



## *U.S. Coast Guard History Program*

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Admiral Thomas H. Collins

Change of Command Remarks

May 30, 2002

Secretary Mineta, Secretary Chao, Secretary Slater, Chairman Young, Congressman Taylor, General Meyers, Admiral Clark...other distinguished guests...Family, Classmates, Friends, Men and Women of the Coast Guard...Ladies and Gentlemen...Good afternoon, and thank you all for joining us today, as we mark this moment of change.

[Acknowledgement of special guests, family, and friends.]

Well, the watch has shifted! I am very honored to be your new Commandant! My expression of gratitude to Secretary Mineta and President Bush for their confidence in me is my promise of four years of utmost dedication and loyal service.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for your strong support to us over the past year and a half. You and your leadership team have shown your absolute commitment time and time again to sustaining a strong and able Coast Guard for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

I'd like to take a moment to pay tribute to a man whose leadership for the past four years will be a legacy to the Coast Guard for many years to come. Jim Loy has been a great friend and mentor to many of us here, but having the front row seat that I've had for the past two years, I dare say that no one has received a greater blessing from his leadership than I have.

His emphasis on restoring readiness and shaping the future of our organization, and his strategic vision of what that future will be, have made all the difference in ensuring the pre-eminence of the Coast Guard as America's Maritime Guardian, both before and after that infamous day in September of last year. On behalf of the entire Coast Guard, thank you, Jim.

Much of what Admiral Loy has done will remain as a lasting legacy, like an established river of clear, bright water. But even the course of the mightiest river changes over time.

It is vitally important to maintain continuity. But it is just as important to welcome the change that is inevitable. That's what this ceremony is all about.

Cutters in which Jim Loy and I once sailed are still active today. *Valiant* stands proudly before you, there in the river. *Vigilant*, a cutter on which I served, is on law enforcement patrol, protecting our southern coastline.

Others units, too, are keeping watch over the safety and security of America this morning. We have Port Security Units active in our major ports, as well as protecting American forces in the Persian Gulf and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Cutters and aircraft are conducting fisheries enforcement in the First District; tending Aids to Navigation along our shores and on our lakes and rivers; on patrol against contraband smuggling in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico; guarding our fishing grounds along the Pacific Coast and Alaska; the Morgenthau is training and assisting other nations in the Far East to improve international relations, and thereby help provide greater maritime security in the region.

Likewise, our Captains of the Port are overseeing safety and security inspections of foreign flag vessels in our ports and waterways...and the lives of 10 Americans will be saved by Coast Guard search and rescue efforts today.

Coast Guard units have been serving the maritime interests of the United States on missions like these for well over 200 years. And they continue to serve well today.

Though each of these units now carries on in our timeless tradition of maritime, multi-mission, and military service, some things are very different from the days in which Jim and I stood our watches. The technology of going to sea has certainly changed. Even aboard the beautiful tall-ship behind me, that's true. Many other changes have taken place, as well.

Perhaps the greatest difference between then and now, however, is that we must be ever mindful of the fact that our homeland has recently come under direct attack. And the threat remains. None of us on active service can remember another time when that was true. That changes everything. We must adapt to that change.

We knew it was coming. Our vision of the future foresaw it. Perhaps no one could have predicted the timing or severity of the terrorist attacks against us, but we knew that we were not immune to the scourge that much of the world has suffered for so many years.

Today, as we are gathered here, there are many who fear what the future may bring. A recent poll in the Washington Post cited the fact that more than half of Americans feel unsafe and insecure.

We are in the midst of a very difficult time of tribulation. In this environment, we must be vigilant. But we need not be afraid. We must move ahead in a direction that will help to ensure our nation's security, and so restore safety and confidence to the American public.

Over the years, I have taken strength and wisdom from the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes, who said: "The great thing in this world is not so much where we are, as in what direction we are moving. To reach our goals, we must sail with the wind and sometimes against it—but we must sail, and not drift nor be at anchor."

Some of you have heard me quote those words before, but it seems to me that they have never before been so relevant. We dare not drift with the current. Nor should we secure an anchor in the past. We must sail on.

Let no one mistake our purpose as we do so. Strengthening our capability to lead the maritime homeland security strategy will remain our first priority.

As we look forward, we must place our immediate focus on that hard work, yet we must do so with careful attention to all of our other missions. Each of our missions is inherently connected to the others. The success of all depends on the excellence of each one.

It will take new thinking and innovative action to get that job done well. As we proceed through the next few years, our thoughts and our actions must prepare us to step into harm's way on behalf of a nation in crisis. We have a unique set of competencies and capabilities to bring to bear in these difficult times.

We must not fail to do so. Failure is not an option!

In his address to the nation last September, President Bush said these words:

“Our nation -- this generation -- will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail.”

Mr. Secretary, we pledge to you today that you can continue to count on the Coast Guard to do our utmost to make those words become reality.

As we sail on, my emphasis in thought and action will be focused sharply in three areas: readiness, stewardship, and people.

First, we must continue to improve our readiness to perform all the jobs that America has asked us to do. We have long been recognized for our superior operational service. We must bring the same level of professionalism and maritime leadership to the war on terrorism that has been demonstrated in everything we do. As the lead federal agency for maritime safety and security, we will do all in our power to ensure that our units employ sound doctrine and tactics...that they are supported with capable integrated systems, both on shore and on the high seas...that they have enough people properly trained...and that they are equipped with modern cutters, boats, aircraft, and equipment. And we will continue to build upon the incredibly strong partnership we have with other government agencies, especially the Department of Defense and the United States Navy.

Second, we must continue to strengthen our stewardship of the public trust by striving to be the best led and managed organization in government. To do so, we must ensure that we are in alignment from top to bottom and bottom to top—and for us, the top begins in the Oval Office, and extends through our Secretary and his staff. We must inspire a culture of innovation, embracing technology and more effective management practices to achieve measurable outcomes. We must take full advantage of opportunities presented by our newest acquisition strategies, such as the Integrated Deepwater System Project. All of our efforts must be aimed at delivering measurable results that support the President's Management Agenda.

Third, we must remain loyal to our people and inspire their loyalty to us. We must grow the work force. The first increment of growth in the coming year will be about 2200 people, with more to come in the out-years. This growth puts our recruiting and retention effort front and center. We must grow and we will...but we must do it with a watchful eye on the diversity of our ranks. We can't afford to grow indiscriminately. The future of our service demands a multitude of technical skills and capabilities. It will require people with broadly diverse talents and backgrounds. We can easily observe in the natural world around us the simple lesson that life adapts to change best through diversity.

The readiness of our ships, aircraft, and systems will come to nothing without Coast Guard men and women who are ready, willing, and able. I am talking about every element of our team: active duty, reserve, civilian, and auxiliary.

By doing so, we will continue restoring the readiness of our workforce to enable us to meet the challenges ahead.

All three areas of emphasis will be important to meeting the challenges of the future, as we look forward to the coming days ahead. But the most important will be the emphasis on people. After all, it is people from whom the courage must rise to drive away any fear and to lift that dark threat of violence from our nation.

In confronting a crisis at a different time in our nation's history, Abraham Lincoln once said, "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew." To rise to the occasion at hand, we cannot afford to rest on the strong lead that Admiral Loy has established. It is time for us all to think and act anew.

Semper Paratus, and thank you.

