



Duncan Hunter
U.S. House of Representatives
50th District, California

February 21, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you recently. I valued our time together and I look forward to working with you and your administration on advancing America's priorities and strategic interests.

One issue we were unable to discuss but demands your continued attention—as Commander in Chief—is the readiness crisis facing the nation's armed services. Your commitment to rebuild America's military is an important step toward strengthening force projection, operations and effectiveness. While the traditional military services are the primary focus of this effort, I want to be sure you're aware that the U.S. Coast Guard is facing readiness shortfalls of its own that must be given equal attention and consideration.

Often, the Coast Guard is identified as an extension of law enforcement due to its mission requirements in protection of America's shores and waterways. This view significantly understates the Coast Guard's critical mission and fails to account for the service's role as a military organization among its counterparts. As a result, the Coast Guard has been severely underfunded and any opportunities for expansion have been stifled—much to the credit of your predecessor.

In fact, one of the biggest acquisition challenges facing the Coast Guard is the procurement of at least six icebreakers, evenly split between three heavy icebreakers and three medium icebreakers. These vessels are critical for projecting power in the Arctic and advancing our strategic interests. Although, currently, the U.S. has only two operational icebreakers while Russia, our single greatest competitor in the Arctic region, possesses 40 vessels with more coming online in the near future, including vessels set for completion in 2018 and 2020. Not only have we not built a new icebreaker since the late 1970s, the Coast Guard is being forced to order parts online and cannibalize older vessels to maintain a minimum level of operability—just to operate a *single* heavy icebreaker.

Meanwhile, Russia is launching its biggest icebreaker—the Arktika. It should be of tremendous concern that next to this vessel, there is no equivalent in the world. In other words, Russia is not just exceeding the U.S. in icebreaker production and Arctic presence, they're in a class by

7

themselves and setting a standard, supported by enhanced capability, that is unmatched. We must act with the same sense of urgency.

It's not the Navy that will be responsible for patrolling the Arctic. It's the Coast Guard. As such, funding for six new icebreakers must be a high priority to ensure the Coast Guard can begin undertaking a more expansive Arctic mission without any further delay.

The Coast Guard also has an immediate need for unmanned aerial systems but remains at the mercy of Customs and Border Protection, which owns the assets the Coast Guard often requests but is denied. The lack of these assets has undoubtedly constrained the Coast Guard's reach and effectiveness in areas where aerial surveillance is needed.

These are just two of the Coast Guard's most pressing issues, but worth acknowledging is Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly and his familiarity with the Coast Guard during his time as the head of U.S. Southern Command. He understands the Coast Guard better than any of his predecessors, as well as the unique mission of the service and its alignment with the rest of America's military. I ask that you and Secretary Kelly, as well as Secretary of Defense James Mattis, consider the Coast Guard in your plans and efforts to rebuild the nation's armed forces to ensure this vital organization is not overlooked and further disadvantaged.

Thank you for your attention to this request. As Chairman of the House Subcommittee on the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, I am available to discuss these and other issues unique to the Coast Guard with you and your team.

Sincerely,



Duncan Hunter

Chairman

Subcommittee on Coast Guard
and Maritime Transportation