

Admiral T. H. Collins
CGCs SHAMAL & TORNADO Commissioning
Naval Station Pascagoula, Pascagoula, MS
6 December 2004

Good morning! Thank you all for joining us here for today's commissioning of the two newest cutters to join the Coast Guard fleet, SHAMAL and TORNADO.

[Recognize VIPs].

We're extremely fortunate to have the senior Senator from Mississippi among those who are here today to help us celebrate. Senator Cochran, thank you very much for joining us today.

We in the Coast Guard are indebted to the support shown by Senator Cochran. He keeps a sharp focus on the homeland security issues facing Mississippi and our Nation. At a time of sharply competing resource demands, he, like President Bush, has shown a keen understanding of the need for our Nation to have the capability and capacity necessary to keep America safe and secure, today and in the future. Of course, capability and capacity depend on modernization of the Coast Guard's surface and air fleets – they are critically important assets that will provide significant counter-terrorism capability to the Nation. With the help and guidance of Congress, the Coast Guard will rebuild its fleet and will be able to dramatically improve homeland security in the maritime arena, all the while continuing to save lives, ensuring illegal drugs and migrants don't reach our shores, and keeping our ports and waterways operating efficiently. We thank you for your support.

The transfer of SHAMAL and TORNADO help to provide a bridge to a modernized fleet. They will help fill a gap in Coast Guard resources at a time when our inventory of 110-foot patrol boats is being converted to 123-foot cutters and the rest of our fleet continues a historic, high tempo of operations. These cutters will help us defend the homeland and accomplish the many missions that America expects of the Coast Guard. Homeporting them here in Pascagoula will help us meet my readiness goals by providing

essential, additional operational capacity on America's critically important southern maritime border.

- The Coast Guard performs significant missions in the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean, with great benefit to the American taxpayers. For example:
- The Coast Guard protects vital waterways and ports to ensure the safety and security of our Nation's mariners and commerce. Consider the Louisiana Off-shore Oil Platform and its significant contribution to America's energy requirements and economic security: approximately 30% of the foreign oil imported into this country comes via that platform or roughly 11% of total petroleum products nationwide.
- Our men and women in blue go out when needed, no matter the weather or the seas, to save lives.
- They are on our Nation's waters to patrol our borders and ensure illegal drugs and migrants do not reach our shores. Last year was a record year in counter-drug operations for us -- we seized over 240,000 pounds of cocaine, shattering the previous record by over 100,000 pounds or 72%. Keeping these drugs off our streets helps save innumerable lives which will now not be impacted by the tragedies of illegal drug use.

Moving SHAMAL and TORNADO to Mississippi will keep the Coast Guard "Semper Paratus" and ensure we have the right resources in the Gulf and the Caribbean to continue performing all these missions. This change of homeport meets all three points of my strategic emphasis on readiness, people, and stewardship.

- We're improving readiness: From their new homeport, here at Naval Station Pascagoula, SHAMAL and TORNADO are well positioned for their primary missions of maritime homeland security, search and rescue, and law enforcement. And overall logistics and maintenance support is enhanced – therefore, overall fleet readiness goes up.
- Our people also get to enjoy the quality-of-life of this area -- it's a terrific place to be stationed! SHAMAL and TORNADO join the other Coast Guard units here in Pascagoula – Cutter DECISIVE

and Station Pascagoula -- and the other 10 Coast Guard units who call Mississippi home, all of whom have served this region and the United States well. Lieutenant Commanders Hollingshead and Raymond, you and your crews are joining a lucky group of Coast Guard men and women stationed here on Singing River Island.

- Stewardship is also enhanced with this move: These cutters, crews, and families will receive both effective and efficient support here. The Naval Station will be an excellent host for the two cutters. Cutter DECISIVE has received outstanding support from the Navy. I know SHAMAL and TORNADO are looking forward to the NAVSTA's support and hospitality. In addition, the Naval Station is a secure location and will significantly enhance the force protection and security for these highly visible and valuable military units.

This move also helps further cement the extraordinary partnership between the Coast Guard and Navy. As noted by Admiral Crea, I'd like to recognize the fact that these units have been engaged in homeland security operations since shortly after 9/11. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Clark, recognized the significant contribution these assets bring to this mission. The Navy/CG partnership has only grown stronger as the homeland security mission has grown. The shift of these vessels from the Navy to the Coast Guard is a testament to our continuing collaborative efforts to secure America's maritime border.

Commander Rea ["RAY" – CO, NAVSTA], and all our friends in the Navy: I know that Admiral Clark, Chief of Naval Operations, would be proud of your efforts to make SHAMAL and TORNADO welcome here at your fine Station. Your cooperation and support in readying these vessels' homeport is yet another example of how well the Navy and the Coast Guard work together – from our war efforts in Operation Iraqi Freedom to the Navy's transfer of these Patrol Coastals to the Coast Guard – it's a partnership focused on success.

Pascagoula is fortunate not just to have these cutters tie up here, but also to be getting such fine new citizens. To our crews and families: I know this area is glad to have you here, as a part of their community, and will make you feel at home. As part of this community partnership, I charge you

to be the very best citizens you can be. Coast Guard cutters all over the Nation enjoy a rich relationship with their local communities. Get involved and let your fellow citizens get to know you for the fine people that you are. Welcome to your new home.

Now it is my great honor to introduce our next speaker.

Senator Thad Cochran is a tried and true Mississippi native and a great American, called to a life of duty and service to others. As most of you know, he was born and raised here, graduating from Ole Miss. Upon graduation, he was commissioned an Ensign in the Naval Reserve and served on board USS MACON. Senator Cochran served five years in the Navy, rising to the rank of Lieutenant. He attended law school at Ole Miss and then practiced law for the Jackson firm of Watkins & Eager, becoming a partner in only two-and-a-half years. In 1972, Senator Cochran was elected to the House of Representatives, where he served until his election to the Senate in 1978 and he has served in the Senate ever since.

Senator Cochran has done an extraordinary job in both the House and Senate representing the needs of Mississippi for more than 30 years. He is doing the same for the entire Nation as he addresses America's homeland security needs, focusing on what is needed to make our country safe and secure.

Senator, I realize I'm a day early, but on behalf of the entire Coast Guard, let me wish you a very Happy Birthday.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Senator Thad Cochran.