



## All Hands Messages

### *Commandant's Change of Command*

Guardians,

Later today, I will be relieved as Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard by Admiral Robert Papp. It has been an honor to serve as your Commandant for the past four years and I am confident in Admiral Papp's ability to lead the Service during a period of tremendous changes, challenges, and opportunities. The value of the U.S. Coast Guard has never been greater than it is today and it is the men and women of our great Service who truly make it all possible.

After the Change of Command ceremony, I will continue to serve as the National Incident Commander for the Gulf of Mexico oil spill for some period of time but I wanted to take this final opportunity to thank you for your tremendous commitment, dedication, and courage over the past four years.

When I became the Commandant in 2006, I issued a number of orders that I thought were necessary to meet the challenges we faced then and set the conditions for future success. With your help we have accomplished a great deal. We transformed our acquisition process, enhanced our marine safety capability and capacity, created a new and more effective support structure for our Reserve Forces, stood up the Force Readiness Command and Deployable Operations Group, created the Maritime Enforcement Rating, and transformed our maintenance and logistics processes. At the same time we met operational challenges in piracy off the Horn of Africa, the tsunami in America Samoa, the earthquake in Haiti, and more recently the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. We accomplished all of that without losing focus on our broader mission set. We continued to interdict drugs and made major strides to eliminate the use of self propelled semi-submersibles. We deployed wireless biometric capability to significantly reduce illegal alien migration. At the same time we saved countless lives.

In the last six years, we have also strengthened our relationships within the Department of Homeland Security. Through the completion of the first Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, we helped mature the Department and build the Nation's homeland security enterprise.

In the process we enhanced our ties to the Department of Defense. We held unprecedented staff talks with the Navy, Air Force, Marines, Army Corps of Engineers and the National Guard Bureau. The Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps and I cosigned "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower" and

Naval Operating Concepts. We forged stronger bonds with our interagency partners in the Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Maritime Administration, Drug Enforcement Administration, National Transportation Safety Board, and the Department of the Interior. Finally, we strengthened our international ties with our hemispheric partners and through the North Pacific Coast Guard Forum and North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum. Together, we raised the visibility of Coast Guard missions to our external stakeholders and our international partners.

The common thread connecting each of these of initiatives and actions, and my overarching goal as Commandant, was for the Coast Guard to become more change-centric ... to sense changes in our operational environment and have the courage to make course corrections before problems overwhelm us or we have terms dictated to us externally. To do that we must become more diverse, adapt to new technologies, and embrace social media as well. I believe we have become more change-centric and a learning organization that capitalizes on lessons learned. Nowhere has this been more evident than in our responses to the devastating earthquake in Haiti and in our leading role to the ongoing oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. The world has seen the value of the U.S. Coast Guard in action. We protect, defend, and save America's maritime interests wherever they are at stake - that is the legacy you have left for our future Guardians to embrace.

In spite of our operational successes, challenges remain. Our operations are not risk free and we have known the pain at the loss of shipmates from USCGC HEALY, MSST Anchorage, CG 6505, and CG 1705. Our promise to them is to prevent future accidents and insure we create the safest possible environment for our personnel. The Coast Guard will meet future challenges because of our multi-mission nature, bias for action, and the incredible talent and dedication of our people. As we look to the future, I encourage each of you to be insatiably curious, to be life-long learners, to look after your shipmates, and, finally, to seize every chance to apply your leadership skills, talent, and competencies when the opportunity presents itself.

I am incredibly proud of all our active duty members, reservists, civilians and auxiliaries. No matter how fiercely the winds of change swirl around us, our people stabilize the Service. You are America's Maritime Guardians and your country needs you now more than ever. It has been my extraordinary honor to have been your Commandant and I am excited to see where you will take the organization in the future. Fair winds.

Sincerely,

Admiral Thad W. Allen  
Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard

