

As delivered

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31<sup>st</sup> Annual NNOA Conference: “NNOA 2003: Developing Sea Service Leaders  
for a Global Mission in a Diverse Environment”  
Luncheon Remarks – as delivered  
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Good day, everyone! Thank you for inviting me here today to speak to you.

[Recognize VIPs]

I’m looking forward to telling you a little about what’s going on in the Coast Guard these days, then discussing some of my thoughts on leadership. I’ll have time at the end of my comments, so please feel free to ask me questions then.

First, let me congratulate LT Dan Ostergaard, our 2003 winner of the Captain Edward R. Williams Coast Guard Reserve Award for Excellence, recognizing his work in support of achieving, valuing, and managing diversity in the Coast Guard. Dan, keep up the good work – we need more folks like you, to give our people the best opportunities we can to excel.

CG events (year past)

I’ve been Commandant of the Coast Guard for a little over a year now – and what a year it’s been! Not just for me, but for all of us in Coast Guard blue.

The theme for your conference this year is “Developing Sea Service Leaders for a Global Mission in a Diverse Environment”. Some of you may wonder how “global” the Coast Guard is – it’s not unusual to run into people who think the Coast Guard only patrols waters close to U.S. shores. Well, just yesterday I pinned Bronze Stars on two of our cutter Commanding Officers who would “tell you different”. Let me set the record straight:

We deployed Coast Guard forces to execute Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom as America's superb military and our coalition partners liberated Iraq from a tyrant. Deployed Coast Guard Forces included 2 High Endurance Cutters, 8 Patrol Boats, a Buoy Tender, 4 Port Security Units and over 1200 Coast Guard men and women, all sent overseas in support of those Operations. Our Coast Guard ships ensured safe transit of the armament and supplies needed to prosecute the war. We ensured safe shipping lanes were marked, then maintained. We guarded aircraft carriers and minesweepers. We boarded suspected smugglers. We located and secured a large Iraqi military equipment and weapons cache hidden in caves in southern Iraq. We intercepted fugitives attempting to flee Iraq by sea. We captured Iraqi POWs. And today, we continue to serve overseas, as 350 of our Coast Guard men and women remain far from home, continuing to support the U.S. mission there.

Our global missions extend beyond Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom: we’re involved in global shipping regulations, global operations, and global engagements.

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Closer to home, as we confronted the tremendous new demands of Homeland Security and the Global War on Terrorism, the Coast Guard supported Operation Liberty Shield to defend America's ports, coasts, and infrastructure.

While supporting these Operations at home and abroad, we successfully met the unrelenting demands for search and rescue, marine safety, environmental protection, drug interdiction, domestic and polar icebreaking, fisheries enforcement, aids to navigation, and migrant interdiction.

We initiated the two largest procurements in Coast Guard history: the Integrated Deepwater System and Rescue 21.

We stood up an Assistant Commandant for Intelligence, our C2 shop. Admiral Rochon, here in the audience, is currently in charge of C2.

We led the international effort to adopt a new maritime security code and began implementing major new federal maritime legislation, the Maritime Transportation Security Act, all in record time.

And on March 1, 2003, as part of the largest government reorganization in over 50 years, we moved smoothly from the Department of Transportation to the new Department of Homeland Security.

From my perspective, there are five key factors to our success in these historic events:

1. the military character of our Service;
2. the multi-mission capability embedded in our cutters, aircraft, boats, systems, and people;
3. investments we in the sea services have made to interoperability and jointness;
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; and
5. most importantly, the hard work, integrity, professionalism, and adaptability of our people;

#### Transition to DHS

Our transition into the Department of Homeland Security is not the first time the Coast Guard's changed Departments. In 1967, when the Department of Transportation was established, we moved from our original Department, Treasury, to Transportation.

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A month after the terrorist attacks on September 11, President Bush established the Office of Homeland Security, headed by then-Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge -- who, by the way, is a veteran, having served as an Army Infantryman in Vietnam where he earned a Bronze Star. In June of 2002, the White House requested that Congress create a Department of Homeland Security; in November, Congress passed, and the President signed, the bill establishing the Department of Homeland Security. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 2003, 22 agencies belonging to 11 different Departments, came together to become the Department of Homeland Security. By the way, this was the largest reorganization of the federal government since WWII, when President Truman merged the Navy, Marines, Army, and Air Force into the Department of Defense.

The Homeland Security Act of 2002, which established DHS, specifically stated that the Coast Guard would transfer completely intact, with all mission areas, authorities, capabilities, and assets. We are the same Coast Guard, now on a new team.

For us, being on the DHS team greatly facilitates our operations, since now many of the key federal agencies involved in those operations are all within DHS. With our increased emphasis on homeland security missions, we are now America's Shield of Freedom.

#### People/Leadership

When I became Commandant, I issued my Commandant's Direction, stating my priorities. They are Readiness, People, and Stewardship. "People" are listed in the middle, because they are center-stage and are the main focus of my attention. I believe all the Service Chiefs would echo my thoughts that the greatest asset any of us has is not a ship or weapons system or helo -- but our people. You -- are our greatest asset. In Operation Iraqi Freedom, primacy of well trained, well equipped, well led, and dedicated people was evident. It is clearly the case within the United States Coast Guard.

Writing my Commandant's Direction a year ago, I stated "Our ability to attract, develop, retain, and deploy a quality workforce is the key to the Coast Guard's future -- it must be a top priority and is perhaps our greatest challenge." Later, I refined the term "a quality workforce" to mean "a diverse, highly capable, and flexible workforce". Those words were true then and they still ring true today.

The way to attract, develop, retain, and deploy this kind of workforce is through leadership. It takes leaders using innovative ideas to get quality people in the door, then train them, then demonstrate to them all the reasons to stay. And part of that leadership includes diversity management.

The strength and resolve the Coast Guard uses to address the spectrum of diversity management issues, is derived in part from our long association with the NNOA. Since the mid-80's, NNOA conference reports have generated recommendations to facilitate diversity in the Coast Guard. NNOA "tells it like it is" -- and challenges the Coast Guard to improve. I need to hear that straight talk and our Service needs to hear it too . . . even when it's not the best of news. As a matter of fact, that's when I need to hear it most -- when there are improvements to be made. I appreciate what NNOA's done

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in the past to help us improve and I hope that you will again forward your recommendations to me after this year's conference for my planning and strategic efforts.

Many of our current successful Coast Guard diversity recruiting and retention initiatives had their genesis as an idea at an NNOA conference -- initiatives such as the Pre-Enlisted Program for Enlisted Personnel (PPEP) and the Minority Officer Recruiting Effort (MORE), which has now evolved to the College Student Pre-Commissioning Initiative (CSPI), were ones that grew from ideas at NNOA conferences like this one.

Our Coast Guard NNOA members participate in scholarship drives and other outreach initiatives to ensure young men and women from all walks of life are aware of the opportunities available to them through the military. Just last year, we initiated a new NNOA/Coast Guard Academy partnership to increase the number of minority students in the cadet corps. Under the leadership of Captain John Williams, our Coast Guard rep to the NNOA's Board of Directors, a network of volunteers, all of whom were NNOA members, was organized around the country. Their task was to engage minority students in their areas who had indicated interest in the Academy and to encourage them to complete the Academy's application process. Our intent was to increase the applicant pool, thereby increasing the number of minority students receiving appointments to the Academy. The volunteer network contacted and counseled 130 highly qualified minority students and their parents, giving each student that all-important one-on-one contact. The result was a 36% increase in the number of minority pre-applicants and a 27% increase in the number of finalists. Captain Williams' initiative in spearheading this program was part of the citation that accompanied his selection as the recipient of the 2003 NAACP Roy Wilkins Renowned Service Award. Congratulations, John, and thank you for all you've done to help lead our Service.

Besides the recommendations that will come from you here at your annual conference, I also hope you will continue your day-in/day-out efforts to lead, back at your units:

- Be successful at what you do. Of course everyone wants to be successful, but the ones who actually are, are those who put in the effort needed for their team to succeed, whether that "team" is your division, your department, your command, or your service. Sometimes being a team player means you're carrying the ball and sometimes it means you provide the assist. Ask yourself, "How can I add value to the team?", then make that happen.
- Be a role model. As an officer, no matter your race or gender, you are a role model, maybe to people you don't even realize see you in that light. Your influence is great -- you could very well be that make-or-break factor going into that Petty Officer's decision to re-enlist or not. You need look no further than Captain John Witherspoon to see the epitome of a role model. Captain Witherspoon enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1963, rose to Quartermaster First Class, was selected for Officer Candidate School and was commissioned an Ensign in 1971. He became the Coast Guard's first African-American to

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command a shore unit and in addition, he commanded three of our cutters. Our highest leadership award is the Captain John G. Witherspoon Inspirational Leadership Award, named for him, one of our greatest leaders.

- Be a mentor. We all need someone to help guide us, to steer us in the right direction. I remember well my first Senior Chief who gently nudged me a little, one way or the other, when I started going off track. He helped me not only with my shipboard duties, but was a sounding board for career discussions, general questions, that sort of thing. I'm sure he never thought he might be helping a future Flag Officer, let alone a future Commandant of the Coast Guard . . . as a matter of fact, I'm sure there were days when he wondered if I'd make JG . . . but you never know how high the people you mentor today will soar tomorrow.
- Join your service's diversity outreach programs. I mentioned the one Captain Williams initiated for the Coast Guard Academy. For those in the Coast Guard, volunteer for the COMPASS program, where volunteers go into minority communities to talk about the Coast Guard or apply for the Diversity Advisory Council. Both of these programs have just come out with messages soliciting applicants.
- Actively manage your career. Don't just let your career "happen" – grab it by the horns! Set goals – what do you want out of your current assignment? What do you want to do next? Where do you want to be in 5 years? In 10? Grad school? Command cadre? Something else? Then decide now what you need to do to make yourself competitive for those goals. If you want to go to grad school but your undergraduate grades weren't all that great, fine – sign up for a graduate class now and then put in the work needed to succeed at it, so the grad school selection panel sees that you have what it takes to perform at the graduate school level.

In her majority opinion in the University of Michigan law school case decided this term, Justice O'Connor states "In order to cultivate a set of leaders with legitimacy in the eyes of the citizenry, it is necessary that the path to leadership be visibly open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity." That's not just true for law school admissions, but in every setting – including the sea services. That's our goal – to be visibly open to talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity – to be an Employer of Choice. We are not where I want to be yet, but we're moving in the right direction. With your help – and your leadership – we will continue to move forward.

Thank you very much. Now I'd like to hear what's on your mind, so I'll open things up for any questions you might have.

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