

As delivered

Admiral Thomas H. Collins  
Coast Guard Birthday Celebration with Secretary Ridge  
“Same Coast Guard, New Team”  
James Creek Marina  
6 August 2003

Good afternoon everyone! I'm very pleased to be here with you today to celebrate the Coast Guard's 213<sup>th</sup> Birthday and with that, recognize Operational Excellence.

It is a great privilege to have Secretary Ridge here with us this afternoon. Thank you for joining us, Mr. Secretary.

[Recognize other VIPs].

Looking back over this past year, we have quite a lot to celebrate and in which to take pride. It's been a year as challenging and dynamic as any in Coast Guard history. We continued to successfully meet the demands for our traditional missions of search and rescue, marine safety, environmental protection, drug interdiction, fisheries enforcement, domestic and polar icebreaking, aids to navigation, and migrant interdiction. At the same time, we ensured America's maritime security by supporting Operation Liberty Shield here at home, defending America's ports, coasts, and infrastructure. We also deployed 11 cutters, 4 port security units, and over 1250 people overseas, in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, as America's superb military and our coalition partners liberated Iraq.

Our success in these historic events was due to four key factors:

1. the hard work, integrity, professionalism, and adaptability of our people;
2. the military character of our Service;
3. the multi-mission capability embedded in our cutters, aircraft, boats, and systems and people; and
4. our transfer to the Department of Homeland Security, which strengthened both our partnerships with the other DHS agencies, as well as those with other federal, state, and local agencies.

Whether we're rescuing mariners in distress or protecting our nation from those who would harm our people and our ports, we take great pride in our 213-year history of service to our nation. We in the Coast Guard have all experienced great pride in becoming members of the Department of Homeland Security. Our mission to provide maritime safety and security and environmental protection for the American people has never been more clear. From a mission perspective, we are the Same Coast Guard, New Team – an enhanced Coast Guard regarding capability and capacity.

We are very fortunate to be led by a Secretary who knows quite a bit about the challenges and opportunities of public service. He has served his country with distinction

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as an Army Infantryman in Vietnam, as a District Attorney, as a member of the United States Congress, and as Governor of Pennsylvania.

In October of 2001, following the tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, he was sworn in as the first Director of the Office of Homeland Security and on January 24<sup>th</sup> 2003, he became the first Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my privilege to introduce the Honorable Tom Ridge, Secretary of Homeland Security ... and Secretary of the Coast Guard.