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COMMITTEE ON

TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE

SAM GRAVES, CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

Chairman Ezell Statement from Hearing on Coast Guard Assets and Infrastructure

For Immediate Release: March 05, 2025
Contact: Justin Harclerode (202) 225-9446

Washington, D.C. - *Opening remarks, as prepared, of Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee Chairman Mike Ezell (R-MS) from today's hearing, entitled "America Builds: Coast Guard Acquisitions and Infrastructure":*

Today the Subcommittee meets for our latest hearing in the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's America Builds series to review the Coast Guard's modernization efforts.

I'd like to welcome our witnesses: Vice Admiral Tom Allan, Acting Deputy Commandant for Operations, and Heather MacLeod, Director of Justice and Homeland Security Programs at the U.S. Government Accountability Office, who is joined by Shelby Oakley, Director of Contracting and National Security Acquisitions at the U.S. Government Accountability Office. Thank you all for being here.

Every day, the Coast Guard is called upon to save lives, respond to emergencies, protect the environment, enforce our laws, secure the maritime border from drugs and illegal immigrants, and maintain the flow of maritime commerce. The brave sentinels who carry out these missions should be supported by reliable ships, helicopters, and airplanes, but instead members of the Coast Guard find themselves on vessels and air assets that should have been retired long ago.

The Coast Guard's ability to "do more with less" has unfortunately encouraged years of underinvestment and ever-increasing mission demands that have pushed the Service to the

breaking point. Today the Coast Guard faces a seven billion dollar shoreside infrastructure backlog with barracks, hangars, and docks that are literally crumbling, leaking or both.

The Service's Medium Endurance Cutters are increasingly unable to carry out their missions, our icebreaker fleet is unable to project our nation's sovereignty in the Arctic, and flight mechanics are performing miracles to keep the Coast Guard's aging aviation assets in the air.

While the Coast Guard is well into a multi-decade modernization plan that has seen Fast Response Cutters and National Security Cutters come online, progress on other programs remains dangerously behind schedule.

Since the Subcommittee last examined the Coast Guard's modernization efforts in June, the Polar Security Cutter Program continues to crawl forward, but we need to continue to see meaningful progress. The Subcommittee is encouraged by the Coast Guard's past statements highlighting the importance of this acquisition, and we expect you to continue to prioritize this critical program.

Concerns with the Offshore Patrol Cutter Program remain as we prepare for the lead ship to be delivered at the end of this year — four years late, and with a host of non-compliant parts. In addition, new problems have developed with the last hulls in the National Security Cutter Program, and we could receive one ship less than what Congress appropriated.

At the same time, efforts to modernize the Service's aviation fleet have taken steps back with MH-60s and C-27s being phased out earlier than planned.

Failure to successfully acquire new surface and air assets, and the shore infrastructure required to support them, is a true crisis for the Coast Guard — without them, the Service cannot carry out its missions. The failure to appropriate adequate funds year after year is a significant factor contributing this problem, but it's not the only one. Broken contracting processes and inadequate planning and review efforts have dug the Coast Guard deeper into the hole.

To encourage proper oversight, Congress requires yearly Capital Investment Plans and Major Acquisition Reports. These plans are not optional. They are required by law. Yet the Coast Guard fails to produce them. This is unacceptable.

As Chairman of this subcommittee, I am committed to reviewing the Coast Guard's contracting and planning efforts, and working with the Service to improve them.

I also applaud the President for a strong vision and helping us get our shipbuilding industry back on track. In his speech last night, he set a clear leadership vision for investing in American shipyards through the establishment of a shipbuilding office to strengthen our domestic capacity, our local economy, and local workforce.

Vice Admiral Allan, I am eager to hear your plan to right the ship, so that we can get the men and women of the Coast Guard the assets they need to carry out their missions. Director McLeod, I look forward to you bringing a dose of reality to the Coast Guard's plans.

Thank you all for being here today and I look forward to our discussion.

Click [here](#) for more information from today's hearing, including video and witness testimony.

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