

As delivered

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
Federal Law Enforcement Foundation Luncheon
New York City
28 October 2004

Good afternoon! Thank you to the Foundation for what you do for law enforcement men and women and what you do for the community ... I am honored to be part of this luncheon event and to be in the company of such a distinguished list of award recipients. I am also deeply honored by your recognition of the United States Coast Guard, and I'm very pleased to accept this award on behalf of all Coast Guard men and women.

You know when most people think of the Coast Guard, they don't think of intelligence collectors and analysts, law enforcement investigators, or security teams. The predominant image, especially before 9-11, was the Coast Guard as maritime lifesavers ... rescue swimmers jumping from helos ... small boats assisting a grounded vessel. This image is accurate but not complete ... the heart of the Coast Guard is law enforcement and it has been since 1790 ... a famous New Yorker had it right.

Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton wanted, "A few armed vessels, judiciously stationed at the entrances of our ports, [that] might at a small expense be made useful sentinels of the laws."

A few armed vessels — sentinels of the laws.

On August 4th, 1790, Congress passed the bill that Alexander Hamilton had proposed — to build ten ships designed to enforce the customs laws and to inhibit maritime smuggling.

That was the start of what is today, your United States Coast Guard.

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So we've been enforcing our nations laws for all 214 years of our history. And – taking this opportunity to brag just a little – I will say we've gotten very, very good at it.

One example ... This past year, the Coast Guard working with the Navy and our interagency partners, interdicted over 240,000 pounds of cocaine, shattering our previous record by more than 100,000 pounds. The monetary value of that seized cocaine was approximately \$7.7 Billion – with a “B” – dollars ... that's \$7.7 Billion not financing terrorists and criminal organizations around the world - in addition to saving innumerable lives by keeping these drugs off the street.

What makes this feat even more impressive is that this milestone was established while we met increased Homeland Security responsibilities, responded to the potential mass migration from Haiti, handled the effects of multiple hurricanes, and fought the war on terror at home and abroad.

Count on us to:

1. Be aggressive in enhancing our capabilities and presence on our Nation's waterways;
2. Make the U.S Maritime Transportation System safe, secure, and efficient;
3. Place a high priority on law enforcement investments; and,
4. Ensure cooperative, productive partnerships with state, local, and federal law enforcement partners.

I'm very proud of the men and women of the Coast Guard that are making this happen. I thank you for this recognition of their outstanding efforts – and outstanding results.

Thank you.