

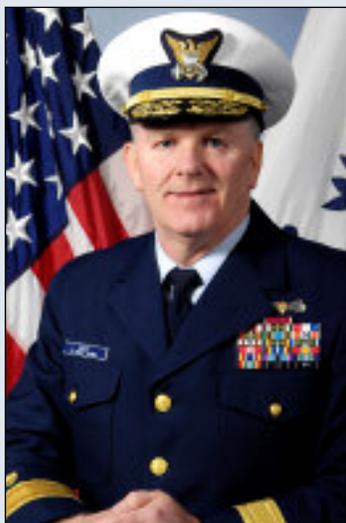


INTERVIEW WITH THE COMMANDANT

WITH AN INTRODUCTION FROM RDML DANIEL MAY

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A Commitment to Improving Readiness, Mission Support and Mission Execution

In my very first “View from the Bridge,” I outlined what our top priorities would be for this year. The number one item on that list was to modernize the Reserve Force, including implementing the Reserve Force Readiness System (RFRS), re-positioning our full-time support (FTS) billets, and right-sizing our SELRES.

Over the past six months, we have made significant progress in this effort. In June 2008, the Leadership Council approved the RFRS model for the future management of our Reserve Force, and we are currently in the middle of a large-scale effort to re-position the FTS billets to support RFRS. Additionally, we have proposed growth of our Reserve Force with two new port

security units, along with the FTS to support them. In the future, we are planning to add up to 200 new billets in the field to support our operational commanders.

Below is the interview with the Commandant, and he discusses many of these items as well as a number of other key issues involving reservists. As you’ll read, the Commandant is committed to improving the readiness of our Reserve Force and improving everything we do to support you in order to enhance your contributions to mission execution. We are very fortunate to have this opportunity for the Commandant to share his many thoughts and ideas.

Enjoy!

On July 28, 2008, THE RESERVIST interviewed the Coast Guard Commandant, ADM Thad W. Allen. He discusses an array of Reserve-related issues, including Reserve integration of the 1990s, the Reserve Force Readiness System and the way ahead for the Coast Guard Reserve.

THE RESERVIST: *Was there a particular experience you had, or an event that influenced your decision to include the Reserve component as one of your top priorities for the organization to resolve?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Yes, there are actually a couple. Let me give you a refresher on how I became involved with the Reserve during my career. I had what I would call very little contact with reservists until I became the Group Commander in Atlantic City from 1979 to 1982. Back then it was a group with four stations and I became fully exposed to the reserve unit structure as it was at that time.

Before the mid-1990s, we actually had reserve units, with commanding officers, but most notably, training officers and admin officers. While it was not always visible to the active component, they took care of what I would call the care and feeding of the reservists. They made sure they were being properly trained, qualified and the administrative needs were

taken care of. And that’s pretty much the way it used to be.

Fast forward many years later, when I was a Group Commander in Long Island — a couple of things happened there. First of all, we went through Reserve integration, and I had to actually take a system of reserve units. The reserve units were done away with and they were moved over and integrated with the active component. I also dealt with a whole bunch of leadership issues associated with what to do with senior enlisted and senior officers who were displaced from command and leadership positions. It was a very difficult time.

About the same time, everybody started to grapple with how big the Coast Guard Reserve should be, who should manage it, and whether the Selected Reserve was the right size? Prior to my tenure in Long Island, I had some exposure to reserve issues related to the work I did as the deputy in G-CPA, now CG-82 (Office of Budget and Programs).

While I was at Long Island as an O-6, I was also assigned one year to the Coast Guard Reserve Policy Board, chaired at that point by Reserve RADM Rick Schneider, prior to his retirement. So I got immersed in issues related to Reserve support as a result of that assignment.

With all this background in Reserve issues, it led me to inquire further how things were structured regarding billets, and how we administered the program and so forth.

From there, I went to the Seventh District, where I was fully involved in Reserve programs, and then the Fifth District. Ditto on 9/11, when I was LANTAREA Commander, and we had to mobilize and put people up in Boston Harbor and New York Harbor. And then finally, with the support for the waterside security at Guantanamo Bay, I really started to see how frayed the system had become between 1995 and 2001, with no suitable replacement for the training and administration that was provided by the reserve units. I am not indicating we should go back to them, but we didn't get it right.

I've made the statement on several occasions why we didn't foresee the events of 9/11 in the mid-1990s. We practiced Reserve integration for all intents and purposes. But when we really needed to mobilize the Reserve after 9/11, we found out we had practiced Reserve disintegration.

THE RESERVIST: *What hurdles, if any, do you foresee to implementing Reserve Force Readiness System beginning in 2009?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Well, there are always issues related to organizational change, new business models and so forth. But frankly, the real [challenge] in this thing is going to be the redistribution of the full-time support billets. That's always been a key issue.

When I met with the Reserve folks gathered in Dallas (Reserve Management Conference, September 2007), the one thing I told them — the guidance I gave, frankly, was that however we distribute the full-time support (FTS) billets under the new construct, it should be able to withstand a desk audit by the Inspector General (IG) or anybody else, looking into whether or not they were properly applied to Reserve support. That raises a lot of issues because sometimes we just augment support staff with billets, knowing that a portion of the workload is related to the Reserve.

But you can't go into somebody that's in a support billet always, and say, "All right, tell me what you do every day that's related to the Reserve?" I thought we needed more clarity, less ambiguity and a greater nexus between what those billets were intended to do in national Reserve support.

THE RESERVIST: *You stated at the Reserve Management Conference last fall in Dallas that the Reserve program needed to finish the implementation it started during integration in the 90s. From your review of the Reserve Force Readiness System, do you believe it completes the process?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: I believe it will. I haven't seen the finalized implementation plan, but the things we are replacing back into the system are accountability at the field level for the administration, training, and mobilization of reservists. And that would largely be embodied in a new Reserve support structure at the sector level.

What we lost in the mid-1990s was a point of accountability. It was easy to have accountability for training reservists to augment. But if you're looking at trying to train and equip, and make ready for deployment a force whose basic statutory authority is mobilization, we in fact moved away from that. Now that could have been based on assumptions related to post-Cold War threats, and the perceived lessening need to mobilize reservists.

But as we found on 9/11, that is not what happened. We need to make sure we take care of business and create a structure that allows us to adequately train, administer the Reserve program, and then mobilize reservists when we need them.

THE RESERVIST: *The process of developing a Reserve Force Readiness System in less than a year is a significant lift. What advice would you give to the implementation team as they move forward?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Stay busy.

THE RESERVIST: *The RFRS model provides a systems approach to our world of work. Resources are placed in the chain where reservists are assigned. The uniqueness of the Reserve force is addressed. In your words, how do you think these strengths will resolve long-standing problems in managing the Reserve force?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Dedicating resources to the problem places a point of accountability at the unit-level. A visible organizational location for that support will be beneficial to everybody who needs it.

THE RESERVIST: *RFRS places an emphasis on training and recruiting. Do you see the Reserve force growing?*



ADMIRAL ALLEN: I think we need to look at the size of the Reserve force. I think there's every reason to believe we could use more Reserve capacity. But I have to tell you, going clear back to 1995, when I was a Group Commander on Long Island — we never came up with a single agreed upon methodology by which to size the Reserve force — Contingency Personnel Requirements List, or augmentation or whatever. That was somewhat exacerbated by the fact that both Areas had different methodologies, or ways they would build the Reserve requirements. We would simplify that to some extent because when we establish Coast Guard Force Readiness Command and the Coast Guard Operations Command, there should be no duality, or split methodology used to size the requirements.

I think we'll have an organizational structure in place that will do two things. Number one, we will be able to administer the program better at the field level; and number two, we will have unity of command at the operational level. We will also generate a single set of requirements. I think we can establish what the gaps are. And I am more than happy to go in and seek an increase in Reserve, but I think we need to have that structure in place to support it.

THE RESERVIST: *One of the aspects of the Reserve Force Readiness System is the concept that everything we do impacts Reserve force readiness. This includes our entire world of work from assessing the right person, making the best assignment, paying them promptly and accurately, effectively and efficiently utilizing the RT appropriation to enhance readiness and developing on target policy. A critical success factor is shifting everyone's thinking, from admin support and logistics, to readiness preparedness. Can you assist us in sending this important message?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Well I think to start with [we need to ask], should the social contract with an active-duty member be any different than the social contract with a reservist? And to the extent we are focusing on readiness and human resource systems to support our most valuable commodity — that's our people — should we treat the Reserve component differently than the active-duty component? The answer is no. Over the past few years, it's been somewhat degraded by changes we've tried to make. It's time to restore that.



THE RESERVIST: *How does the establishment of a law enforcement and security rating impact the PS rating?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: I gave explicit orders as part of the LETSGO (Law Enforcement, Tactical and Security Group Occupation) study team that they were to address the issue of the PS rating, because for a long time, going back to when I was LANTAREA Commander, we'd known it was an orphaned rating. It didn't have an active-duty counterpart.

Because of that, we tended to redefine the PS rating every time we had a new challenge in the Coast Guard they might be able to impact. I remember when we first started this back in the early 1970s, we had a huge influx of firemen and policemen, locally, who populated that rating to do port-security work. But over the years, some folks have drifted more into small-boat operations, while some others have drifted into what I would consider almost a Marine Science Technician type of work. It tended to lose its identity. It didn't have the anchor of a curriculum in a school on the active-duty side to kind of keep it pointed the right way. So, it was a fundamental part of the LETSGO study to address the PS rating as well.

THE RESERVIST: *How do you envision policy for dwell time impacting operations?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: That's going to be an interesting thing to watch. If you look at addressing the entire Reserve component as a system, then you have to address what I would call parity and equity in application to the requirements of the Coast Guard.

Because of the vagaries of the system, and the fact we didn't have a set system to deal with admin mobilization in support of reservists, we tended to get folks that wanted to volunteer. And most of the time we would ask for and get enough volunteers. It was kind of haphazard on how we did that.

Looking at our [DoD] counterparts across the (Potomac) river, the Reserve components have been involved in what we all agree is an era of persistent conflict. There is going to be an enduring requirement for Reserve support. I know Master Chief [Reserve Force] Jeff Smith has done a lot of work with his Reserve [DoD] counterparts.

But we need to create a system that is very similar to the other services, where there is a predictable rotation we can train our people to establish a readiness cycle, and let them know there will be a period of time where they will be available for deployment. It would be a more equitable burden sharing across the Reserve component to add predictability to the individual members, and also inform the unit on what their responsibilities are to get these people equipped for their mobilization period.

And as I've told people at All Hands lately, you know over a five-year cycle, there will be a year where that's going to be your year, and you're on call. And whether it's for military out load assignment or waterside security at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, you'll know when you are going to go. There will be a cycle associated with it; you'll be able to train to it. There will be a readiness level required for you to be mobilized.

I think in the long run it will create enduring capability for whatever we have to deal with in the Coast Guard. And we'll find out at that point, once we set that cycle up, the support structure that matches it, and whether or not we've got the right size for the Reserve.

THE RESERVIST: *On that last comment, maybe you could expand — what has been absent since integration — for the training and utilization of employment. And given this era of persistent conflict that we find ourselves in, how do you see the role of say, working, to define that.*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Well, it's probably better to describe it in terms of what our DoD counterparts are doing. I think it's a general recognition that you need

some capacity to be able to respond on short notice to contingencies around the world, and for us, it would be all hazards, all threats.

If you look at what's going on in Iraq, what's going on in Afghanistan, the horn of Africa, Southern Philippines and elsewhere, it's pretty well recognized, on the defense side of the house, that there needs to be some recurring capacity to deal with a number of different small engagements in an era of persistent conflict.

We know for instance, that we have a long and enduring requirement in the Persian Gulf. We're not even anywhere near the point now where we can shift security for securing the oil platforms. But beyond that, there are issues of development and long-term training requirements for our partner nations over there.

For the foreseeable future, we're going to be doing that. For the foreseeable future, we are going to be in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. For the foreseeable future, we will be doing what I've characterized as incremental out-loads. We don't have the big wars like we had before, where you mobilize troops — and then they come back home. What we have are persistent, periodic out-loads to different parts around the country, trying to address all of this through recalls, whether it's voluntary or involuntary, and then source these every year through supplemental funding.

Is it consistent? It doesn't allow you to do long-range planning, and it lacks consistency in application of the force. We need to create that same extra level of capability that DoD has created, and respond to new challenges in our persistent conflict. The only way to do that is with our Reserve component.

THE RESERVIST: *You mentioned earlier the challenges that we've faced since Reserve integration, especially for senior enlisted. What is your vision for where you see that headed in the future? Also, we haven't really addressed, necessarily, that pre-mobilization piece that resides within integration. Do you have any thoughts about how we continue to develop that and build that into the pre-mobilization piece for the organization?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: Well, I think once we define what the staffing and the management constructs are for the sector and the district, and the tier set of resources to help manage the Reserve program, then I would treat that almost as a fixed constant in the equation. Then you have other capacity that is out there in the form of your senior enlisted leaders, and the officers that are assigned to the Selected Reserve.

I think then what we're going to need to do is have a pretty good assessment of the best application of those skill sets. But I'm going to give you a couple of examples. There is every reason to believe we can have some kind of a senior leader development program within sectors and commands, where people come up

and they qualify as command-duty officers working in command centers, and become surge capability for those local commands in times of, for instance the recent New Orleans oil spill.

We also have not clarified the role of the Reserve component in the deployable specialized forces. We have the port security units already, which have a command structure. Some of the MSSTs were created with the Reserve components, and some of them were not.

Master Chief [Reserve Force] Smith and I have talked about this several times. We are going to have to decide whether or not we want a Reserve component, and can a Reserve component be adequately supported? And when we move outside the sector construct, what do we think about the Reserve component, particularly for the MSSTs?

The reason I bring that up is there are leadership and command opportunities there as well. So I think we need to kind of lay all that out and look at the officer structure and the senior enlisted structure.

There is another thing too. When we are doing mobilization and deployments, you are still going to have reservists back at home. There's always going to be a piece that won't mobilize. And there will be an enduring requirement for somebody to manage the Reserve programs, like the people who are assigned to full-time support billets.

And what we'll have to figure out is what is our career progression for senior enlisted and senior officers within that? I think there are plenty of opportunities, but I'm not sure it was clarified as well as it should have been.

I had a Reserve Group Commander who was my counterpart at Long Island — but after Reserve integration, he became the Senior Reserve Advisor, or Senior Reserve Officer. And quite frankly, that was pretty tough on these folks. They didn't know what their job description was, and it varied from place to place. Depending on their background, they were employed differently by different commands and became kind of inconsistent. I think we've got to bring that kind of structure back into it.

THE RESERVIST: *What we hear sometimes is the Team Coast Guard concept in regards to integration doesn't need duplication of effort because we're going to take care of everybody, with respect to the senior leadership, whether it's enlisted or officer positions. But I think what we've found is number one, that there's some unique knowledge that really doesn't reside in the active-duty component. And also, there really is a workload here, it's a workload issue. Can you offer a comment on that?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: I have said from the start, our external environment has changed dramatically, and

the requirements on our Reserve component are not the same as they were in 1995. So this is not a referendum on what was done in the past — on whether we did the right thing or not. Rather, it is a referendum on whether or not the current structure created in the mid-1990s is suitable in a post-9/11 world. It clearly needs to be changed — it's not responsive. That doesn't mean that anything was wrong. That was not the intent of what we tried to do.

Now that said, there's lots of talent in the Reserve component that could be utilized to benefit the active duty side. For example, let's look at the things we really need to do on the Human Resources side of the Coast Guard right now, like mentoring. The Reserve chief petty officers can mentor active duty enlisted and help bring them along and develop them. That is also going to help us with diversity.

And having some force multipliers for the senior enlisted at the sector level is good, but you've got to bring them into the fold. Everybody has got to understand what you're trying to do together, whether it's leadership training or dealing with the difficult

decisions these young kids have to make right. If you are dealing with it as "a family within the sector," you are going to be much more effective in dealing with your work force.

THE RESERVIST: *Any final comments?*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: There's an opportunity here in my view. You are never going to have a Commandant sitting where I'm at right now, that's lived this for as many years as I have, who understands the problems we'll be taking on. That's not a value judgment on anybody else, it's just the fact where I happened to have been. I have been tracking this thing for many years.

THE RESERVIST: *Well thank you sir. We appreciate you taking time with us today.*

ADMIRAL ALLEN: No problem, you're welcome.

