

As delivered

Admiral Thomas H. Collins  
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Good evening, everyone! And thanks for that kind introduction, Bill [Edgerton, National Commodore].

Thank you all for the honor of speaking with you tonight. It's good to be back with you again and to have this opportunity to share a few thoughts with you about our service together in the Coast Guard.

I want to welcome our many, many international guests – I understand we have 20 nations represented here at this year's conference. Welcome and thank you for honoring us with your presence. International partnering is a cornerstone of our Maritime Security Strategy, so it's wonderful to welcome so many of you here, to renew acquaintances and to cement friendships.

I also want to recognize a true legend in the Auxiliary – Sol Spiegel. Sol celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday earlier this year, which certainly is an accomplishment worth noting, but what I find truly extraordinary about Sol is that he joined the Coast Guard Auxiliary in 1939 – the year it was established – and has been a member ever since! Let's give Sol a round of applause.

These are very exciting and challenging times to be wearing a Coast Guard uniform in service to our great Nation.

I know that Commodore Edgerton agrees with me. And I think all of you do, too.

Bill, before I get too far along in my remarks, I want to take just a moment to offer a word of appreciation. Let me extend a sincere thank you for the outstanding leadership you've demonstrated throughout your tenure as National Commodore.

The past two years have seen tremendous challenges. You've met those many challenges with strong leadership. Due in large part to that

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leadership, Americans are safer today than ever before in our harbors and on waterways. Thank you, Bill, very much for your service to the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Coast Guard, and our great country!

Gene, we also appreciate your leadership over the past 2 years and look forward to working with you as the new National Commodore. Congratulations on your election!

Besides celebrating the many accomplishments of the Auxiliary and the election of your new leadership, this conference also gives us a chance to take stock of where we are and where we are going.

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

One of those changes came in the form of ground-breaking legislation. Just over a month ago, the Coast Guard began enforcing in full the requirements of the Maritime Transportation Security Act – or MTSA. This incredibly important Act ensures our Nation’s ports and waterways are safer and more secure than ever before. I’m happy to report that for the large number of vessels coming into U.S. ports, it’s been “business as usual.” For those not complying with our stricter security regulations, those ships and their owners are discovering how resolute and vigilant the Coast Guard is. As of September 1st, a total of 87 vessels have been denied entry or ordered out of port or detained in port – but that’s out of a total of 9,280 foreign vessel arrivals in the United States. That’s less than 1% of the vessel traffic into this country! I’m very, very pleased with those numbers – and I believe they’re a real testament to the power of partnerships. Had shipping industry and port facility stakeholders not been participants in this effort right from the beginning, I am sure those numbers would be much, much higher.

Another area of great change for the Coast Guard and one where the Auxiliary has been invaluable to our efforts is in Maritime Domain Awareness – or MDA. I know that you’ve discussed that concept at several of your conference meetings this week. And I received a brief of your

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efforts this afternoon. From my perspective, MDA is one of the most critical elements of our Maritime Homeland Security Strategy.

Simply put, it is possessing comprehensive awareness of our vulnerabilities, threats, and targets of interest on the water, including adjacent waterfront facilities and infrastructures.

Effective risk mitigation ... both safety and security ... in the maritime – anywhere for that matter -- is about awareness: leveraging and synthesizing large amounts of information and specific data from many disparate sources to gain knowledge of the entire maritime environment.

The goal is to know the difference between friend and foe, so that legitimate commerce and mariners can move through our coastal and port areas unimpeded, while we interdict contraband cargo and deter illegal activity of all types at sea before it reaches our homeland. It is international in scope, interagency in approach, and incredibly complex in execution. Our efforts must leverage technology to collect, consolidate, analyze, and sort multiple information sources.

MDA is all inclusive and doesn't just focus on major shipping. I am greatly concerned about several of the gaps in our security net, in particular, smaller vessels that don't meet MTSA reporting thresholds. America needs more "eyes on the water" to ensure this vulnerability does not go unchallenged.

You in the Auxiliary are doing a tremendous job in assisting us in the MDA arena with Operation Patriot Readiness and the America's Waterways Watch. With thousands of Auxiliarists on the water performing safety patrols, and on the piers, performing vessel safety checks, your ability to observe what's going on out on the water is invaluable to our MDA. You and the recreational boaters out there know best what's normal and what's out of place.

For MDA and for other aspects of our safety and security missions, our Nation, our Department, our Coast Guard is dependent on the Auxiliary to serve in the role of a force multiplier.

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We rely on you – we need you – today, just like we’ve needed you throughout your 65-year history.

Over this year, I’ve had the honor and the pleasure to recognize the fantastic contributions of our World War II veterans. Many of these contributions from the Second World War come from the Auxiliary:

- Auxiliary security patrols that started in December, 1941;
- Integrated Army-Navy-Coast Guard-Auxiliary coastal patrol system that consisted of mounted, foot, canine, and afloat patrols; and
- The Coastal Picket Force, consisting of Auxiliary vessels patrolling along the 50-fathom curve of the Atlantic seaboard.

In World War II, the Auxiliary served a valuable national security role during a period of heightened security risk. And you are serving a valuable role today. As we know, more cops on the beat translates into neighborhoods that are safer – well, more eyes on the water mean our country’s ports and waterways will be safer too. You are those eyes.

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 you.

We have done so well because you have done so much.

You had a 15% increase in patrol hours with overall operations support topping 220,000 hours. That's over 25 years of support so far this fiscal year!

Your Academy Introductory Mission – or AIM – program increased its throughput 300% percent over the past 3 years, giving rising high school seniors a very hands-on experience at what Coast Guard Academy life is all about, but more importantly, introducing these service-minded 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

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with medical training augment the Academy Clinic – that’s a huge force multiplier! The program is under the coordination of Coast Guard Auxiliarist Dr. Richard Lavy, who in addition, routinely uses his dental skills to help our training commands take care of some of their backlog.

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!

As noted by Admiral Sirois this morning, 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 the Nation. I ask that you remain focused on this essential initiative and grow it into a vital element of our MDA program.

This year has also been the year of the special event. Just recently making the headlines were the Democrat and Republican National Conventions, both 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 noteworthy achievements, and while I’m thrilled with your many successes, there are opportunities to grow an even more productive partnership. There is much to do in the arena of national security and you have already laid out a superior trackline. Your forward-looking Operation Patriot Readiness plans are the key.

OPR and Phase III’s seven major initiatives will continue the Auxiliary’s work to enhance our Maritime Domain Awareness and thus, help secure our Nation. OPR adds maritime security components -- such as the observation, reporting of possible threats, and raising the public's

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awareness of possible security threats -- to already existing Auxiliary programs, such as Safety Patrols and Vessel Safety Checks. OPR expands your role in providing assistance to the Coast Guard, including assignment to non-law enforcement billets at stations and on cutters, increased land, water, and air patrols, and the ability to take on additional responsibilities during surge operations.

The execution of Operation PATRIOT READINESS has already -- and will continue to -- reap many benefits: identification of critical infrastructure within our major ports, additional patrols during MARSEC I, necessary surge capacity at MARSEC levels II and III, and additional support to our DHS partners, as demonstrated in the aftermath of Hurricane Charley, when Auxiliarists supported FEMA operations.

An activist Coast Guard Auxiliarist needs a growing budget. And despite overall Auxiliary growth from 5.9 million dollars in 2001 to 10.2 million in 2004, there are some negative trends and new funding initiatives that need attention. Like all good OPLANS, Operation Patriot Readiness requires resources. Recognizing that future efforts in support of the Coast Guard and our Nation will come with additional wear-and-tear on your vessels and aircraft, I'm happy to note that on top of the four-and-a-half million dollars in the Auxiliary budget for next fiscal year, I have directed my staff to add another five hundred thousand dollars for the Standard Auxiliary Maintenance Allowance program. This new initiative represents more than a 10% increase in the Auxiliary program's budget and will begin providing maintenance support funding for over 200,000 air and surface operational hours conducted by the Auxiliary each year. We will look to build on this amount over the years ahead. As noted by Admiral Sirois this afternoon, we are also expanding support to Auxiliary boat operations through the allocation of Coast Guard Boston Whaler Outrage models purchased several years ago.

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.

Thank you. And Semper Paratus.