

World Maritime University Graduation

Remarks of the Commandant

November 24, 2013

Malmö, Sweden

Good afternoon! At least I think its afternoon. After the traveling I've been doing this week, my body's clock tells me it may still be last night. But either way, I'm very excited to be here in Malmo, and I'd like to thank the World Maritime University for this wonderful opportunity to spend a few minutes with you today.

I know this graduation is a special time for you – and in the process of making my way here to Malmo, it's been a special week for me as well. Since last Sunday, I've spent time in Ireland with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, their Navy and Coast Guard, as well as their National Maritime College. I spent time with my patrol boat crews in Bahrain, and visited the Royal Danish Naval Academy. And finally today I have the great honor and pleasure to stand here and speak with you.

It been a long trip, but these visits with our international partners have reaffirmed a belief I first gained early in my career as a ship's captain. I find that there is a common bond among those who have made the sea their life's work, that bridges both language and nationality. I find this to be true everywhere I go, and it is a privilege to be here in the company of so many Shipmates.

My next stop is in London as the head of the United States Delegation to the 28th Session of the International Maritime Organization General Assembly.

I'm looking forward to addressing the Assembly and meeting with our partners. The initiatives currently underway at IMO benefit all of us who rely on the oceans, and I'm very excited about the great work being done there.

I'm also looking forward to participating in the IMO Bravery at Sea Award presentation for two U.S. Coast Guard Petty Officers who were instrumental in the rescue of the crew of the Sailing Vessel HMS BOUNTY. I mention this partly out of pride – but also because it is relevant to so much of the work we all do.

BOUNTY was a replica of the infamous British ship where Fletcher Christian led the mutiny against Captain William Bligh in 1789. Just over a year ago, she foundered and sank at the height of hurricane SANDY off the outer banks on the east coast of the United States – an area that long ago earned the nickname “Graveyard of the Atlantic”. And on a tragic night thirteen months ago it earned that name once more. Rescue swimmers deployed from two Coast Guard helicopters and saved 14 BOUNTY crew members from the raging seas that evening. Unfortunately, one crew member did not survive and the Captain of the BOUNTY, despite a massive search effort, was never recovered.

Our rescue swimmers deployed from their helicopter and swam through 30 foot seas, 60 knots winds, and torrential rain. I met with those air crews after the rescue, and I was amazed to hear them talk about the winds and seas they encountered. Even the most experienced among them told me these were the roughest conditions they had ever flown in.

I'm very proud of all those involved in that rescue and I look forward to seeing them receive this well-deserved recognition. But the dramatic rescue that night was not just the result of the heroism of those two Petty Officers.

Our efforts advocating for and advancing *prevention standards* – both domestically and in the international community – have ensured vessels carry emergency equipment that gives them the chance to survive if disaster strikes.

The crew of BOUNTY had a working EPIRB. They had survival suits, marine radios, and working life rafts. Because they complied with regulations, fourteen sailors were able to stay alive until rescuers arrived.

This rescue reaffirmed my belief that our success in the maritime environment rests firmly on two distinct pillars: *prevention and response*. The response is what usually makes headlines and often garners the awards. But it is in providing for the safety of our mariners and *preventing* the need for a response that we can make the difference for the greatest number. It is this work of providing safety and security for those who rely on the oceans that I'd like to speak with you about today.

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 and, I would add, environmentally sound movement of trade and commerce to and from its shores. That's a common goal we all share.

Those from all nations who do this work 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 that harm our environment; ship groundings that threaten our cargo and our crews; depletion of the fish stocks that provide our food, disruption of traffic into our ports, the destructive power of nature in the form of hurricanes and floods, 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 economies 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 collective 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.

To some, the threats we face, and the many different missions we undertake to confront them, seem like unrelated or disparate activities. But such belief reveals a misunderstanding of the environment we live in and the real importance of these efforts.

We rescue mariners, manage oil spills, teach boating safety, maintain aids to navigation, patrol the Arabian Gulf, and break ice in Antarctica. But these are *not* discrete, unrelated actions – and they are much more than the sum of their parts.

Human activity on the oceans affecting 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 in commercial ships and over two billion passengers board ferries and cruise ships around the world. New energy exploration is planned in dozens of areas previously untouched by this activity. 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 all of our ports.

Through the education you receive here, and through the work done at IMO and by our national governments, we help ensure adherence to a system of rules and sustain the mechanisms designed to provide for the security, safety, environmental stewardship and prosperity of all those who use the maritime domain.

This noble work provides us all with both order and opportunity on the oceans.

Wherever human activity thrives, we have a shared responsibility to uphold the rule of law; ensure the safety and security of mariners, passengers and cargo; and provide for environmentally responsible maritime activity. Each sovereign state, working together with the international community, must uphold these responsibilities to help ensure order in a dynamic and challenging world.

In short, what I am talking about is maritime governance. This is what our Nation – and indeed *all* nations – need.

Something that is often overlooked is how critical maritime governance also is to both national *and* global 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. Effective maritime governance enhances our security, reinforces the rule of law, and supports stability for all nations.

War and conflict are often the tragic result when maritime governance breaks down – or is not practiced as all. The better we perform maritime governance – the better we will be at reducing the risk of such conflict. 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.

By working together here – and then taking the knowledge you’ve gained back to your home, you will help provide a common framework among all countries and an understanding of the meaning and importance of maritime governance. And you will rely on the relationships you built here to help develop and ensure sustainable international governance in the maritime environment by developing regimes and enforcing standards on maritime safety, security and stewardship issues.

All countries must play their full role, contribute to the dialogue, and assist in this effort. You leave here today with both a great opportunity *and* a shared responsibility. I charge each of you to return to your country and become a leader in and advocate for maritime governance.

As you all know – good ideas, good solutions, and good policy do not have a nationality. And no one nation can do the job alone. But many nations, working together with a common framework – can make a huge difference. You are now part of making that difference.

Congratulations on your accomplishment. I wish you all fair winds and smooth seas as you depart here to take you place in this noble effort.