



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Building the Fleet: Assessing the Department of Homeland Security's Role in the United States Coast Guard's Acquisitions Process

December 18, 2024

The Coast Guard's Polar Security Cutter, or PSC, program represents the first effort to construct a heavy icebreaker in the United States in nearly 50 years. When Congress first appropriated funding towards this project, we knew it would be a long and expensive effort. We also knew it was a necessary effort.

The Arctic region has grown in global importance, and the Coast Guard's icebreaking capabilities are critical to protecting U.S. interests in the region.

As waters warm due to climate change, ice caps will continue to melt, making waterways more hazardous.

As maritime traffic increases, the Coast Guard must have an icebreaking fleet capable of conducting search and rescue missions in the region, maintaining freedom of navigation, and responding to the presence of our adversaries.

In addition, the Coast Guard must maintain its ability to support scientific research endeavors in the Antarctic.

Unfortunately, the Coast Guard has struggled to meet budgets and deadlines for the PSC program, which is now in breach of its acquisition program baseline.

The Coast Guard has grappled with an inexperienced U.S. industrial base unprepared to produce complex ship designs, as well as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic which have increased the costs of labor and materials.

Since the Subcommittee's hearing on Coast Guard acquisitions in May, I know the Coast Guard has been hard at work to develop new cost and schedule parameters for the PSC program going forward.

I look forward to seeing the formal approval and adoption of a new acquisition program baseline for the PSC program. I hope the Coast Guard will learn from recent challenges and prevent any further breaches of acquisition parameters from occurring. I also look forward to seeing the Coast Guard deploy its recently purchased commercial icebreaker.

The Coast Guard must move expeditiously to operationalize that icebreaker to help fill the capability gaps caused by PSC program delays. The Coast Guard's icebreaking mission is essential to protecting U.S. interests in the Arctic and to our national security.

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