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MAYORS CALL FOR HALT TO WEAPONS TRAINING ON THE GREAT LAKES

Mayors from across the United States and Canada in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Basin today called on the United States Coast Guard to abandon plans to conduct weapons training in the Great Lakes. The Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, a group of mayors from over 80 participating cities in both countries, support the need for added security but say the safety, health, and environmental risks from the training with machine guns on the Lakes are too great.

“The proposal to do regular training with automatic weapons is totally contrary to the long history of peaceful relations and environmental cooperation between the United States and Canada on the Great Lakes,” said Mayor David Miller of Toronto, Chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative.

Mayors deal with the health and safety of their citizens every day, and fully understand and appreciate the need for security. At the same time, the mayors believe that creating unacceptable risks for boaters, anglers, and the over 40 million U.S. and Canadian citizens who drink the water makes no sense.

“Along with my fellow Great Lakes mayors on both sides of the border, I am deeply concerned about this issue,” said Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley, founding Chair of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative. “We remain concerned about potential safety issues with boat traffic as well as the unknown impact to the environment and health of the Great Lakes. We look forward to continuing to work with the Coast Guard and our Canadian friends on this important issue.”



Mayors attended several of the public hearings held across the basin and voiced their opinions about the proposal for weapons training. Many people from the boating, fishing, and environmental community spoke out in praise of the search and rescue work by the Coast Guard over the years, but said that the risks from the training exercises would be too great. Serious concerns and questions were also raised about the environmental study performed by a private contractor for the Coast Guard, especially the fact that it looked at only five years of impact on the Lakes from the firing. Citizens at the meetings pointed out that the Coast Guard has alternatives available for training their people that do not present the threats created by the open-lake firing of machine guns.