lawrence Seaway to the Boundary Waters. The region encompasses 8 states and 2 Canadian provinces; is home to 32 million people (most crowded along the waterfront); and is all linked together by a common waterway. The Great Lakes contain more shoreline than the U.S. Atlantic, the Pacific & Gulf Coasts combined (which speaks to the challenge of confronting small craft entering the U.S. from Canada at the waters' edge) and 20 percent of earth's surface water - drinking water for 40 million people. The Lakes support the movement of well over 200 million tons of maritime cargo every year (for scale: that's more than the trade of Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore & Norfolk - combined - by nearly 100 million tons). The region produces 50 percent of all U.S. manufacturing output and two thirds of Canada's. Most remarkable of all is the region's U.S./Canadian bi-national trade relationship, which is the single largest trade partnership in world history. \$1.4 billion a day in goods crosses the border, about 40 percent via the Ambassador Bridge alone. Any interruptions to the flow of commerce, whether caused by terrorism or some other event, would have crippling economic impacts on both countries. In some areas, such as Lake Superior and Lake Huron, the border extends many miles into the lake making crossing by small boat difficult. In other areas, such as the Detroit River, St. Clair River, St. Mary's River, and St. Lawrence River, the border is just a few hundreds yards across enabling a crossing by boat in just minutes. During the winter, ice forms creating a "land" bridge which further facilitates border crossings by snowmobile or motor vehicle. Along the Canadian side of the border are several First Indian Nations inhabited by Native Americans. These entities are semi-autonomous regions that demand strong working relationships and dedicated effort to reduce the threat along our northern border. The Great Lakes are also connected to the ocean via the St. Lawrence Seaway, and thus are used as a maritime conveyance for hundreds of foreign flagged, ocean-going vessels that call upon Great Lakes ports.

Not only does our nation's border with Canada pose physical challenges, it poses jurisdictional challenges as well. Unlike search and rescue operations during which the border is transparent, law enforcement operations involve a "solid" border which we cannot ordinarily cross between the ports. This means that on a frequent basis pursuit of suspect vessels must stop at the border. Coast Guard forces respect Canadian territorial sovereignty both as a responsibility under international law and as

an essential aspect of maintaining the trust and confidence necessary to further joint law enforcement operations. A means of bridging this jurisdictional barrier is the Integrated Maritime Security Operation (IMSO), often referred to as “Shiprider,” which allows for cross-border law enforcement operations by Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Coast Guard officers jointly manning each other’s vessels. IMSO operations are discussed in greater detail below.

The movement of persons with possible terrorist connections into the U.S. from Canada is of grave concern to the Coast Guard and all our DHS partners, as well as our Canadian partners, with whom we work well. Although the activities of these groups seem to be primarily focused on raising funds for transfer overseas, often by illegal means, recent events in the Middle East have only heightened concern regarding this threat.

Several of our nation’s most critical pieces of infrastructure link Canada to the U.S. Specifically, the Ambassador Bridge and Detroit/Windsor tunnel, both privately owned, are absolutely vital pieces of infrastructure. The Blue Water Bridge linking Port Huron, MI to Sarnia, ON and the Port Huron and Detroit/Windsor train tunnels are also very important trade links. Ensuring the security of these trade corridors is of major concern for both countries. Without these trade links the auto industry, and many other important industries, would grind to a halt in just a few hours or days due to their reliance on just-in-time inventory.

As Commander of Sector Detroit and Captain of the Port of Detroit, I serve as Federal Maritime Security Coordinator; Search and Rescue (SAR) Mission Coordinator; Officer-in-Charge Marine Inspection; and Federal On-Scene Coordinator. Sector Detroit encompasses U. S. internal waters from Vermillion, OH to Alpena, MI. The command integrates missions to focus on two major operational processes; PREVENTION and RESPONSE, in support of our service’s five fundamental roles: Maritime Safety, Maritime Security, Maritime Mobility, Protection of Natural Resources, and National Defense.

Interagency Planning, Coordination, and Operations

One cannot gain an understanding of Coast Guard operations along the northern border without considering the fact that nearly every Coast Guard mission, if it is to be executed efficiently and effectively, requires some form of cooperation with a sister Canadian agency with a similar mission. Any significant oil spill, security operation, law enforcement action, or search and rescue case generally involves cooperation with Canada. Maintaining close relationships with our Canadian counterparts is an important job of every Sector Commander along our northern border.

Interagency cooperation for border security involves close cooperation between all DHS components, the FBI, State, and county resources through several avenues. Because I’m responsible for the eastern Michigan and northwest Ohio regions, I’ll speak primarily of our efforts in those regions; however, they are analogous along the entire maritime border with Canada.

Both internal inter-agency cooperation and cross-border cooperation and planning take place through a series of teams that function on a regional and local level. Integrated Border Enforcement Teams (IBETs) are composed of both US and Canadian law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The Great Lakes/St. Lawrence Seaway IBETs are Superior, Sault Ste Marie, Detroit/Windsor; Niagara, 1000 Islands, and St. Lawrence Central Valley. In total there are 15 IBET regions along the northern border, 8 of which have a maritime nexus. These teams comprise intelligence and law enforcement specialists from the Coast Guard, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Customs and

Border Protection (CBP) and its CBP Border Patrol (BP), RCMP, Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), and other Federal, State, Provincial, Tribal and local officials. The IBET mission is to enhance integrity and security at the US/Canadian border by identifying, investigating, and interdicting persons and organizations that pose a threat to national security or are engaged in other organized criminal activity. IBETs gather, analyze, and disseminate intelligence across a broad spectrum of law enforcement and security issues. They enhance border security by identifying, investigating, and interdicting persons and organizations that represent a threat to either country. IBETs are dedicated to tracking any potential terrorists and organized crime members and interdicting drug and alien smuggling and any other illegal activity. Working under the IBET are two more regional teams that coordinate joint, multi-agency law enforcement operations along the border. Working on a more regional level to coordinate resources are Joint Operations Teams (JOTs) that identify law enforcement goals, partners, and logistics necessary to plan and execute joint law enforcement operations along the border. JOTs work with Joint Management Teams (JMTs) at the station level to carry out planned operations. A typical operation will involve Coast Guard cutters, Coast Guard small boats, Coast Guard aircraft, CBP Border Patrol vessels, county Sheriff boats working with RCMP, or Ontario Provincial Police vessels to conduct targeted operations in high density smuggling areas.

Another effective avenue of cooperation occurs through the Area Maritime Security Committees. These committees, and their executive bodies, provide the Federal Maritime Security Coordinators (FMSC) with advice on identification and mitigation of threats, serve as a link between law enforcement agencies and ship and marine terminal operators to communicate threat information and change Maritime Security levels (MARSEC) to respond to threats, and assist the FMSC with maintenance of the Area Maritime Security Plan (AMSP). In Detroit, the FBI, Michigan State Police, and the chief of security for the Ambassador Bridge play a vital role in maritime security planning. Ardent Sentry 2006, a Northern Command national security exercise in May, 2006 provided a test of Sector Detroit and Sector Northern New England's AMS Plans and cross border coordination of counter-terrorism operations.

To strengthen our maritime security relationship with Canada, Coast Guard personnel now staff the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway Marine Security Operations Center, an interdepartmental Canadian effort designed to detect and deter threats to security along the northern maritime border. The RCMP operates several of these centers to enhance national security in the maritime realm.

The most exciting and promising avenue for Coast Guard cooperation with our Canadian counterparts is the Integrated Maritime Security Operation (IMSO) program, also called the USCG/RCMP "shiprider" proof of concept. This program was successfully tested in September, 2005 and became a component of maritime security operations for Super Bowl XL in Detroit. The "shiprider" concept of operations calls for each government to cross-designate the other participating law enforcement officers – for the U.S., ICE or CBP will cross-designate RCMP officers as Customs Officers (excepted), and for Canada, RCMP will cross-designate USCG officers as Special Supernumerary Constables. This will allow armed agents from both countries to conduct joint law enforcement operations in both countries' internal waters. Once designated, the RCMP officer has the lead in Canadian waters, and the USCG officer is supporting as directed. The converse is true while in US waters. In essence, the operation renders the border transparent to law enforcement operations removing a major impediment to maritime security along the northern border. Not only does this program bring an incredible increase in operational effectiveness, it comes with very little incremental cost. An IMSO crewed patrol allows each nation to obtain a patrol for the cost of operating one vessel. There is probably no other northern border security initiative that offers as much promise of

effectiveness for such low cost; however, there are no IMSO operations planned as the Canadian government currently to evaluates the program.

Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA): The Foundation of Everything We Do

MDA is a combination of our intelligence and situational awareness and provides a basis for all operational and policy decisions.

INTELLIGENCE:

Field level commanders can never get enough operational, real-time intelligence. The Coast Guard is a relatively recent member of the national intelligence community, but it has worked diligently to rapidly build its intelligence capability. At the Sector level, we are now starting to reap the benefits of this program as it continues to grow. Field Intelligence Support Team (FISTs) members are integrated into the IBETs and FBI Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs), meet regularly with Sector Commanders, and provide a stream of intelligence products.

But relevant, operational intelligence usually only results from investigations involving confidential informants, wire-taps, and other investigative means to penetrate a criminal entity. Coast Guard Investigative Service Agents (CGIS) embedded in JTTFs and partnering with agents from the CBP Border Patrol, ICE, CBP, DEA, and FBI are now producing effective intelligence leads that have resulted in recent drug and currency seizures. Because CGIS agents can engage in a much broader spectrum of law enforcement activity than a Coast Guard officer, their connection with DHS and DOJ agents investigating serious crimes is proving invaluable to field commanders.

Current Issues and Challenges Along the Northern Maritime Border

The rise of transnational criminal networks and syndicates, particularly groups of Albanian heritage, poses a significant threat to security along the northern border. Integrated both vertically and horizontally, these organizations are particularly difficult to deal with because of their members' ability to assume aliases and evade detection. Albanian criminal elements are centered in Toronto, Windsor, Detroit, and New York and were responsible for transporting approximately 64 percent of the illegal aliens through the Detroit/Windsor corridor. The Detroit/Windsor IBET has focused resources on this rapidly growing threat to the region.

The winter environment itself poses significant challenges to border security. As mentioned previously, ice forms extensively throughout the maritime border region presenting unique problems for law enforcement. To provide mobility in this environment, the Ninth Coast Guard District has deployed "Iceboats," essentially modified airboats, designed to operate on the ice as a means of rapid transportation across the ice and water for both search and rescue and law enforcement operations. Located at designated ice rescue stations along the Great Lakes, these boats provide a new and exciting capability to conduct law enforcement and security operations. Training is supported by the Ice Rescue Center of Excellence located at Coast Guard Station Saginaw River, Michigan.

The hypothetical threat of small boats as terrorist weapons continues to be a concern along our northern border. There are over six million registered recreational vessels along the northern maritime border. The use of a boat as a suicide weapon is a concern our Commandant has articulated to Congress and one of grave concern to our DHS partners as well. In terms of acknowledging the size & scope of the challenge, an illicit border crossing consists of 3 phases: 1.) an approach without being detected/interdicted; 2.) crossing without being detected/interdicted; 3.) assimilating on the U.S. side without being detected/interdicted. The northern border *presents challenges in all 3 phases*. One area

where the movement of small boats across the border is frequent, yet uncontrolled, is the region of western Lake Erie. This area contains islands belonging to the U. S. and Canada in close proximity and involves boating traffic as dense as anywhere in the Great Lakes. Coast Guard Station Marblehead, OH is located at the center of this area and is one of the busiest on the Great Lakes. Frequent, undeclared entries between both countries occur by small boat. The CBP Border Patrol's Detroit Sector considers western Lake Erie an area of high concern.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS:

Use of Technology to Support Border Security

Development of maritime domain awareness (MDA) and a common operating picture (COP) is under rapid development in the Coast Guard. Automated Information System (AIS), which provides the identity and location of ship traffic is now available in our command centers and provides a valuable tracking and investigative tool of larger vessels. Systems capable of tracking and sorting small boat traffic provide great promise in supporting Coast Guard, CBP Border Patrol, and CBP enforcement operations along the northern maritime border. Coast Guard boat crews are equipped with up-to-date night vision devices and are capable in some areas of secure communications with CBP Border Patrol.

The testing of counternarcotics acoustic buoys, basically Navy sono-buoys, is being conducted by the Coast Guard's Research and Development Center in Groton and may hold promise for detecting small boat border incursions in high density smuggling areas. Also, the collection of intelligence by the Law Enforcement Technical Collections Unit (LETCU) has been used in the past and is scheduled for future use along the maritime border.

Another interesting technology with promise to improve border security effectiveness and response to major security incidents is web-based incident management software used by many states. The Michigan State Police, for example, have a software program which all the Federal/DHS partners used for security operations supporting the 2005 Major League Baseball All Star Game and Super Bowl XL in Detroit. Coast Guard Sector Detroit command center watchstanders will soon be using this technology to allow for rapid Coast Guard support of any major incident affecting safety and security in eastern Michigan. The benefits of a federal-level, web-based system for incident management linking critical command centers around the country has obvious benefits.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the Coast Guard continues to focus on improving border security along our maritime border with Canada while continuing to provide the type of quality service across the full spectrum of our missions that the American public and the maritime industry have come to expect. In this, we are lucky to have a positive and useful relationship with Canadian authorities that is beneficial for both our nations. Our Commandant, Admiral Allen, has emphasized the interconnected nature of the safety, security, and defense issues successfully managed every day by our Coast Guard and DHS partners in the maritime environment.

Here in Detroit, we have worked very hard to ensure our maritime border with Canada is secure as possible by cultivating partnerships, applying new technology, and reaching out to all our maritime customers to leverage whatever assistance they can offer to enhance security. A few of our successes in Detroit include:

- The “shiprider” proof of concept was the first time that armed law enforcement officers from Canada and the United States have conducted joint maritime law enforcement operations in each other’s waters. It involved close cooperation with all IBET partners that successfully boarded 173 vessels in U. S. and Canadian waters during September, 2005. Conducted a second IMSO operation to enhance maritime security for Super Bowl XL.
- Conducted safe and highly successful maritime security operations supporting the 2005 Major League Baseball All Star Game, Super Bowl XL, and the 6th Federal Circuit Judicial Conference in May, 2006.
- Working with ICE and CGIS agents, a Sector Detroit boat crew interdicted \$200,000 in currency aboard a vessel bound for Canada.
- Hosted a Critical Incident response conference with all Federal, DHS, and Canadian security partners to ensure a rapid and coordinated response to a transportation security incident in the Detroit area.

Mr. Chairman, on behalf of all the men and women of Sector Detroit and my civilian and Auxiliary volunteer team, we thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.