

Admiral Thomas Collins
Veterans Day
CG Memorial, Arlington Cemetery
11 November 2004

Thank you, Master Chief, for your kind introduction.

I am truly honored to be with all of you at today's event, as we take time to remember our Coast Guard Veterans. I extend a warm welcome and thank you to the Coast Guard personnel in attendance, and to their families and friends. I especially welcome our World War II veterans and their families. Admiral Loy, thank you for joining us.

[Recognize other VIPs]

Arlington is a sacred place ... Tampa Memorial is hallowed ground. We have gathered today to honor the service of our veterans. Our country would not be the great Nation it is, without the men and women of our Armed Forces, who have sacrificed and continue to sacrifice the comforts of home and family to protect and defend the United States. From the heroes at Valley Forge to the courage of the World War II generation we have celebrated this year to the soldiers fighting in Iraq as we speak – they have delivered to us our freedom, our liberty, our way of life.

Some have made the last and greatest sacrifice, by laying down their lives to ensure our Nation's safety and security. We are forever in their debt.

In May of this year, many of us stood together on this hallowed ground as we sorrowfully and proudly laid to rest one of our own, Petty

Officer Nathan Bruckenthal, United States Coast Guard. As part of Law Enforcement Detachment 403, Petty Officer Bruckenthal was assigned to the Coast Guard forces in Southwest Asia on board USS FIREBOLT. On April 24, he was part of a joint Coast Guard/Navy crew on a small boat protecting an oil terminal in the North Arabian Gulf. His boat was attacked by terrorists in a suicide bombing. Sadly, Petty Officer Bruckenthal died from his wounds, as did two of the Navy sailors. But importantly, because of their sacrifice, the terrorists failed in their goal of destroying the oil terminal, critical to Iraqi economic security.

Petty Officer Bruckenthal epitomized the proud legacy of the men and women of our Armed Forces who are committed to Duty, Honor, Country.

We are rightfully proud of the Coast Guard's service both in war and in peace. Our men and women routinely put themselves in harm's way so others may live. So today, we remember with pride both our combat and peacetime veterans; those who, throughout our 214 years, have worked to guarantee our freedoms, to protect and save lives and property, and to secure our marine resources and environment. 214 years of selfless service. It is critical that we recognize and remember their service.

Now it is my great honor to introduce our next speaker, who epitomizes service and sacrifice. After 38 years of dedicated service and exceptional leadership to the Coast Guard, Admiral Jim Loy continued to serve his country as the head of the Transportation and Security Administration until he was nominated by President Bush to serve as the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the Honorable Jim Loy, veteran of the Vietnam War, 21st Commandant of the Coast Guard, and friend to all American veterans.