

CHIEF'S CALL TO INITIATION

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CAPT GENTILE, MASTER CHIEF LIVINGSTONE, SENIOR CHIEF ABERNATHY, NEW CHIEFS, HONORED GUESTS, LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN, GOOD EVENING! I AM DELIGHTED TO BE HERE THIS EVENING AS YOUR GUEST SPEAKER, AND I'D LIKE TO THANK MASTER CHIEF LIVINGSTONE FOR PROVIDING ME THIS OPPORTUNITY.

FIRST, CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW CHIEFS—AND I AM SURE YOUR WELL-DESERVED PROMOTION. WELL DONE! ALSO, CONGRATULATIONS FOR A GREAT TURNOUT.

I THINK I FIRST GOT AN IDEA WHAT A "CHIEF" IS WHEN I WAS A TEENAGER READING ACTION BOOKS ABOUT THE EXPLOITS OF THE SEA SERVICES IN WWII. DURING MY 34 YEARS OF MARITIME AND COAST GUARD SERVICE, I'VE GOTTEN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING, THAT STARTED IN EARNEST WHEN, AS A LTJG, I WAS 1ST LT ABOARD THE CUTTER WESTWIND.

LOOKING BACK I BELIEVE THAT A BMC NAME ROGER GRAY,
THAT I THOUGHT WORKED FOR ME, REALLY RAN THE
OPERATION AND MENTORED ME ALONG.

DURING THOSE YEARS, AND CERTAINLY TODAY, I'VE HELD THE
POSITION OF "CHIEF" IN GREAT ESTEEM FOR WHO YOU
ARE, WHAT YOU ARE, AND WHAT YOU REPRESENT. SO, TO
ME, IT'S A DISTINCT HONOR AND A PRIVILEGE TO BE YOUR
SPEAKER TONIGHT. THANK YOU!

ALL OF YOU CHIEFS GATHERED HERE TONIGHT REPRESENT THE
SENIOR ENLISTED LEADERSHIP OF THE COAST GUARD.
YOU ARE KEY LEADERS IN OUR SERVICE. YOU ARE
CLEARLY THE PEOPLE THAT YOUR SUBORDINATES LOOK
TO FOR GUIDANCE.

AND, YOU ARE DEPENDED UPON BY THE UPPER ECHELON OF
THE CHAIN OF COMMAND FOR ADVICE – YOUR CO, GROUP
AND DISTRICT STAFF, DISTRICT COMMANDER, ETC. AND
YOUR COUNSEL IS VALUED OR IT WOULDN'T BE SOUGHT.

I THINK THAT THE MEANING OF THE ANCHOR IN THE CHIEF'S EMBLEM THAT IS READ AT THE CHIEF'S CALL TO INITIATION IS A GOOD DESCRIPTION OF WHY YOUR COUNSEL IS SOUGHT AND IS VALUED. THE ANCHOR IS SAID TO REPRESENT STABILITY AND SECURITY AND THE CHAIN REPRESENTS FLEXIBILITY AND STRENGTH. FURTHER, THE CHAIN OF LIFE IS SAID TO BE FORGED DAY BY DAY, LINK BY LINK AND FORGED WITH CHARACTER AND VIRTUE IN THE FIRES OF ADVERSITY. IN OTHER WORDS, YOU'VE BEEN THERE AND YOU'VE DONE IT.

THERE ARE MANY SIMILARITIES IN COMPARING AN OFFICER ATTAINING FLAG RANK AND PUTTING A STAR ON THEIR SHOULDER AND AN ENLISTED PERSON ADVANCING TO CHIEF AND BEING PINNED WITH THE ANCHOR AND SHIELD. FOR ONE, YOUR FIRST NAME AUTOMATICALLY BECOMES CHIEF OR ADMIRAL, AS THE CASE MAY BE.

BUT, MORE IMPORTANTLY, YOU AS MUCH AS I ARE CRITICAL LINKS IN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND. IT MAY SURVIVE WITHOUT OUR MUTUAL BEST EFFORTS, BUT IT WON'T BE NEARLY AS STRONG.

AND, THE FUTURE OF OUR SERVICE DEMANDS THE BEST EFFORTS THAT WE CAN PUT FORTH – WE, YOU AND I, HOLD THE FUTURE IN OUR HANDS.

SO, TONIGHT, AS ONE OF THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP OF THE
COAST GUARD'S OFFICER CORPS SPEAKING TO MANY OF
THE COAST GUARD'S SENIOR ENLISTED LEADERSHIP, I
WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU SOME OF MY PERSPECTIVES
ON THE COAST GUARD GATHERED OVER MY CAREER IN
WHAT I THINK IS IMPORTANT IN THE WAY WE CARRY OUT
OUR MISSIONS AND WHERE WE'RE HEADED AS A SERVICE.

TO BEGIN WITH, I TRY TO KEEP MY THOUGHTS AND IDEAS
ABOUT WHAT WE DO AS LEAST COMPLEX AS POSSIBLE.

I LOOK AT THE DAILY WORK OF OUR SERVICE INVOLVING FIVE
BASIC AREAS OF ACTIVITY:

- ◆ MARITIME SAFETY;
- ◆ MARITIME LAW ENFORCEMENT;
- ◆ MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION;
- ◆ NATIONAL SECURITY;

AND, ALTHOUGH NOT A MISSION AREA PER SE, WE COULDN'T
COMPLETE OUR MISSIONS WITHOUT NUMBER 5:

- ◆ TAKING CARE OF OUR PEOPLE.

IN THOSE FOUR MISSION AREAS WE DO TWO THINGS:

PREVENTION: STOPPING BAD THINGS FROM HAPPENING; AND,

RESPONSE: RESPONDING, ALWAYS READY, WHEN THEY DO
HAPPEN.

THERE ARE A LOT OF VISION STATEMENTS IN THE COAST
GUARD THAT DESCRIBE WHAT WE WANT OUR
ORGANIZATION TO BE LIKE RELATIVE TO THE
ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THOSE MISSIONS.

THEY ARE ALL VERY WELL ARTICULATED WITH A GREAT DEAL
OF THOUGHT. HOWEVER, TO KEEP THEIR INTENT IN MIND
WHILE I GO ABOUT MY DAILY WORK, I SUMMARIZE THEM
ALL IN THREE WORDS – BE THE BEST!

IT SIMPLY MEANS TO ME THAT WE WANT TO BE THE BEST IN
ALL THAT WE DO. WE'RE THE WORLD'S PREMIER
MARITIME SAFETY, MLE, AND MEP AGENCY AND WE NEED
TO WORK HARD TO REMAIN THERE. WE ALSO WANT TO
BE THE BEST IN HOW WE MANAGE OURSELVES, IN
DIVERSITY IN PEOPLE AND IN HOW WE DEAL WITH OUR
CUSTOMERS. WE WANT TO BE THE TRENDSETTERS, THE
PACESETTERS – AND WE ARE IN MANY THINGS.

I TELL MY PEOPLE THAT IN OUR DAILY ACTIVITIES TO ACCOMPLISH OUR MISSIONS AND REACH OUR VISION, TO THINK OF THE FACADE OF A BUILDING – A PARTHENON. I USE IT TO REPRESENT MY PHILOSOPHY OF COMMAND LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT. IT'S NOT THE ONLY MODEL BUT THE ONE I FIND USEFUL.

I WANT YOU ALL TO VISUALIZE A FOUNDATION UPON WHICH STAND SIX COLUMNS THAT SUPPORT A PEAKED ROOF. THE FOUNDATION REPRESENTS PROFESSIONALISM; OUR VALUES OF HONOR, RESPECT, AND DEVOTION TO DUTY; AND, ETHICS.

THE COLUMNS RESTING ON THAT FIRM FOUNDATION REPRESENT:

1. TEAMWORK – ONE COAST GUARD PULLING TOGETHER WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS.
2. DATA AND INFORMATION – MONITORING OUR PROGRESS TOWARD OUR LONG TERM MISSION GOALS. I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT YOU CAN'T MANAGE WHAT YOU DON'T OR CAN'T MEASURE.

3. PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS – DEVELOPING A BOND OF TRUST BETWEEN EACH OTHER, BETWEEN THE COAST GUARD AND OTHER AGENCIES AND BETWEEN THE COAST GUARD AND THE PEOPLE WE SERVE. I DEFINE TRUST AS AN INDIVIDUAL'S OR ORGANIZATION'S DEMONSTRATION OF CAPABILITY AND RELIABILITY; WHEN YOU DEMONSTRATE THOSE QUALITIES, THEN YOU CAN BE EMPOWERED.

4. PLANNING – DECIDING THE DESIRED STATE OF OUR SERVICE OR MISSION EFFORTS AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE AND DETERMINING THE STEPS TO REACH IT – THEN USING DATA TO TRACK YOUR PROGRESS TO ADJUST AND OPTIMIZE OUR EFFORTS.

5. LEADERSHIP – EMPOWERING OUR PEOPLE, MENTORING THEM AND CREATING THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW.

AND LASTLY,

6. STEWARDSHIP – TAKING GOOD CARE OF THE RESOURCES THAT WE HAVE TO DO OUR WORK AND DETERMINING THE "BEST INVESTMENT" – THE MOST PRODUCTIVE USE FOR OUR PEOPLE AND HARDWARE IN CARRYING OUT OUR MISSIONS. WE CAN OFTEN DO MANY THINGS, WE MUST CHOOSE THOSE THAT HAVE THE MOST RETURN FOR THE RESOURCES EXPENDED.

THOSE COLUMNS SUPPORT THE ROOF WHICH REPRESENTS
MISSION ACCOMPLISHMENT AND AT ITS PEAK
ATTAINMENT OF OUR GOALS AND VISION.

IF EVERYONE, WHETHER SEAMAN OR CHIEF, ENSIGN OR
ADMIRAL, GOES ABOUT THEIR DUTY TO BE THE BEST, AS I
DEFINE IT, IN ALL THAT THEY DO, THE UNIT, DISTRICT
AND SERVICE WILL BE THE BEST.

SO, I THINK OF THE PARTHENON OFTEN, TRYING TO ENSURE
THAT I MAINTAIN THE FIRM FOUNDATION AND KEEP THE
COLUMNS IN MIND AS I CARRY OUT MY RESPONSIBILITIES
EACH DAY TOWARD ATTAINMENT OF OUR GOALS AND
VISION.

ALSO, IMPLICIT IN THE PARTHENON ARE WHAT I CALL THE
THREE BASICS AND I FEEL THAT IF YOU DO THE BASICS
RIGHT, YOU'LL BE READY FOR THE OFTEN COMPLEX AND
DANGEROUS MISSIONS THAT ARE THE STUFF OF
EVERYDAY LIFE IN OUR SERVICE.

THE THREE BASICS ARE:

FIRST AND FOREMOST, TAKE CARE OF YOUR PEOPLE, TREAT THEM FAIRLY, WITH RESPECT AND WITH EQUALITY; MENTOR THEM. ALL THE BEST EQUIPMENT, BOATS, INFRASTRUCTURE, CUTTERS AND AIRCRAFT ARE WORTH NOTHING WITHOUT THE FINE MEN AND WOMEN WHO GIVE THAT HARDWARE LIFE AND WITHOUT WHOM THERE WOULD NOT BE A COAST GUARD.

SECOND, KNOW YOUR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, ESPECIALLY THOSE OF YOU IN COMMAND, AS DESCRIBED IN COAST GUARD REGULATIONS. READ THEM AND CARRY THEM OUT FAITHFULLY.

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE THE MODEL FROM WHICH YOUR PERSONNEL WILL BE MOLDED. YOUR UNIT WILL REFLECT YOUR OWN ATTITUDE AND PERFORMANCE.

THIRD, ENSURE THAT THE EQUIPMENT AND PEOPLE THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALWAYS MAINTAIN THE REQUIRED STATE OF READINESS FOR BOTH PREVENTION AND RESPONSE MISSIONS, ESPECIALLY PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN WEAPONS, SURFACE OPERATIONS, AVIATION AND MARINE SAFETY. DON'T PUT UNQUALIFIED PEOPLE OR POORLY MAINTAINED EQUIPMENT IN "HARM'S WAY."

FINALLY, IN TALKING ABOUT PERSPECTIVES ON THE COAST GUARD AND HOW WE DO OUR WORK; IN SUMMARY, I BELIEVE THAT, WE, THE LEADERSHIP HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT OUR PEOPLE ARE PROVIDED WITH AN ATMOSPHERE OF EQUALITY WHERE THEY CAN GROW PROFESSIONALLY, WHERE THEIR FAMILIES CAN LIVE SAFETY AND COMFORTABLY, WHERE THEY CAN HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DO THEIR WORK EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY AND SAFELY, KNOWING THAT MUCH OF WHAT WE DO IS INHERENTLY RISKY.

NOW, WHAT OF THE COAST GUARD'S FUTURE? IN A WORD – BRIGHT!

YOU ALL HAVE HELPED MAKE THE COAST GUARD WHAT IT IS TODAY AND IT IS A SUPERB ORGANIZATION.

WE ARE A VALUED, RESPECTED AND TRUSTED (REMEMBER MY DEFINITION) MEMBER OF DOT AND THE ARMED FORCES.

THE COMMANDANT OFTEN SAYS THAT – "BUSINESS IS GOOD" – AND YOU ALL KNOW THAT AS WELL AS I DO. OUR SERVICES ARE INCREASINGLY IN DEMAND.

AND THE PEOPLE OF OUR ORGANIZATION DO THEIR JOB VERY WELL, WITH GREAT INGENUITY, DEVOTION TO DUTY, PROFESSIONALISM AND PRIDE. AND I KNOW THAT THEY ARE A REFLECTION OF THE REST OF THE COAST GUARD.

THEY ARE THE BEST WE'VE EVER HAD, THEY ARE THE BEST THAT THERE IS AND THEY DESERVE OUR BEST.

IN CLOSING, I LEAVE YOU ALL WITH THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE. WE, THE COAST GUARD, HAVE A GREAT HERITAGE OF SERVICE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND TO THE WORLD. IT IS OUR CHALLENGE TO LEAD THE COAST GUARD IN THE 21ST CENTURY, ENSURING WE REMAIN A STRONG AND VITAL ORGANIZATION READY FOR THE NEXT 100 YEARS – AND WITH YOUR LEADERSHIP AND OUR GREAT PEOPLE, IT WILL BE DONE!

FINALLY, I WANT TO LEAVE EACH NEW CHIEF WITH A PARTHENON PIN AS A MEMENTO OF MY VISIT THIS EVENING AND THEIR NEW LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES AND WITH THE CHARGE TO THINK HARD ABOUT YOUR PHILOSOPHY OF COMMAND, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT – AND CONSCIOUSLY LIVE IT EACH DAY. I'M ALSO PRESENTING EACH NEW CHIEF WITH AN "M" COIN FOR THEIR SPOUSE OR ACCOMPANYING FRIEND. THANK YOU. I WISH YOU ALL FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS.