

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
Ops Spotlight: Coast Guard Academy Cadet Corps
“Leadership and the Importance of Effectiveness”
Thursday, 05 January 2006

Amenities

Thank you.

And, thank you to Cadet Corps, Officer Candidates of OCS Class 1-06, Leadership Development Center (LDC) staff and faculty ...

I hope everyone’s holidays were full of family, friends, good food and lots of good times! And, now you’re back here at the Academy ready and raring to go for the spring semester!

We’ve made the turn into a New Year ... and that allows us to reflect on the events of the last year as we set our course for the new.

Introduction

Operationally, 2005 was a spectacular year for the United States Coast Guard.

We continued to break records in our fight against illegal drugs with nearly 300 thousand pounds of Cocaine seized at sea. That amount broke the 2004 record of 240 thousand pounds, which broke the 2003 record by 100 thousand pounds! Director John Walters of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) and I had the great pleasure last month to honor the officers and crew of the Coast Guard CUTTER HAMILTON in San Diego. We recognized their accomplishments over a 90-day patrol in the Eastern Pacific (EPAC) where they seized 40 thousand pounds of drugs.

Migrant Operations during 2005 were equally successful. We interdicted nearly 11 thousand migrants. That’s the highest total in over a decade!

On the homeland security front, we very successfully implemented and enforced the Maritime Transportation Security Act (MTSA) and International Ship and Port Security Code – or ISPS Code – regulations.

In our fisheries mission, we effectively enforced fisheries conventions in the Bering Sea, the Western Pacific, and in our coastal waters.

In fact, in every mission area, we have positive trends in our level of performance. And of course, our men and women achieved an extraordinary operational record in response to last summer's hurricanes. I'll talk in detail in a few minutes about those.

Suffice it to say, our efforts have been recognized by the POTUS – the President of the United States – on the floor of the Senate, by laudatory legislation recently passed by Congress, and by ABC T.V. which saluted our service with their annual "People of the Year" award.

By every measure, we clearly lived our motto – Semper Paratus – in 2005!

Introducing the Seven Principles of Coast Guard Operations

Why have we been so consistently successful?

In fact, our operational record in 2005 is a continuation of operational excellence achieved by the Coast Guard's "Long Blue Line" over decades and decades. From my perspective, it is exceedingly important that you – as future leaders and operators of the Coast Guard – that you clearly understand the factors and principles of successful Coast Guard operations ... those key elements of doctrine that distinguishes us an organization.

Here, in my last Academy leadership presentation as your Commandant, I can think of no more fitting topic than this.

The principles that shape our operational culture are embedded in Coast Guard Publication 1 – Pub 1 for short -- a handbook that describes and synthesizes the "who we are, what we do, and how we do it." It is a seminal document and one that every Cadet who has entered the Academy since 2003 has received during Swab Summer. Cadets will encounter parts of Pub 1 in your Naut-Sci classes. OCS Candidates should get a copy as well.

Chapter Four, in particular, is critical reading and an absolute must for all Coasties. That Chapter distills the essence of what it is to be an effective operator in our Coast Guard. Whether getting your ship underway, working with your shipmates to complete a morale project on time and on budget -- or as you get more senior -- planning a full-scale operation, Pub 1 enumerates Seven Principles that define how the Coast Guard harnesses the power of take-charge individuals and combines them into a cohesive, effective team.

The Seven Operational Principles include:

- The Principle of Clear Objective,
- Effective Presence,
- Unity of Effort,
- On-Scene Initiative,
- Flexibility,
- Managed Risk, and,
- Restraint.

I'll talk more about these in a moment. But first, let me put today's comments in context to my earlier leadership remarks here at the Academy.

Synopsis of 2003 – 2005 Coast Guard Academy Ops Spotlight Addresses

In 2003, I presented a talk – the first of my tenure as Commandant – that I labeled “Get Blue.” Its focal point was the importance of maintaining our operational effectiveness through the practices of alignment, accountability and accomplishment. In essence, I was saying ... if you know and understand service strategies, goals objectives ... if you keep aligned within your own world of work, with those higher goals ... if you ensure your subordinates do the same, and if everyone is held accountable for knowing and performing the mission ... we are assured success. So, know your job and how it must intersect and contribute with higher level outcomes ... hold yourselves and others accountable to the mission at hand.

My message in 2004 was about individual responsibility ... personal commitment to effective leadership ... and the development of effective leaders. To you, this means holding yourself responsible in regards to our Core Values of Honor, Respect and Devotion to Duty. Good leaders align personal values with

organizational values and use them to guide themselves in their day to day work ... and how they relate to others. I quote from Pub 1:

“Our Core Values are the bed rock upon which our character and operating principles are built. They provide fundamental guidance for our actions, both on duty and in our private lives, and they challenge us to live up to the high standards of excellence exhibited by our predecessors. Our Core Values bind us together and guide our conduct, our performance, and our decisions.”

This charge is terrifically important and sometimes tough to accomplish. But tough or not, you’ve got to live and breathe our Core Values every minute – off duty and on. As Cadets, this means, among other things, treating each other and your faculty with due respect. Also treating others that you come into contact with, even if infrequently – for instance, civilian contractors and athletic opponents – with due respect. A big part of Coast Guard business is interacting with others. If you don’t show and practice the concept of Respect, you will not be able to build an effective operational team effort. In effect, if you don’t learn and live the our Core Values – especially the value of “Respect” -- you will not succeed, and more importantly, the Coast Guard will falter in its missions.

In 2005, I left you with a message about leadership in our changing operational environment. We discussed core ideology, the importance of having a clear game plan linked to high-level strategic objectives, and building, maintaining, and extending a culture designed to support effective leadership. To you, this means understanding that you are a change agent. It also means understanding that we live and work in dynamic times. You can either be on board with the command’s goals or be a distraction ... whether that is here at the Academy or on your first unit upon graduation. Your energy and intellect ... and your adaptiveness and flexibility ... can help drive us to be successful in an era of great internal and external change. You could be an impediment to progress if you don’t seek to align yourself with our organizational goals. Seek out your leadership, understand their goals and then actively pursue them ... help transform our Coast Guard in the right direction.

2006 Ops Spotlight Address: “Seven Core Principles of Coast Guard Operations”

Which brings us to 2006.

The Principles in Pub 1 are your touchstone to personal effectiveness and operational success ... they tie many of my previous leadership observations together ... they give them life. These Principles, when applied on a daily basis, will help you “Get Blue,” will help you meet your individual responsibilities and will help you to be an effective change agent. Let me take a moment to refresh your memory ... to give you a short description of each principle.

The first is the “Principle of Clear Objective,” in which you as the leader direct operations toward a clearly defined and attainable central objective, understandable by your subordinates.

The second is the “Principle of Effective Presence,” in which you must have the right assets and capabilities at the right place at the right time.

The third is the “Principle of Unity of Effort,” which requires your positive leadership to ensure a clear understanding of the objective and the role each individual, unit, or organization is expected to play.

The fourth is the “Principle of On-Scene Initiative,” in which you push both authority and responsibility to the lowest possible level, and historically Coast Guard men and women have performed superbly in assessing the situation, seizing the initiative and taking the action necessary for success.

The fifth is the “Principle of Flexibility,” in which you live our motto “Always ready” to meet just about any maritime challenge by adapting your operations to the situation at hand.

The sixth is the “Principle of Managed Risk,” in which you evaluate the capabilities of your crew and equipment against the environmental conditions likely to be encountered, and make sound, safe decisions on whether and how to execute a given mission.

The seventh, and final, is the “Principle of Restraint,” in which you exercise your powers prudently and with respect and good judgment. We are a regulatory, law enforcement and humanitarian service, and all our missions contribute to the safety and well being of the public. Our legacy of public service has shaped our tradition of restraint.

The real take-away is that if you apply these Principles every day – during routine operations, during routine staff work – you will succeed. More

importantly, if you apply these on a daily basis, these Principles will become so ingrained, so second-nature, that when a critical operation occurs we, as a Team, can't help but succeed.

Response to Hurricane Katrina

Consider Hurricane Katrina ...

The Principles of Effective Presence, Unity of Effort, On-Scene Initiative, Flexibility and especially of Clear Objective played out in full in our operations before, during and after Hurricane Katrina.

Sector New Orleans' Hurricane Plan Mission Statement says it all:

“Sector New Orleans will provide search and rescue support, restore essential aids to navigation, respond to hazardous material spills, manage waterways including traffic and safety or security zones, provide transportation of victims, provide essential waterborne and airborne logistics support, deliver vital supplies and materials, provide access to storm damaged areas to key response personnel and perform any and all acts necessary to rescue and aid persons and protect and save property.”

Katrina: Search and Rescue Response

Within 2 hours of the storm's passage on Monday and when it became safe to do so, our forces began to remobilize to the effected area. Under Captain Bruce Jones' superb leadership as the On-Scene Commander for air search and rescue, aircrews from Air Station New Orleans, and beyond, arrived on-scene to commence what became around- the-clock air rescues for a week and a half straight.

Commander Shannon Gilreath led the combined surface response by all 165 Coast Guard forces and the interagency teams from Zephyr Field, a big sports complex on the west side of New Orleans that was not under water. He single-handedly brought structure, discipline and focus to the interagency small boat operations.

By Tuesday morning, our small boats, river tenders and crews had remobilized back into the city to commence large scale urban search and rescue; and within 2 days, a Coast Guard Medium Endurance cutter was on-scene providing command and control and security presence on the river. The ability to rapidly respond back into the effected areas, integrate with other agencies, and surge additional forces was critical to our success and resulted in more than 13,000 rescues and assists by small boats – by the end of everything, we had accomplished 33 thousand 544 rescues overall ... 12 thousand of them were rescued from rooftops ... that is a lot of hoist in a week and a half!

Katrina: Other Coast Guard Missions

In addition to the heroic efforts of Coast Guard personnel conducting search and rescue, Sector New Orleans was well-poised to effectively deal with other Coast Guard missions as well.

Reopening the Mississippi River and Gulf Intracoastal Waterway became a national priority since that region is host to 4 of the nation's top 11 ports. 80% of the aids to navigation below New Orleans were destroyed, and numerous sunken or grounded barges and ships threatened the waterway. Through longstanding relationships with the maritime industry, Pilots Associations, Army Corp of Engineers and NOAA, Sector New Orleans was able to rapidly assess the impact to 255 miles of the Mississippi River and more than 200 miles of Gulf Intracoastal Waterway. Within one day, portions of the river and Gulf IntraCoastal Waterway were reopened, and by Friday, 4 days after the storm, oceangoing ships were entering port Aids to Navigation Teams went above and beyond reestablishing critical aids under arduous working conditions.

Sector New Orleans responded to 134 minor oil spills and 10 significant oil spills totaling more than 8 million gallons of produced crude oil discharged from storage tanks, refineries, pipelines, and marine facilities across 130 miles of rivers, canals, bays and adjacent sensitive wetlands. At the peak of the response, the Coast Guard coordinated the efforts of more than 750 pollution responders, deployed more than 30,000 feet of boom, and recovered more than 3.3 million gallons of free floating oil. Additionally, the Coast Guard supervised several controlled burns of marshland to consume any remaining oil. Furthermore, Sector New Orleans is engaged in long term salvage recovery to remove hundreds of sunken and grounded vessels which pose serious hazards to navigation or the environment. Under a unified command, Sector New Orleans successfully brought

together a team of experts from the private and public sector including the Navy Supervisor of Salvage and members of the American Salvage Association to complete this task.

Katrina: Other Success Stories

If I had the time, I could cite the efforts of scores of Coast Guard men and women who performed in the best operational traditions of our service.

For example, Auxiliarist Mel Marx from Flotilla 51 in District Seven ... or, EM2 Rodney Gordon who rewired and regenerated all the power sources in the storm ravaged area ... or Station Grand Isles' efforts, that despite 29 of 41 of it's people losing their residence and/or belongings, they safely evacuated 41 Coasties, six boats, and 41 dependents living in on base housing and provided disaster relief to the town of Grand Isle by ferrying Red Cross and other emergency personnel and supplies to and from the island for two weeks until the bridge that provided the major access to the island was repaired ... and, I could go on, and on.

There are reasons why they were successful ... why the whole Coast Guard Team was successful ...

Excerpt from Letter Co-written by CO, ATC and CO, AIRSTA NOLA

I'll read you an excerpt from a letter jointly written, towards the end of our Katrina response effort, by the Commanding Officer of Aviation Training Center Mobile, Alabama, and the Commanding Officer of Air Station New Orleans. And, they wrote:

“That this complex operation could be so overwhelmingly successful despite a nearly complete loss of connectivity between Airsta NOLA and the outside world and chain of command for extended periods of time is a testament to the value of our Principles of Operations (reference Pub One). Particularly, the Principles of Clear Objective; Unity of Effort; Effective Presence; On-scene Initiative; and Flexibility. If you turn highly trained and properly equipped Coasties loose on an objective, they will tackle it, and let you know when it is done.”

End of excerpt.

With over 215 years of operational experience in Search and Rescue and battling Mother Nature, we knew our mission ... not only at Headquarters, but all the way through the Chain of Command, through Area, to the District, to the Sector, to the Stations, to individual Coxswains and rescuemen. The Principle of Clear Objective was met ... we would save lives. We didn't have to waste time reissuing orders or giving rudder commands from Headquarters. Individuals and units alike had internalized our primary objective ... we would save lives.

Likewise the Principles of Effective Presence, On-Scene Flexibility, Managed Risk, Restraint and Unity of Effort defined our Team focus. Auxiliarists, Reservists and Active Duty personnel took charge of their individual responsibilities, held themselves and others accountable to the highest standards of safe, professional conduct. Where there were roadblocks individuals and units sought unorthodox solutions. They were able to rise above limits in training, in material support, and personal fatigue and uncertainty by harnessing the Principles they practiced daily.

I truly believe Coast Guard men and women are the very best professionals in the world, bar none, because,

- (1) they care,
- (2) they know their jobs inside and out,
- (3) they are always looking for ways to get past operational or personal barriers,
- (4) they have internalized our Core Values, and,
- (5) they have internalized our Seven Operating Principles.

In other words, our professionals practice these Principles everyday and they naturally rise to the forefront during moments of crisis. You, whether in a few short months or in a couple years, will soon join this cadre of dedicated professionals. You owe it to them ... you owe it to yourself ... and you owe it to the public we serve to live and breathe these Principles.

Leadership Lessons

So, lesson number one ... infuse your every effort with these Seven Operational Principles. If you do, success in the routine is assured and even more

likely when the balloon goes up in a major crisis. I guarantee you that there will be other hurricanes, and it is highly likely that we will face some sort of man-made cataclysm in the future ... whether a mass migration, or a terrorist incident, you as our future leaders will need these seven Principles to succeed.

Which leads me to lesson number two. These Principles don't only apply to operations. They apply to everything you do. Furthermore, you don't have to wait until graduation before you start putting these Principles into action. In many cases, here at the Academy, you are already demonstrating an innate understanding and execution of these Principles.

For instance, you learn the value of unity of effort in sports, in your platoon and company assignments, and during your summer cruises. You know the value of a smoothly functioning team.

And, I hope you are learning the Principles of Restraint and Managed Risk. You elect to study, or not. You elect to adhere to regs, or not. Failure to study ... failure to adhere to standards ... has consequences.

If you happen to be on academic probation or restriction, you better re-examine your understanding of the Principles of Restraint and Managed Risk.

Look ... these are just a couple of examples how these Principles play out in your Cadet life. The consequences in the real Coast Guard are infinitely greater. Your understanding, your living of these Principles could be the difference between life and death. It may sound melodramatic, but I assure you, it's not.

When you're the OOD on board your Cutter, in the dark of night when all-hands are below asleep and entrusting their lives to you, how important are the Principles of Clear Objective, Unity of Effort, Restraint and Managed Risk to your shipmates? For some of you, you will be Commanding Officers in two years time. This is a serious business. And, your fundamental understanding of these Principles is a sacred trust and obligation.

Conclusion

I want to leave plenty of time for questions, so let me sum up.

Over the last four years, I've presented observations on leadership that I think you need to succeed. And through your success, the Coast Guard succeeds.

As a leader, your personal effectiveness derives from a clear understanding of your own responsibilities and the accompanying belief that with responsibility comes accountability.

You have to hold yourself and others true to our Core Values ... not only when it's convenient, but all the time.

Further, your effectiveness as a leader ... and ... our effectiveness as a military, multi-mission and maritime service depends in no small way on a set of key concepts about the way we operate.

As Cadets ... as soon-to-be Ensigns ... as our senior leaders of tomorrow, you have to inculcate and infuse your performance with the Coast Guard's Seven Operational Principles. These Principles are the glue and muscle that move the Coast Guard on the path towards success. The Principles of:

- Clear Objective
- Effective Presence
- Unity of Effort
- On-Scene Initiative
- Flexibility
- Managed Risk, and,
- Restraint,

are applicable in all that we do. You are living them now and learning the lessons that will carry you through your career.

Learn these lessons well ... for you are the heirs to a very proud, professional, and successful historical tradition of excellence and selfless service. You will be entrusted, through your day-to-day attention to our time-tested values and principles, with the continuation of an institution respected throughout the world for the work we perform.

Thank you.

Semper Paratus.