

## **Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Bob Papp's Remarks**

**at the**

### **U.S. Coast Guard Academy Leadership For the Arctic Conference**

April 13, 2012

RADM Sotsz, thank you for the kind introduction;

Thank you to the Law of the Sea Institute from the University of California's Berkley School of Law—co-sponsors of this important conference;

Now I know the mascots of both Berkeley and Coast Guard Academy is the Bear. And our cheer at both schools is "Go Bears", so I can say that here without offending anyone. Now that's an example of bilateral engagement.

And thank you to the Coast Guard Foundation whose generosity made this conference possible;

Good afternoon Shipmates!

In the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, explorers travelled to the Arctic seeking its precious resources – seal skins and whales. That's really how the Coast Guard got it's start. Today is no different – it's just that these resources are oil and natural gas – and shorter trade routes – which are a really big deal for China and Russia. A new gold-rush of sorts is underway in the Arctic. But the prize promises to be much more substantial.

The Coast Guard is no stranger to Arctic waters – we have operated in the Arctic for most of our history. In 1867, the Revenue Cutter Lincoln transported the official U.S. delegation to Sitka for the transfer ceremony from Russia – and in what was the "territory" of Alaska we soon became quite literally the law of the sea and land – our cutters conducted "court cruises" with federal judges and Public Health Service doctors embarked, settling disputes, dispensing justice, and providing humanitarian care to its indigenous peoples, protecting fisheries and marine animals on the Bering Sea Patrol.

Today, the majority of our Arctic operations are concentrated in the southern Arctic, or Bering Sea, where we protect the fish stocks and fishermen. Protecting one of the world's richest biomass, those who make their living harvesting it, and other shippers who transit through its often treacherous waters, creates a persistent demand for Coast Guard services. We understand these waters – we've worked closely with Native Alaskans to gain the benefit of their traditional knowledge, and we have almost a century and a half of experience conducting Arctic missions.

Now, as in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, our mission is to protect U.S. sovereign interests, rescue mariners in distress, and enforce U.S. laws and treaties. In short, we protect people on the sea, we protect people from threats delivered by sea, and we protect the sea itself.

Yet today, we – along with many of YOU in this room -- are facing a challenge. With the increase in Arctic activity you have been discussing over the past two days, our Nation must recognize that the United States is not only a maritime nation, we are an Arctic nation. All of us.

Why is this a challenge? Perhaps, one reason, is because with the exception of the residents of Alaska, Americans do not intuitively view the U.S. as an Arctic Maritime nation. So, while there's a lot of hard work going on – led by many of you in this room – there needs to be a stronger, more comprehensive National focus and effort on the Arctic.

This was not always the case. There was a time in the late 1950s when the Cold war was the driver for a surge in Arctic strategy and capability.

The Coast Guard and Navy worked jointly to support the Distant Early Warning Line – or DEW line – which was a string of 50 radar sites and weather stations running 3,000 miles from Point Barrow in Alaska across the Northern Arctic Circle to North Eastern Canada's Baffin Island.

It was no accident that in 1957 Coast Guard Cutters STORIS, BRAMBLE and SPAR were the first American vessels to circumnavigate the North American continent via the Northwest Passage – their mission was to find and mark a usable Northwest Passage in the event ships supporting the DEW line became trapped north of Point Barrow, so they could use this passage to escape to the Atlantic.

When Coast Guard Cutters SPAR, STORIS and BRAMBLE received their orders to transit the Northwest Passage, they met up in Seattle, to report in to Navy Task Force 5. Task Force 5 was commanded by Rear Adm. Henry S. Persons, USN, and was responsible for the supply of the DEW line stations on the Pacific side of Bellot Strait. The Coast Guard element was designated as Task Unit 5.1.5, and operated under the command of Capt. Harold Wood, the skipper of the STORIS.

Capt. Wood was a pipe-smoking and ever-stoic skipper. As he and his Coast Guard contingent entered Admiral Persons' office, Persons quipped that it was “good to have the Hooligan Navy here at the meeting.” Wood curtly replied, “Admiral, we don't mind you calling us ‘hooligans’, but it's the ‘Navy’ part that we find objectionable.”

But, back to our challenge.

I've read that another fleet of ships is planning to head up to the Northwest Passage this summer – but they are not planning to circumnavigate it – there're planning to lay the

first submarine fiber optic cables along the sea floor – to expand and increase the speed of internet connectivity between Asia and Europe – indigenous people living in remote Arctic communities will reportedly also have the opportunity to tap into this connection.

Another cable laying operation is planned for the Northern Sea Route above Russia.

Now, why are internet cable companies laying down their cable along Arctic sea routes? For the same reason that shipping companies are increasingly making use of these routes – they are shorter – faster – and cheaper!

I don't know about you, but when I heard that internet cable providers plan to take advantage of shorter and increasingly accessible Arctic sea routes, for me it was another indicator that yet another important sector of the global economy sees opportunity in the Arctic.

Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr., father of President Kennedy, once famously said that he knew it was time to get out of the stock market before the 1929 crash when he started getting stock tips from his shoeshine boy.

Well, this is also a shoeshine boy moment – it's just that the opposite is true here – when it's not just shipping companies and oil companies but internet companies that are getting into the Arctic – it's a strong signal that it's time for a more deliberate and serious focus on the Arctic. Now, this is not to discount the important work that is going on – but rather to say, much remains to be done – we don't just need more wind pushing our sails – we need a bigger national sail.

And, speaking for the Coast Guard – and I know you had the benefit of hearing from Admiral Ostebo this week – there is a strong present demand signal for Coast Guard services in the Arctic. So much so that, tactical demands are overtaking the current pace of Arctic national strategy development – if we were mushers in the Iditarod, we might say that the current tactical demands are putting our sled before our dogs!

Let me give you a few examples of what I mean . . .

We watched this winter as Cutter HEALY broke the way into Nome to ensure heating oil and fuel could be delivered. HEALY's operation received national media attention – we were not only able to help out the people of Nome, but we had the Nation tuned in on a major Arctic operation!

But, there was another story here that received much less coverage – and, I suspect, something the Nation did not see or fully appreciate. While a great deal of present Arctic discussion is focused on the Arctic's increasingly open and accessible waters in summer months, during winter months, Arctic waters remain frozen. For me, HEALY's operation demonstrates the importance of -- assured -- and year-round -- surface

access to ice-covered Arctic waters. We're working hard with the Congress, the Department and the Administration to maintain this capability.

But, what you might not know is that the Coast Guard was asked to have HEALY go down to Antarctica this past winter, and break out our science station in McMurdo Sound.

How did this request come about? Because the Swedish-flagged icebreaker that was leased to perform this mission was pulled back by the government of Sweden at the last minute – it was needed to perform Swedish sovereign missions!

So when the Coast Guard received this request to use HEALY in the Antarctic, we gave it a lot of thought. But, in the end we said no. Not because we did not want to perform this important mission – we did. But, because we felt we needed to have an ice breaker at the ready in case something happened in the Arctic. And, it just so happened that there was need for HEALY.

So, while we are working on the strategic part of how many ice breakers – ice capable vessels and other types of vessels need to be part of our fleet mix to carry out our Arctic responsibilities – the point I want to make it that we have a strong demand for these capabilities now!

In addition to HEALY, a medium icebreaker, we are reactivating POLAR STAR as a heavy icebreaker and expect it to be operational by mid-2013. Together those icebreakers will provide the nation's capability for the next 7-10 years while we take a whole-of-nation approach to examine our future national icebreaker requirements and resourcing.

The planned Arctic offshore exploratory drilling for this summer is another example of the present demand for Coast Guard capabilities. The increasing world thirst for petroleum is being driven by advanced emerging markets. Demand and the cost of petroleum continue to rise. As the U.S. and other Arctic nations seek new sources of energy there, we plan to be at the ready to protect our sovereign interests and meet our statutory responsibilities — including U. S. Arctic environmental response.

You'll notice that I said sovereign interests – I say sovereign because, to me with all the important activities going on up in the Arctic – from the intensive research our world-class scientists have been performing from vessels like HEALY and our Canadian partners LOUIS S. St-Laurent – to oil exploration and increased shipping and human activity – one of our most important missions is ensuring clarity of sovereign interests and a national, multilateral framework of rights and obligations. Doing so is the foremost responsibility of nation-states, and the international community.

Which brings me to the Law of the Sea Convention. Arctic governance will become increasingly important – especially if the reported reserves of oil, natural gas and other resources are discovered. We continue to work closely with the administration, our

partners in DoD and the interagency to advocate to the Senate the importance of acceding to the convention – doing so will provide further certainty to Arctic claims, and it will also provide us additional credibility with our many Arctic partners as we work to provide safety, security and stewardship of what is really an entire new ocean.

On a personal note, I have made it a priority to travel to Alaska the past two summers—with DHS leaders and interagency leaders like Department of Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Deputy Secretary David Hayes, to meet with our local and state partners . . . including Governor Parnell, and Lt. Governor Treadwell, Alaskan Natives, and industry, and to see the challenges we are confronting first-hand.

It's my observation that in the Beaufort and the Chukchi seas, we are now seeing a gradual transition from very limited, episodic demand into a more sustained seasonal demand. At some point, these demands may evolve into full-fledged seasonal operations. Therefore, our present operational concept is largely an extension of our current posture – a mobilization of sea-based command and control forward operating bases, from which we will conduct operations with gradually increasing support from our shore-based aircraft.

We have only minimal levels of shore-based infrastructure such as hangars for our planes, and barracks for our shore based boats and support forces in places like Barrow. In the past, our focus has been on operations in southern Alaska – we must now turn our focus further North.

So, this summer, we plan to send the NSC BERTHOLF up to the Arctic – BERTHOLF will keep watch over the planned offshore drilling activities and provide many of the same capabilities of a shore-based Sector including communications and command and control – she also brings the added advantage of serving as a helicopter flight deck and a small boat launch. BERTHOLF will be supplemented by our black-hull fleet of seagoing buoy tenders that are versatile and ice-capable.

So, as you can see its ongoing Arctic activity that's causing us to shift our forces North – there's a strong demand now for Coast Guard capabilities, competencies and authorities...it's OK to a point if we are moving some of our Coast Guard resources to respond to changing demand signals – that's what an adaptable maritime service does – but, we also knew about the summer drilling – so we were able to put together a plan.

But, from a broader perspective, the Arctic is an international challenge. And, as some of your speakers have stated this week, it requires a whole-of-nation solution. And, what concerns me is that we don't fall behind on meeting this challenge – especially when we see other Arctic Nations—including our partners—surging forward and expanding their Arctic capabilities.

Which brings us back to our collective challenge . . . how do we meet our current demands, while continuing to move forward on the development of a national Arctic

strategy? How do we get the demand for Coast Guard services and services from other agencies and organizations you represent, in the Arctic when resources are limited?

This is why I am so pleased the Coast Guard Academy and its many partners have come together to host this conference -- and, I am particularly pleased that so many of YOU – from industry, academia and with Arctic operational backgrounds who represent both the Arctic leaders and Arctic thought leaders were able to attend this week – because, we, as the Service that is presently “on-point” for Arctic issues need to hear from you, listen to you, and learn from you . . .

The Coast Guard has the experience, and authorities to lead, where appropriate, and assist with the development of a national Arctic strategy – but we need your support...your leadership...and your voice to not only shape National Arctic policy, but more importantly to make the Arctic a national imperative once again . . .

Thank you. Semper Paratus.