

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
Annual State of the Coast Guard Address
“Making History”
21 April 2005

Amenities

Introduction

The State of the Coast Guard is a great opportunity to take stock of where we've been and where we're going. As a longstanding history buff, and even a teacher of it once upon a time, I am fascinated by the lessons history offers us and appreciate the value of understanding and applying those lessons in our current efforts. There are many quotes about history and the role it plays in society ... one of my favorites is, “History never looks like history when you are living through it” -- quite true for us today.

Then and Now – a comparison

Consider the following list of organizational challenges:

- A realignment and reorganization of field commands ...
- A reorganization of district and headquarters offices ...
- A new Department ...
- An expanding mission portfolio ...
- A new international agreement and a new domestic law that significantly expand Coast Guard authority and operations ...
- A significant growth in the number of Coast Guard personnel ...
- An expansion of our coastal communications systems ...
- An increased port security role for the Coast Guard ...
- A significant increase in the boarding of vessels at sea and escorting them into port ...
- Fighting our Nation's war ...

Some of you may hear that list and think, “Wow, today the Coast Guard really has a lot on its plate.”

While that list of challenges sounds familiar, I'm actually talking about the Coast Guard of 90 years ago. Around 1915, the Coast Guard had:

- two reorganizations of its Headquarters;
- a reorganization of its districts;

- a restructuring of field commands and cutters' chain-of-command;
- a new Department, when during World War I, we became "that hard nucleus about which the Navy forms in time of war;"
- a new international law, the Treaty for the Protection of Fur Seals and Sea Otters, which greatly expanded our operations in the Gulf of Alaska;
- a new domestic law, the Espionage Act which created our Captains of the Port;
- A greatly expanded coastal communications system to support our U-boat patrols; and
- The at-sea boardings of vessels carrying ammunition and explosives to ensure their safe arrival in port and offloading of their cargo.

Of course, most significantly, the modern Coast Guard was created when the Revenue Cutter Service was joined with the Lifesaving Service in 1915. Who we are today – an effective, efficient, and professional multimission, maritime, military service – is a direct result of the seemingly chaotic transformation of 1915 ...

... History in the making.

But the modern Coast Guard didn't just happen. It was sound, visionary leadership, a willingness to change what needed to be changed, and just as importantly, the willingness to safeguard those guiding principles most critical to organizational success.

In 1915, the Coast Guard's first Commandant, Commodore Ellsworth Bertolf, knew what was important, what had to remain rock solid no matter the changes we experienced: our core ideals, our value to the Nation, the "who we are". And he knew that the rest could change: our name, our Department, our size, our mission mix. As a visionary for our Service, he kept our core ideologies tightly fixed, but he displayed a powerful drive for progress that enabled him to change and adapt without compromising the Service's core values or operational principles.

We must apply the lessons of history today. We must be willing to change that which impedes progress but safeguard that which makes us relevant and operationally successful.

In fact, from the earliest days of our Constitution and the Revenue Marine ... to Bertholf's day and the establishment of the Coast Guard ... to the challenges we face today ... change and opportunity has always been a part of our history. Today the United States is confronted with tremendous challenges ... the world's greatest superpower and greatest democracy, attacked by a network of terrorists who seek the destruction of our freedom, our economy, and our culture. No one will ever forget the searing image of airliners crashing into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a Pennsylvania field. And from the horror of those moments come changes for our Nation and our Coast Guard.

Since 9/11, we've adapted operationally and culturally to those threats to our security and safety. Security and safety are inseparable. They are integral. They are both about preventing harm to Americans. While homeland security has refocused our operations, we remain committed to our traditional missions of search and rescue, fisheries enforcement, waterways management, and environmental protection.

All our missions, however, benefit from our aggressive efforts to find the best way to deliver service to America ... to secure our liberty and our economic prosperity. Our willingness to change operationally, organizationally, and technologically are fundamental to our success. But just as important, is our clear view that these changes are anchored by our core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty and our operational principles of on-scene initiative, flexibility, and managed risk.

Because we've adapted, because we've changed in response to the new environment in which we operate today, we are successful.

The past year

This has been an extraordinary year for the Coast Guard, one in which we continued our operational excellence across all missions. We accomplished these goals through our international coalitions, interagency cooperation, industrial partnerships, and because of our outstanding professionals in the field.

As Secretary Chertoff said at his swearing in, “America today is safer, stronger, and more secure.” I absolutely agree. Let me list some of our accomplishments:

1. On July 1st of last year, we began enforcing the Maritime Transportation Security Act, one of the most important pieces of legislation in Coast Guard history and critical to increasing the security of our Nation’s ports. We’ve conducted over 6800 compliance boardings of foreign vessels since July 1st, and when required, we expelled, detained, or denied entry to those vessels that did not meet our strengthened security standards.
2. We’ve increased the number of our Maritime Safety and Security Teams to 13, adding them in Anchorage, Honolulu, New Orleans, San Diego, and Miami. In addition to their everyday mission of protecting our ports and waterways, we’ve used these teams for the G8 Summit, both National Political Conventions, the Presidential Inauguration, the Super Bowl, and President Reagan’s Funeral.
3. We’ve enhanced the fusion of intelligence and operations by standing up 30 Field Intelligence Support Teams. We've leveraged technical intelligence and vessel tracking through our Atlantic and Pacific Area Maritime Intelligence Fusion Centers. And our partnership between the Intelligence Coordination Center and the Navy's Office of Naval Intelligence is improving our global maritime intelligence integration.
4. We supported – and continue to support – America’s Global War on Terror. We are proud of the unique capabilities we provide the theater commanders, while mindful of the sacrifices of those that gave their lives so that others may know the joy of liberty. Among them, we especially remember Petty Officer Nate Bruckenthal who died so far from home protecting Iraqi freedom. While we mourn his loss, we honor Nate’s sense of service and duty which is reflected in his fellow Coast Guard men and women.
5. We didn’t just have a record-setting year in counter-drug operations; we had a record-shattering year, seizing over 240,000 pounds of cocaine, exceeding the previous record by over 72% and 100,000 pounds. And this year, we’re ahead of last year’s pace. Keeping these drugs off our streets helped save innumerable lives from the tragedies of illegal drug use.
6. Our efforts to protect the nation's valuable fish stocks continued to be both robust and effective. In 2004, Coast Guard units conducted over 4,500 domestic fisheries boardings, an increase of more than 1,000

boardings from the previous year. These efforts resulted in a compliance rate of over 96%, and the seizure of more than 130,000 pounds of illegally caught marine species. In cooperation with our international partners, we significantly reduced the instances of foreign fishing vessel incursions into the rich fishing grounds off Alaska, and have made illegal high seas driftnet fishing a far less lucrative endeavor.

Yes, it has been another high-paced operational year for the Coast Guard. And while ensuring this day-to-day operational excellence, we are concurrently improving the way we deliver services to America, in very substantial ways. We are adjusting our mission strategies, our force structure, our organization, and revamping our capabilities to get the job done.

In essence, we are shaping our future, just as Commodore Bertholf did 90 years ago. We should be able to look back with pride and say, “We envisioned it; we created it; we made it happen ... and our country and our children’s future are better for our efforts.” We recognize there is a natural set and drift caused by external forces – and as professional mariners, we know we have to adjust our course and speed to account for them.

Commandant’s Direction - People

Our “game plan” is embedded in my Commandant’s Direction of People, Readiness, and Stewardship. Our fantastic people are key to effective service delivery. We are ensuring they have the right competencies to work effectively in our complex operating environment. I have directed a top-to-bottom review of professional competencies, especially those of our boarding teams, to ensure we have the right doctrine, training, and tools necessary for the 21st century. Concurrently, we are taking a round turn on our leadership development program. Our new and improved personal and unit leadership development programs are in place, and I expect all hands to take advantage of them. Sound leadership is the key to our success, today and tomorrow. Some of our best individual leaders are here with us today:

- our first-ever civilian inspirational leadership award, the Putnam Award was presented to Ms. Norma Bullock from Headquarters civilian personnel;
- Lieutenant Commander Adrian West of Group Mayport is our Witherspoon Award recipient; and

- Chief Damage Controlman Travis Lovvorn [LOVE-urn] of Group Humboldt Bay is our McShan Awardee.

Congratulations to the three of you -- would you please stand and receive our applause?

As significant as inspirational leadership is to the performance of our people, so is our ability to provide them with the right tools and services to enhance their personal success. We have committed to the largest tuition assistance program in Coast Guard history, believing firmly that a well-educated workforce is essential to deal with this era's growing complexities. We have instituted a new fitness program and new wellness standards to ensure personnel readiness is at an all-time high. We are joined today by two officers who represent the epitome of fitness, our Elite Athletes of the Year:

- Lieutenant Kerry Karwan [CAR-WIN], from MSO Houston-Galveston, who is an elite volleyball player; and
- Chief Warrant Officer Christopher Whitlock, an outstanding triathlete, stationed at the Personnel Command.

Would you two please stand? [applause]

Other important components of our workforce are our Reservists and our Coast Guard Auxiliary. They have played a critical role in our operational readiness. The threats and our response requirements have changed since September 11th, so our personnel surge capabilities must adjust as well. The Reserve Strategic Employment Study, due to me shortly, will outline what we require from the Coast Guard Reserve during an emergency or surge operation. I expect the Study to provide me with a better understanding of the total reserve forces needed to support our missions, including individual qualifications required and recommendations on how we employ our reserve forces. Coast Guard Auxiliary leadership has a new strategic plan that meshes well with our current security and safety environment. We are leveraging their extensive talents to enhance all our missions.

In regards to our active-duty workforce, we must be doing things right. We have some of the highest retention rates ever in the history of our Service. And recent results from our organizational assessment survey show impressive results ... we saw significant improvement between 2002 and 2004 in the areas of leadership and quality, training and career development, innovation, customer orientation, and use of resources. We set a new

benchmark standard amongst 23 other government agencies in the area of communications, leadership, and quality. This is indicative of the significant strides we have made over the past two years in our leadership development programs and the opportunities for individual professional growth across the entire workforce. I am very pleased with our progress but we can continue to do even better ... there is no more important focus than the commitment to our workforce.

Commandant's Direction - Readiness

In terms of our second strategic area of emphasis ... Readiness ... we will continue to seek ways to improve our operational excellence.

In 2004, we instituted the Maritime Transportation Security Act. In 2005, we build on its success by continuing to close remaining security gaps. We are actively involved with the development of a refocused national maritime homeland security strategy and policy, mandated by Homeland Security Presidential Directive number 13. And we will pursue legislative and regulatory changes to expand the population of vessels covered by our security regime, remove barriers to information sharing, and strengthen credentialing standards.

We will use technology to its fullest. The United States is bounded, but not protected, by its ocean borders. This fact requires viewing the oceans as they are: not borders or mere barriers to cross but rather, expansive pathways for potential threats that are ripe for exploitation and disruption. Security depends more than ever on our ability to achieve an effective understanding of the global maritime domain.

We've initiated a major acquisition project for the Nationwide Automatic Identification System to deploy sensors to track vessels in all our ports, waterways, and coastal areas. This vessel-tracking capability will greatly enhance our Maritime Domain Awareness, providing critical real-time vessel position and information. Having increased awareness of the vessels in and near our waters will allow us to better focus our resources on specific vessels of interest, resulting in improved mission effectiveness and operational readiness.

The Coast Guard's Command 2010 initiative will transform command and control as we increase maritime domain awareness. Specifically, Command 2010 will provide additional sensors for tracking cooperative and

non-cooperative vessels, will fuse vessel tracks with historical data, law enforcement information, and intelligence through the Common Operational Picture, and will increase interoperability between all echelons of command.

The Coast Guard is at the beginning of a 5-year plan to arm all of its aircraft. This Airborne Use of Force capability is being established across the fleet to provide support to our entire range of missions, including air intercept, counter-narcotics, delivery and force protection of boarding teams, and counter-terrorism.

By interagency partnerships in Charleston and Miami, and the Joint Harbor Operations Centers in Norfolk and San Diego, the power of co-location and unity of effort has been proven. The Nation is best served when Federal, state, and local responders join forces and coordinate intelligence and operations. We will expand the number of integrated joint operations centers and aggressively pursue closer partnerships with private industry and all levels of government.

Our Deepwater recapitalization is key to readiness and our ability to meet our multimission requirements. I thank the Administration for its strong support and recognition that the original Deepwater plan must change to reflect the post-9/11 environment. I am encouraged by the statements of support I have received from Congress and look forward to working with Congress to deliver the President's budget.

Our Deepwater partnership with Integrated Coast Guard Systems, a joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, remains strong. It is worth noting that Deepwater is an important contributor to the Nation's industrial base and economic engine; more than 300 subcontractors and suppliers in more than 40 states are contributing to the program, with even more companies involved in the supply and production of parts and subsystems.

This year's approval of a revised Deepwater Mission Needs Statement and Implementation Plan, reflecting our post-9/11 needs, is the program's most significant development since we awarded the Deepwater contract. The new plan moves the delivery dates of the Fast Response Cutter and Offshore Patrol Cutter up by 10 and 5 years, to 2007 and 2010, respectively.

The National Security Cutter is the flagship of Deepwater's System of Systems. Last month, together with Secretary and Mrs. Chertoff, I

participated in the keel-laying ceremony for our first National Security Cutter, a significant milestone in Deepwater's transformation of the Coast Guard for our 21st-century missions.

We are moving out smartly to realign our field organizations, establishing Sector commands. After 9/11, it became obvious that we needed to realign our operational face to the public – having two Coast Guards in the same city just didn't make sense.

The Operations and Marine Safety communities are being integrated in the field first, where it matters most -- at the point of service delivery. Necessarily, if we're changing our face at the point of delivery to the public, we also have to look at the chain-of-command, to realign the Operations and Marine Safety staffs at districts, Areas, and Headquarters to the response and prevention construct we are implementing at the Sector level. We will see those realignments within the next 12 months.

The Coast Guard also fully supports Secretary Chertoff's Second-Stage Review, where the department is considering the necessary operational and management changes to make America more secure and our department more integrated and efficient.

Commandant's Direction - Stewardship

As we work towards the future, we have a duty to wisely steward the assets and resources placed in our care. Just as good leaders are important to our success, our people must have the right tools to do the jobs we ask of them. As we work with Integrated Coast Guard Systems to bring Deepwater on line, they are also working with us to update our failing legacy assets. Senior leadership in the Coast Guard, Department, Administration, and Congress all recognize the deplorable state of our cutters and aircraft. We have the 39th oldest fleet of the 41 major navies and coast guards of the world ... only Mexico and the Philippines are older. Our dedicated men and women deserve better and they will get it.

We have and are continuing to address the issues surrounding our legacy assets:

- This year, the Coast Guard Yard will start on the Mission Effectiveness Project, to upgrade our Medium Endurance Cutters for their remaining service life. This project will replace aging, obsolete,

and in many cases, failing systems, ensuring the operational readiness of these "work horses" until Deepwater's Large and Medium Security Cutters come on line.

- We are converting our 110-foot patrol boats into more capable 123-foot cutters, equipped with a modernized bridge, completely upgraded command and control systems, and stern boat-launch capability. Sometimes, change is uneven but it offers us the opportunity to learn from the school of hard knocks. The first 123, MATAGORDA, had problems when it came out of the yard, but those have been corrected and I'm happy to report that MATAGORDA recently returned from a very successful patrol. We've taken the lessons learned from MATAGORDA's conversion and applied them to follow-on efforts.
- Re-engining the HH-65 helicopter fleet continues to be my highest aviation concern. We are moving out at best speed at the Aviation Repair and Supply Center to restore operational safety and reliability to these critical assets. We are looking at ways to speed things up, including accelerating engine delivery, standing up a second re-engining facility, and purchasing additional aircraft. I am confident we will complete operational re-engining in 2007.

Clearly, we are moving out across a broad front with a wide variety of initiatives ... and necessarily so. There are a number of factors driving us to change, but none more important than our need to secure America's maritime border. We are on a mission to effect change, not for change's sake, but because the times require it.

Conclusion

As I close, let me cite another quote, this one from a New York newspaper: "The consensus of those we interviewed on the streets of Manhattan is that we'll welcome the new century with open arms. But don't expect us not to be a little frightened. Business is changing. Work is changing. Science is advancing. The world political climate is unlike anything we've ever witnessed. Even the weather seems different. Many see the party coming to an end. Others see a dawn of even greater opportunity."

Can you relate? Well, that passage was actually written when then-Second Lieutenant Bertholf was the Executive Officer on Revenue Cutter BEAR -- December, 1899!

But the point is the same. Whether it's a hundred years ago or a hundred years from now, change is constant and always brings some degree of discomfort. But it's also necessary for opportunity -- an opportunity for us to lead an ever-evolving, ever-improving Coast Guard.

“History never looks like history when you are living through it” ... Coast Guard men and women, let me assure you that we are making history in today's Coast Guard. These are dynamic and exciting times, and we must meet them with a sense of purpose and urgency. With your help, your ideas, and your energy, we will make the Coast Guard even more effective, and better integrated with our partners in government and in the private sector.

I thank you in advance for your efforts and look forward to another great year in the service of America.

Thank you and Semper Paratus!