

As delivered

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
CG Auxiliary Change-of-Watch Ceremony
1 November 2004

Good morning, everyone! Thank you all for being here to witness this ceremony today.

As you just heard, the purpose of a Change-of-Watch Ceremony is to establish the continuity of leadership in the midst of change, but it also gives us an opportunity to celebrate the many accomplishments of the Auxiliary – and this year has been a banner year for the Auxiliary!

We recently marked the three-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11. In the three years since that horrific day, much has changed for our Nation as a whole and for the Coast Guard, in particular.

But one thing that hasn't changed is the Coast Guard's dependence on the Auxiliary to serve as a force multiplier to our active-duty component. We all recognize that we need the Auxiliary now more than ever!

We rely on the Auxiliary – we need the Auxiliary – today, just like we've needed them throughout their 65-year history. Their numbers double the size of our active-duty force. Just like more cops on the beat mean our neighborhoods are safer, more eyes on the water mean our country's ports and waterways will be safer too. Our Auxiliarists are those eyes, and their service and contributions are immensely important to us – and thus to our Nation.

It's been a tremendous year for the Coast Guard as a whole – and I know that we could not have accomplished as much as we have this year without our volunteer members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

We have done so well because the Auxiliary has done so much:

- They had a 15% increase in patrol hours with overall operations support topping 220,000 hours. That's over 25 years of support!

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- Their Academy Introductory Mission program increased its throughput 300% percent over the past 3 years, giving rising high school seniors a very hands-on experience of what Coast Guard Academy life is all about, but more importantly, introducing these young people to our great Service.
- Another area of outstanding support is the program enabling Auxiliarists with medical backgrounds to use their skills in augmenting Coast Guard medical facilities. This year's program saw 10 Auxiliarists with medical training augment the Academy Clinic – that's a huge force multiplier!
- We've also seen a 25% increase in public outreach by Auxiliarists over the past year, acting as a force multiplier to get the word out about the Coast Guard and everything we do. Along those same lines, your Recreational Boating Safety Visit Program reached over 50,000 marine dealers, stores, and organizations – a 20% increase!
- The Auxiliary Waterway Watch program, in support of the America's Waterway Watch Program, is a terrific solution to the ever-present problem of "too much coastline and not enough Coasties." The innovation demonstrated by the Auxiliary in mobilizing the boating community to keep a watchful eye out for suspicious activities is a tremendous asset to the Coast Guard and to our Nation.
- In response to the 3 hurricanes that hit Florida, FEMA reached out to the Auxiliary, bringing on 140 Auxiliarists as Disaster Assistance Employees, for outreach and support to the communities hardest hit.
- Also recently making the headlines were the G8 Summit and the Democrat and Republican National Conventions, all in coastal cities, thus requiring a huge lift on our part to ensure security for these events – and as always, the Auxiliary came through for us. Hundreds of Auxiliarists gave us thousands of hours of support, in everything from patrolling the waters around these events to donning aprons to cook for crews out on the water.

These are just a few of your many achievements, and while I'm thrilled with your many successes, I want us to be looking forward to growing our partnership even more. There is much to do and you have already laid out a superior trackline through Operation Patriot Readiness.

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I believe that together, we have a future that is bright and full of promise ... but I need you – and your Nation needs you – in order to make that happen. You've been a part of Team Coast Guard for 65 years now and I know the next 65 will be just as stellar as the first.

Commodore Edgerton, I sincerely congratulate you for the exemplary leadership that you have shown during your tenure as National Commodore, and thank you for your outstanding service.

I welcome the newly elected National Commodore, Gene Siebert as your relief. Gene, I look forward to working with you this coming year as you take charge of this fast-moving, hard-charging, heroic organization. And as you continue to align Auxiliary strategic goals and objectives with Coast Guard priorities – readiness, people, and stewardship.

And to all members of the Auxiliary National Executive Committee, I look forward to your participation in the Fall Flag Conference next week.

Thank you and Semper Paratus!