



Navy League Statement on Proposed Cuts to the U.S. Coast Guard

The Navy League of the United States staunchly opposes the proposed gutting of the Coast Guard in the fiscal 2018 budget. If the rumors about the proposed 14% cut, as first reported by *Politico* and *The Washington Post*, are true, this would have a devastating impact on the service and undermine our national security and potentially cost American lives.

“The outstanding men and women of the Coast Guard do incredible work on a shoestring budget, and to force them to carry out the same 11 statutory missions — which are mandated by law — with such a sharp reduction in funds would be an enormous mistake,” said Navy League National President Skip Witunski. “On a typical day, the Coast Guard conducts 45 search-and-rescue missions, saving 10 lives. To put more than 3,000 American lives at risk is a gross abdication of government responsibility. The men and women of the Coast Guard put their own lives at risk every day to save others. This type of cut, which would drastically shrink the force as units are decommissioned, demonstrates an astonishing lack of gratitude and appreciation for the sacrifice borne by servicemen and women and their families.”

President Trump made inspiring promises to strengthen our military. The Coast Guard, a military branch, does not deserve to have those promises broken. With only 42,000 service members and a budget of \$9.1 billion, it is already the leanest service, doing far more to safeguard our security than its size would suggest. The Coast Guard also provides the strongest American presence in the Arctic, against a backdrop of increasing Russian aggression in the region. By gutting the Coast Guard, the administration would be breaking its promise to our military.

Additionally, the cuts to the Coast Guard would undermine the administration’s stated goals of reducing illegal trafficking of people and drugs into the United States. As the dominant maritime force in the Western Hemisphere, the Coast Guard is the primary military service responsible for all aspects of Western security, including combatting terror and drug/human traffic networks, securing maritime borders and safeguarding commerce. It is the only service that is both a military agency and law enforcement authority. This unique capability must be strengthened, not weakened.

The Coast Guard in 2016 interdicted more than 6,300 undocumented migrants, 201 metric tons of cocaine and 52,613 pounds of marijuana. One of the ships on the chopping block, a National Security Cutter, is especially valuable; another ship in this class conducted 12 drug interdictions, confiscated more than 33,000 pounds of cocaine and detained 32 suspected smugglers in a single month.

If the Trump administration is looking to strengthen border security, invest in our military and safeguard American lives, the right choice would be to invest more in the Coast Guard, not less.