

INTERTANKO Tanker Seminar
Remarks of the Commandant
May 30, 2013
Oslo, Norway

Good morning! At least I think its morning. My body clock tells me it may still be last night. But either way, I'm very excited to be here in Oslo, and I'd like to thank everyone at INTERTANKO for the opportunity to speak with you today.

In particular I'd like to thank Kathi Stanzel for her kind invitation to come speak to you this morning, and to my old shipmate, Joe Angelo, as well. It's certainly nice to see one of our former Coast Guardsmen doing so well!

It's hard to believe, but the last time I was here in Oslo was 42 years ago, probably just a few months after the birth of INTERTANKO and your inaugural meeting.

It's been a little different trip for me this time, as you might imagine, just as I'm sure INTERTANKO is a little different organization than it was 42 years ago.... Like most of you I flew here on this trip – but 42 years ago I first came here as a sailor. A cadet, really, on a summer cruise out of the United States Coast Guard Academy. I enjoyed my first trip here very much, and I deeply regret I've waited so long to come back. I'm sure you've all experienced how sometimes over the course of time you 'build up' places you've been in your mind... and how the years and your imagination have a way of embellishing the memories. And when you finally do have the chance to visit again, it just doesn't live up to expectations.

We'll that's certainly not the case this time. It's absolutely as beautiful here as I remember it – maybe even more beautiful!

Another thing that cruise did for me was to validate my dream of becoming a sailor. And while I may be back this time in a slightly different capacity than all those years ago...I still see myself as a sailor. It's how I've spent much of my career, and I know that's true for many people in this room as well.

So this morning I'll speak to you as the Commandant of the Coast Guard, but I'll also speak to you as a sailor. My experiences as a ship captain, navigator and cutterman have formed much of my view of the world – and I suspect that is true for many of you.

I mentioned that my first visit here was not long after the formation of INTERTANKO. And I know that your goal when you were established was to provide safe transportation, cleaner seas, and free competition.

You know, that's not too different from the mission of the United States Coast Guard. Its part of the service we provide to mariners, and the value we bring to the people of the United States, and I dare say, to the mariners of the world.

In fact, I firmly believe that one real measure of a nation's greatness is its commitment to provide mariners safe and secure approaches to its shores – and that a nation's prosperity is proportionate to how well it ensures the safe, secure and efficient movement of trade and commerce to and from its shores. I also believe that a great nation will ensure the environmental protection of the sea. That's a common goal we all share.

In looking at your program for today, I notice that the topic of your first session this morning is "...*Sustainability – The Big Picture.*" Looking at "*the reality of today and the outlook of tomorrow.*"

I spend a fair amount of time thinking about that subject myself.

In conducting Coast Guard missions, we continually face a broad of range of persistent threats, from both human and natural adversaries, that challenge us in providing those safe and secure approaches.

We face oils spills in the Gulf of Mexico; ship groundings in the Gulf of Alaska, depletion of the fish stocks that feed our Nation, disruption of traffic into our ports, the flow of illegal drugs and migrants, and the list goes on...

These and a host of other threats serve to impede trade, weaken our economy and create instability. They disrupt regional and global security, the economies of partner nations, access to resources, and international trade. All of these are vital elements of our national prosperity – just as they are vital to your individual prosperity.

And it is this prosperity which spurs investment and global development, provides jobs, and provides the resources to pay for both national security and national defense.

I suspect these are challenges many of you face as well – and you have other concerns you shared with me during the Council session yesterday. And of course none of us are immune from the pressures of these challenging economic times.

And that is certainly something I understand. In fact, I told our Service recently that we find ourselves navigating uncertain and stormy seas. The United States – like so many – is making difficult *but necessary* decisions to enable us to put our fiscal house in order

This is a challenging time for many in government and industry alike. But it is also a consequential time for us. Our presence and the work we do are important.

For sailors, I believe facing these challenges at sea instills a sense of optimism and faith. I have found in my career that no matter how severe the storm, no matter how difficult the problem, you continue to work, struggle, and fight . . . because ultimately the weather will change, and conditions will improve.

As we each face our mutual challenges, I want to tell you that there is good reason for optimism.

But let me first go back to the beginning for a moment, and the Coast Guard's obligation to ensure safe, secure, efficient and environmentally responsible movement of trade and commerce. I want to talk about exactly how we do that.

Many of you in this assembly may know us primarily as a regulatory agency – or perhaps through our port state control activities. Or – when things go badly – as those who conduct search and rescue activity or conduct pollution clean-up.

But what many don't see is that we do this work on an incredibly diverse array of fronts. We conduct fisheries patrols in the vast U.S. exclusive economic zone and enforce the ban on high seas drift nets in the Pacific. We fight maritime drug smuggling and human trafficking. We respond to natural disasters, like hurricane Sandy which recently ravaged the east coast of the United States, and extreme water levels - both high and low – on our western rivers. And we respond to manmade ones as well, like the Deep Water Horizon oil spill. We also ensure the safe and secure flow of commerce through our ports and along our inland waterways. To some these may seem like disparate activities – but these are not discrete, unrelated actions.

These activities, like all of our missions, are much more than the sum of their parts.

People are often surprised to hear that the same Coast Guard that is rescuing mariners along the coast, managing oil spills in the Gulf of Mexico, teaching boating safety in local marinas, and maintaining Aids to Navigation along the Mississippi River – is the same Coast Guard that is doing joint boardings and combating the piracy you are so rightfully concerned about off the coast of Africa, patrolling the Arabian Gulf, interdicting smugglers off of South America, or breaking ice in Antarctica.

We are also seeing a great expansion in the work we do in the arctic. The Arctic Ocean is rapidly changing from a solid expanse of inaccessible ice fields into a growing navigable sea, attracting increased human activity and unlocking access to vast economic potential and energy resources.

The economic promise of oil and gas production in the Arctic is increasingly attractive as the supply of energy from traditional sources will struggle to meet demand. In the past four years we've seen well over a 100% increase in traffic through the Bering Strait, and one million tons of cargo was shipped through the region last year.

The acceleration of human activity in the Arctic region, the opening of the seas, and the inevitable increase in maritime activity mean increased risk of maritime accidents, including those involving cruise ships; oil spills; illegal fishing and harvesting of other natural resources from U.S. waters; and a host of other threats to our safety, security or sovereignty. Those growing risks—inevitable with growth of human activity—demand the Coast Guard's attention and commitment to meet our responsibilities to the nation.

Earlier this month President Obama issued a national strategy for the Arctic. And just last week, the Coast Guard became the first agency to roll out a strategy that furthers the Lines of Effort and Guiding Principles contained in the National Arctic Strategy. I am exceptionally proud of that effort.

But any sense of surprise at the diversity of this range of activity reveals a misunderstanding of what we do and our value to the country.

Human activity on the oceans affecting our nation and all nations – both lawful and illicit – continues to expand. More than ninety-five percent of global commerce is carried by sea. Well over one million seafarers serve on commercial ships and over two billion passengers board ferries and cruise ships around the world. New

energy exploration is planned not just in the arctic, but off the shores of Cuba and elsewhere. And a newly expanded Panama Canal, along with the opening of the Arctic Ocean, has the potential to alter worldwide shipping routes and bring an even greater number of increasingly larger ships to our ports.

Our Coast Guard missions ensure adherence to a system of rules and sustain the mechanisms designed to provide for the security, safety and prosperity of our nation and all those who use the maritime domain. This is the daily work of government that provides us with both order and opportunity on the oceans. Wherever human activity thrives, government has a responsibility to uphold the rule of law, ensure the safety and security of its people, and ensure environmentally responsible maritime activity.

In short, what we are doing is providing Maritime Governance.

This is what our Nation – and indeed all nations – need.

We protect those on the sea, we protect America from threats delivered by sea, and we protect the sea itself.

Safety. Security. Stewardship.

And something that is often overlooked is how critical this is to our National Security.

When most people think of National Security, especially in the maritime environment, they think of National Defense and the work done by a nation's Navy – providing for control of the sea by naval supremacy, deterring aggression, projecting power, and fighting and winning wars.

But a nation's security is more than its national defense. It is also economic security, energy security, environmental security, and the security of its ports. Our activities in the maritime domain enhance our security, reinforce the rule of law, and support stability, both in the U.S. and abroad.

The truth is many nations don't *need* a traditional Navy – but they do need a maritime force to conduct the day-to-day business of maritime governance. And I increasingly see signs that others know this as well.

I was reminded of this, and of the unique value and nature of our Coast Guard's service recently by an Article entitled "*The Need for a Unified Coast Guard.*"

I'll admit I was a little taken aback when I first saw the title of this article – because I thought that we already *had* a unified Coast Guard. You simply can't do all of the things I just talked about if you don't.

Then I realized the article was not talking about the United States Coast Guard. It was talking about the China's maritime forces.

It made the point that China is unable to deliver affirmative maritime governance. China's maritime forces are spread between five different government ministries – each with a separate focus. Because of this, the article asserts, they are inefficient and lack the synchronization, unity of command, and common culture necessary to make them an effective maritime governance force.

It made the point that they should model their forces after "the most powerful Coast Guard in the world" – the U.S. Coast Guard!

I am proud to be the Commandant of the Coast Guard that article was talking about. But our Service used to suffer from the same problem. There was a time in our history when *our* duties were performed by five different government agencies. Fortunately, we realized a long time ago that bringing these organizations together to unify and synchronize their missions, authorities, and capabilities would make for a far more capable and efficient force than any of those organizations would have been on their own.

We may not have thought in terms of maritime governance then, but that is exactly what we were providing for. And you can see this model being replicated in other Coast Guards and small navies around the world. Indeed, just recently China heeded the advice contained in that article and combined the majority of their maritime forces under a State Ocean Administration. They understand the value of maritime governance, and of working together towards a common goal.

It's true the challenges we face are real, and like everyone we may be asked to do more with less, or at least do the same work *by different means*. But I said earlier that despite our challenges – I wanted you to know there is good reason for optimism.

The sea – and the weather it brings – is always beyond our control. But what we can do is prepare and adapt – and *keep moving forward*. And we can do this together. The Coast Guard has a long history of working together with the maritime industry to accomplish those shared goals of safe transportation, clean seas, and secure and efficient movement of commerce. And my optimism is fueled by our ability to work together with organizations like INTERTANKO.

We will always seek to prevent dangerous or harmful maritime activities through regulation, inspections and enforcement of standards. But we will also work closely with the private sector, including the maritime industry that we are responsible for regulating and governing. It is by working together that we can achieve the greatest success.

It's not always easy, and there is sometimes tension between competing interests, including economic interests and the interest of industry - and the protection of the maritime environment. And we certainly understand your concerns regarding regulations. But as you know, the substance of regulations is often driven by the performance of the industry.

And your performance as an industry shows that you understand that. Last year, of more than 18,000 port calls and more than 2000 Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS) exams – only 15 tanks vessels were detained in U.S. ports. Tank vessel performance is among the best of any segment of the industry. The public expects, as well they should, that tank vessels have the highest of safety standards for safety, security, and environmental protection – and I applaud that record. The Coast Guard looks forward to continuing to work with you to make that record even better.

I also look forward to working together on appropriate *international* standards, including those for ballast water and emissions standards. The Coast Guard leads the U.S. delegation to the International Maritime Organization, and we are committed to working with industry to find solutions to these and other concerns as we move forward.

A legally certain and predictable set of rights and obligations to address maritime activity is paramount. And in creating and enforcing these sets of rights and obligations, there needs to be an agency that listens to the interests and concerns of all those who are impacted. That is why I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to hear from you. It is beneficial to us all. While we may not always arrive at a solution that meets all of the concerns of all of the groups, it will be a solution

that is informed by and has considered all of the interests involved and taken them into account.

And it is through working together as partners that we will navigate those “uncertain and stormy seas” together.

I mentioned that phrase earlier – “uncertain and stormy seas” – and I like using it to describe where we sometimes find ourselves. But as much as I would like to claim it for my own, it’s not an original term. It was originally used by President John F. Kennedy.

I suspect in this group most of you are old enough to have heard President Kennedy speak – or at least read his writings. For those who have not, it always seemed to me that his words – regardless of the subject – were filled with hope, promise, and optimism.

I always knew that he was a sailor. He grew up sailing with his father on Nantucket Sound, and as a Naval Officer he commanded a patrol boat in the Pacific. In fact, when his patrol boat was cut in half by an enemy destroyer, Kennedy, who had been a varsity swimmer in college, rescued his crew – at one point using a life-jacket strap clenched between his teeth to tow a wounded crewman to shore. And later in his life, during his presidency, you would often see him out with his own family escaping the pressures of the White House.

I always believed his experience as a sailor was the source of the optimism and hope I heard in his speeches and in his writing.

It had always been my belief...but I never had any proof. That is, until I found a copy of a letter that confirmed my belief. It was in a program for the very first Operation Sail, and it was a letter that he had written in support of the event.

I’ll share that letter with you.

“From my first race on Nantucket Sound many years ago to my most recent outing as a weekend sailor, sailing has given me some of the most pleasant and exciting moments of my life.

It has also taught me something of the courage, resourcefulness and strength required of men [and women] who sail the seas in ships.

Thus I am looking forward eagerly to Operation Sail. The sight of so many ships gathered from the distant corners of the world should remind us that strong, disciplined and venturesome men [and women] can still find their way safely across uncertain and stormy seas.”

And by working together, we will find our way through those same seas.

Thank you – and I look forward to any questions you may have.