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Amenities:

[Extemporaneous thanks to BGEN HUNTOON, light introductory comments to audience of 1100 mid-grade officers, representing all five U.S. Armed Services and 79 foreign military services.]

Introduction:

As I approached the opportunity of addressing the Command and General Staff College, I figured I could take my comments in any one of three directions.

The first option is that old, reliable stand-by of talking about whatever happens to be in my in-box—always a guaranteed crowd pleaser.

Actually, such a conversation today could be both instructive and timely, given that President Bush met with his five service chiefs and his theatre CINC's last week and raised a few eyebrows in the process by letting us know that he does not presently intend to request an early supplemental defense appropriation for 2001 or to seek an increase over former President Clinton's budget request for 2002.

In Washington, the news that President Bush intends to conduct a thorough review of national security priorities before asking for greater defense spending created considerable consternation within some quarters of the national security community—and several op-ed pieces criticized the administration for allegedly backing away from their promises to help the military restore its readiness.

Without appearing to be sucking up to the boss, I think these reflexive expressions of dismay are out of line.

The only fault here lies with those who, upon hearing Vice President Cheney promise the military that "Help is on the way," strained their imaginations no further than to suppose that help would certainly come in the form of a fat supplemental appropriation for this year and a blank check for next year.

That was a naïve expectation. My view of the matter is that President Bush would not have stacked his national security team with heavyweights like Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, Donald Rumsfeld, and Condoleezza Rice unless he honestly intended to apply their expertise to a serious analysis of what the military should be doing today and how we should be preparing for tomorrow.

That President Bush would conduct that analysis before establishing budgetary priorities might have been predicted and should have been reassuring. What it signifies chiefly is that he intends to devote the concentrated attention of some first-rate minds to our long-term national security needs before he commits to any particular proposals. Once he establishes his priorities, I think we will see him pursue them aggressively.

In the mean time, his visit to Fort Stewart yesterday suggests he will move out smartly on those issues like pay and housing that really can be solved by throwing money at them. All of this portends good for the future of the American military. Even so, his independent decisiveness puts all of us on notice that our future probably does not include license for the long-term occupation of whatever comfort zones we now inhabit. But that too is a positive indicator.

At any rate, I could have built my speech around my in-box, but nothing else in it compares with that meeting with the president.

My second option is to proselytize you—to preach the gospel of the Coast Guard’s national security role to an audience whose familiarity with our work may not be at the level it could be if you are to take full advantage of Coast Guard capabilities as you move into positions leading to high command in the coming years.

This is a promising avenue because I believe that the president’s review of national security priorities will inevitably highlight the importance of the Coast Guard’s national security contributions, particularly in responding to the array of maritime security threats like terrorism, drug smuggling and illegal immigration that simply cannot be handled the way naval combatants are equipped to handle problems—by blowing them up from over the horizon. America faces more and more maritime threats that can only be countered efficiently with the Coast Guard’s unique combination of military capability and civil law enforcement authority.

And the Coast Guard also has other important national security niches, like several dimensions of force protection and homeland security, that I could tell you about. But it really isn’t good manners to proselytize. So I won’t. Besides, I can always slip that information in as I talk on another subject.

That leaves me with just my third option, which was my preferred course all along, namely to speak on the subject of leadership.

There is a great danger in addressing a group of leaders such as yourselves on the subject of leadership . . . Especially when you have heard from others on the subject and are in the midst of your own concentrated study. But let me press on.

The danger is that of coming across as Polonius, the father of Laertes and Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Polonius is known for spewing an unbroken stream of fatherly advice as his son prepared for an extended journey. Some of his advice was sound, but all was ignored. And it was ignored for the reason that most advice is ignored: namely, it was given in bulk without a clear understanding of what his son needed to hear or was ready to accept.

Even so, I think I can avoid sounding like Polonius. I may not know exactly where each of you stands in your leadership development, but I do know what lessons I needed to be reminded of when I was a mid-grade officer, and I have some sense of what advice has helped officers under my command rise to their potential. And if by chance I should come across a little too fatherly—well, that's really not a bad place to be.

My subject this afternoon is the development of future heroes. You. The Command & General Staff College classes of 2001.

My purpose is to impress upon you the important connection between constant leadership development and great accomplishment in any field of endeavor. The connection occurs at the point called Preparation. You prepare for greatness by developing leadership competence in your everyday duties. Simply stated . . . Preparation Equals Performance.

It has occurred to me with sufficient frequency to have become a conviction that very few of the Coast Guard's heroes became heroes overnight.

When I review the lives and careers of Coast Guard heroes, my most surprising discovery was how unsurprising it is that they rose to greatness when circumstances demanded greatness of them.

Whether it was Douglas Munro, who died evacuating Marines from Guadalcanal; Jack Rittichier, who was killed after amassing an astonishing record of Combat Search and Rescue in Vietnam while on exchange to the Air Force; or Jimmy Crotty, who died on the Bataan death march after serving MacArthur so well covering the retreat to Corregidor—none of these men became great in a moment. In every case, their diligence and character were readily apparent long before the events arose that earned them honored places in the Coast Guard's memory.

Preparation equals performance.

I would like to demonstrate this principle—that Preparation Equals Performance—by studying the example of a great leader from outside the Coast Guard: the namesake of this very auditorium, Dwight Eisenhower.

#### Eisenhower as Cadet and Junior Officer:

Dwight Eisenhower was president when I was in middle school and high school, and he has long been one of my heroes. Like many Americans, I admire what he accomplished as the Supreme Allied Commander of the European Theater of Operations and as President of the United States.

But I hold him in high regard as much for what he did before he became a general and a president as for what he accomplished when he was in those positions of great responsibility. His actions as a cadet and as an obscure junior officer provide a powerful example—even for mid-grade officers like you who have set aside a year to equip yourselves for the greater responsibility that soon will be yours.

Eisenhower's greatness was apparent in his career as a junior officer, but it was not apparent in the way we would expect.

Please understand that Eisenhower was not launched out of West Point in 1915 on a trajectory that showed he was destined to wear five stars.

He did not graduate at the top of his class—or anywhere near it. In fact, he barely graduated at all. An official at West Point agreed to recommend him for commissioning only if he agreed to request assignment to Infantry.

Once consigned to the Infantry, Dwight Eisenhower did not even get his preferred duty station upon graduation. And he did not screen for company command for his subsequent assignment.

When the United States entered World War One, Eisenhower sought a combat assignment—repeatedly. Not only was he turned down cold every time he asked for overseas duty, but he was told to report around to his colonel, who read him a letter from the War Department formally ordering him to stop asking.

When his classmates headed across the Atlantic to earn glory in the battlefields of Europe, he was transferred from an already low-profile job training a National Guard regiment in Texas to an even less desirable post as supply officer of a start-up regiment that would never see action.

He persisted. But he never did see action in that war. Just when it looked like he was finally on the verge of shipping out, the worst possible thing for that young infantry officer happened. Peace broke out. He was devastated.

Eisenhower was so far off the fast track—and he so deeply dreaded the prospect of having to listen to his buddies' war stories at class reunions—that he thought long and hard about leaving the Army.

In the midst of all this negativism, however, those who observed this young man closely saw potential . . . even potential for greatness.

So, what was so inspiring about this young man who missed the opportunity to distinguish himself in combat early in his career?

Leadership Model:

The older and more mature Dwight Eisenhower had an interesting way of explaining leadership, a model that I have shared with many audiences over the years. He said, "Leadership is the product of native ability and environment."

By "environment," Eisenhower used a term that he took to encompass two ideas: Knowledge of Craft and the Opportunity to Exercise Action as a Leader.

Notice that there are three elements in this equation: Native ability, knowledge of one's craft, and the opportunity to exercise action as a leader.

He acknowledged that we don't have much control over native ability. And his own experience in World War I teaches that we have limited control over opportunity. But Eisenhower insisted, as do I, that we do have control over our knowledge of our craft.

In fact, "knowledge of craft" may be the most important of the three elements in the equation. It is the only one where each of us can make a choice to develop as a leader. Translated, that simply means it's up to us to assume responsibility for our own leadership development. The good news is that we can fulfill this responsibility.

#### Knowledge of Craft: Military Officers:

So let us consider this matter of knowledge of craft. What is your craft as a professional military officer?

A lot of people—most civilians and even people within the military who ought to know better—are confused about what "military" means. They think it has something to do with Hollywood portrayals of barbaric training environments.

Young officers may be forgiven if their initial definition of "military" includes push-ups, screaming at subordinates, and shoe shines. But they do not become effective military officers until they form a more mature understanding of their calling.

In reality, what makes us military is not our uniforms and haircuts and posture. Rather, it is the discipline of organizing our selves and our environment so that we can accomplish important tasks in difficult circumstances.

After one early career setback, Eisenhower made an important decision that set the tone for the rest of his career. He said, "The decision was to perform every duty given me in the Army to the best of my ability and to do the best I could to make a creditable record, no matter what the nature of the duty."

He stopped worrying about what his classmates were doing and how his successes compared to theirs. He started worrying about learning his craft and doing his duty.

And it is what Eisenhower did after making that decision that most commands our respect.

He was assigned the job of establishing a new regiment. He was given a vacant field and a supply clerk and told that in three days, three thousand raw recruits would arrive. It would be his duty to give them supper that evening, provide them with shelter, food, supplies, and anything else they needed to subsist and train. Once he provided for their basic needs, he was responsible for designing and carrying out their training.

Somehow, he got the job done. He borrowed trucks, learned what he could about supply, obtained tent materials, and scrounged food. He took the recruits in, put them to work, and turned them into an effective unit.

Not long afterwards he was given the job of equipping and training the 301<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion—and preparing it for overseas deployment. The only problem was . . . he didn't have any tanks, any equipment, or any doctrine. He did have an old abandoned campsite, but not much else.

Once again, his determination to learn his craft and do his best saw him through. He resorted to measures we chuckle over today—like reading newspaper accounts of current battles, imagining how tanks could be employed, and designing training to fulfill the imagined requirements. But it worked. Undaunted by obstacles we cannot conceive, he established a functioning, effective training center from scratch, and sent thousands of men overseas, never missing a sailing deadline and never having a single soldier turned back from the load-out ports for any deficiency.

Part of knowing your craft is knowing what your service does, what your service needs, and mastering the unique skills it demands. In Eisenhower's case, the unique skill was marshalling huge numbers of untrained people and huge amounts of disorganized materiel and turning them into cohesive, effective forces. And it turned out to be excellent background for his later, better-known successes.

#### Knowledge of Craft: Service Competencies:

Many of you are preparing to become battalion XO's or S-3's. You will be called upon to apply military discipline to the particular business of your respective nation or service. That particular business will be unique to each of you, but there are many core competencies that will, if mastered, serve you well.

For example, Coast Guard officers need to understand that we are America's multi-mission maritime service. We have a unique competence in responding to maritime threats with our combination of military discipline and civilian law enforcement authority. We have a unique ability to support theatre engagement plans and operations for the geographic CINCs around the world. And we offer a unique shore-based command and control network that combines strong Captain of the Port Authority with the ability to organize civilian interagency responses and reserve call-ups for any domestic emergency or natural disaster. (I told you I'd work that in!)

In every one of these areas, Coast Guard leaders frequently find themselves face to face with unique circumstances—high speed drug smuggling vessels resisting interdiction, airplane crashes, a sudden spike of violence in immigration cases, hurricanes and other

natural disasters—circumstances that call for decisive, effective, and defensible action; managing complex and dangerous cases according to the rule of law.

Coast Guard officers acquiring their knowledge of craft need to prepare themselves to make on-scene decisions in the midst of wide-spread chaos and to expect those decisions both to receive immediate public scrutiny and to have widespread legal, political, diplomatic, or security repercussions. That is our craft.

What is it that officers in your service need to be prepared to do? For each of you, knowledge of craft means learning the importance of what your service does for your country and preparing to make the right decisions when emergencies arise.

#### Knowledge of Craft: Core Values:

There is another dimension to this thing called knowledge of craft. It's a virtue called Character. In the life-and-death world of military service, technical competence can never make up for deficiencies in character.

Eisenhower accepted responsibility for that part of his growth while still a cadet. We've already seen the practical application of his devotion to duty. But Eisenhower also taught himself lessons in honor and respect.

When he was a Yearling, the upper class cadets had a number of standard questions that they used to badger young plebes. One of these questions, "What was your previous condition of servitude?" was intended to extract an explanation of what the plebes had done before arriving at West Point. It was a play on the last words of the first article of the fifteenth amendment of the Constitution—a document, by the way, I commend to your perusal so you remember just what it is you swore to support and defend.

One of Eisenhower's first opportunities to "crawl," or harass, a plebe occurred when an already well harassed young man accidentally bumped into Ike and fell down. Eisenhower glared at the hapless fellow and sneered, "Mister, what was your previous condition of servitude? You look like . . . you look like" . . . and here Eisenhower tried to name the occupation most far removed from military glory . . . "You look like a barber!"

"Sir," came the embarrassed reply, "I was a barber."

When Eisenhower told this story, his point was that he didn't have enough sense to apologize to the plebe. He just turned away and left. When I tell the story, my point is that he did have enough sense to realize what had just transpired. He learned from the experience.

"I've just done something that was stupid and unforgivable," he confessed to his roommate that afternoon, "I managed to make a man ashamed of what he did to earn a living."

It took remarkable introspection and maturity for a college sophomore to understand what he had done and why it was important for a leader not to do such a thing again. This

fundamental understanding of respecting the integrity of honest work is central to effective leadership. Everyone you command deserves your respect for the honorable service they are rendering. Ike taught himself the Coast Guard core value of "Respect."

He also taught himself some hard lessons about honor. Commissioned little more than two years, he had the unpleasant duty of confronting an officer under his authority who had been caught cheating at cards.

After a brief and awkward interview in which Eisenhower cut through some feeble denials, Ike laid out a stark choice to the offending officer. Resign for the good of the service now or face a court martial. He presented the choice forcefully enough to obtain the resignation. And he maintained his resolve three days later when the officer's father and congressman showed up in his tent asking him to sweep the whole affair under the rug.

A forced resignation for cheating at cards may sound harsh, but Eisenhower knew the corrosive effect on morale and readiness when dishonesty is permitted to gain a foothold in an organization whose survival depends on complete mutual trust.

Sometimes standing up for your troops means standing up to some of them.

There is great value in teaching our core values in training environments like this one. But Eisenhower's experiences illustrates that core values are upheld not merely by assenting to them in a classroom, but by making deliberate, specific decisions to allow them to govern your conduct. Sometimes those lessons take the deepest root when we are most conscious of not having upheld the standards we espouse—as when he embarrassed the plebe. Sometimes when we fight against the impulse to follow short-term expedience—as when Ike demanded the resignation of an officer not much junior to himself and stuck with his decision when doing so offered him no advantage.

### Conclusion:

When Dwight Eisenhower was assigned a high command in World War II, there was open skepticism as to whether an officer with no combat experience could meet the extraordinary challenge of organizing and leading the Allied assault on Germany.

Eisenhower surprised a lot of people by succeeding.

In fact, he was supremely well prepared. He had learned the core business of creating disciplined order out of massive chaos, and he had spent the twenty years between the wars learning further details of his craft with the same intensity that he trained the National Guard regiment and the same intensity that he established a tank training center without any tanks. And he had fortified his preparation with serious attention to the development of his character. And he did all these things deliberately and consciously, depending on practice instead of osmosis.

It was no more an accident that Eisenhower rose to greatness than it was an accident that those Coast Guard heroes I named earlier rose to greatness. Preparation equals performance.

You are at a critical stage in your careers. It is a time to renew your dedication to preparation. Some officers in your situations reach your level of accomplishment and don't recognize the decision point. Without realizing that they are doing it, they can ease up a bit and begin an ignominious coast towards retirement eligibility.

I am persuaded of better things for you. You are the officers who will be the colonels and captains and generals and admirals when we deploy the weapons and forces that President Bush's national security team is planning today. I don't know what the force lay-down will look like or what systems we will have in the field. But I do know that we will need officers then who followed Ike's example of personal preparation.

My charge for you today—if I may offer it without sounding like Polonius—is to follow Eisenhower's example by resolving to prepare yourself to meet the challenges our services will face together as this century unfolds.

Resolve first to perform every duty given you to the best of your ability—and recognize and honor that duty in others, especially your subordinates. Second, attend closely to the occasions that test the depth of your commitment to your core values. And last, learn the craft of being a leader in the specialties required in your service.

In doing so, you will prepare well. After all, you never know when your opportunity for greatness will come. Native ability . . . opportunity . . . and the knowledge of your craft. Focus on the one you can do something about.

Semper paratus!

