

Change of Command – Commandant – 25 May 2010

Good morning Shipmates!

Secretary Napolitano...Secretary Gates...Admiral Allen.

Distinguished guests, family, friends, and classmates...thank you...for honoring us with your presence.

It's wonderful that so many of our Coast Guard Family...along with our partner agencies and friends...have the opportunity observe the relief of our 23rd Commandant, and to see Admiral Thad Allen honored for his many contributions to our country, and our Coast Guard. Linda and I are thrilled to be here this morning...in fact, as a Coastie, I would have felt privileged to have simply been in the audience today...in either an active duty or retired status...to see this event. Just imagine how I must feel to be on the stage with him as his relief!

I am grateful for the confidence of President Obama and Secretary Napolitano in nominating me to become the 24th Commandant of the Coast Guard, and to the Senate for confirming me. I'm honored by the opportunity to continue serving our country, and I will work, and conduct myself in a manner that secures your trust. More importantly, I'm humbled by the opportunity to lead the great men and women of the United States Coast Guard with whom I have proudly served alongside for over 35 years.

On a personal note, I am especially grateful that my wife Linda and our three daughters...Lindsay and twins Caitlin and Jillian, son-in-law Justin, future son-in-law Jordan, granddaughter Penelope and the entire Papp and Kapral families – are with me today. Linda and the girls have been an inseparable part of my life...and, as many of you in the audience can attest, my Coast Guard career and my adventures at sea have been an inseparable part of our marriage and family life...some might say insufferable...but inseparable, nonetheless.

I would like to extend a very personal THANK YOU to Admiral Allen...Sir, I'm grateful for the opportunities that you gave me to serve as Chief of Staff, and then Commander, Atlantic Area.

Along with the entire Coast Guard, and the citizens of our country, Linda and I are indebted to you and PAM for your long service, and the extraordinary courtesy that the two of you have extended to us as we worked to relieve the watch.

Relieving the watch...As we conduct this ceremony, hundreds of Coast Guardsmen in the Fleet are preparing for the Noon Watch, the 1200 to 1600. As they do so, they will make a round of the ship, inspect the cutter's log for status, mission and tasking, check the weather, and take a fix of the ship's position. Only when there is a clear understanding of the condition, mission and safety of the ship, will the on-coming Officer of the Deck declare that he or she is ready to relieve the watch. It was the routine of my life for over 14 years of going to sea. This routine is not followed for the sake

of tradition...even though traditions are important...it's done for a purpose – to ensure the ship remains on course – its crew safe – that the relieving officer is ready for watch, and the mission is accomplished.

While the routine at sea runs in four hour cycles...the watch of a Commandant runs for four years...but the principles remain the same. Over the last two years – I figuratively, and literally, made a round of the ship – by visiting and talking with thousands of shipmates...and I listened to them. I heard **LOUD** and **CLEAR** that they remain committed to mission excellence – but need the resources – the ships, aircraft, boats, communications systems & shore infrastructure - to keep up with increasingly challenging missions in the unforgiving maritime environment. At the same time, they desire policies and an organizational structure that provide consistency and stability, and facilitate their dreams and aspirations, while accommodating the practical realities of today's family life. We want the Coast Guard to be the Service of Choice

for ALL Americans. But regardless of policy or resource concerns...we still have the Honor and Privilege of performing meaningful work that is essential to the long term safety and security of our country. Our people are capable of heroic and extraordinary deeds, but we should not ask them to do more than our resources allow. At the same time, we must do our absolute best with what we have to sustain mission excellence. We owe it to our country and our Shipmates...I expect nothing better...you should accept nothing less.

Conclusion.

Madam Secretary...the watch is set...the mission is understood.

Captain Fagin...All standing orders remain in effect...carry out the routine of the day:

And...To my Shipmates...Active duty, Civilian, Reserve and Auxiliary (and the retired versions of all of the foregoing):

We are privileged to be members of a very unique Service that, due to our collection of missions, and legacy agencies, sometimes

defies logic when someone attempts to classify us, or to place a label on us. As we continue this voyage over the next 4 years, we will be defined by our missions, people and heritage. We will selflessly serve our country, and perform our duties in a manner that secures the trust and confidence of mariners and citizens alike. We will set a course that Steadies the Service, Honors our Profession, Strengthens our Partnerships, and Respects our Shipmates.

So when I am pressed for an answer by those who try to define, classify, characterize or label us...whenever I've been asked to describe what I am, I have always relied definitively, succinctly, accurately, sincerely and with pride:

I...am a Coast Guardsman...

We...are the men and women of the United States Coast Guard.

So, All ahead standard...steady as you go...stand a taut watch.

Semper Paratus! Thank you!