

State of the Coast Guard 2021 Address

Thank you Master Chief Vanderhaden! To Captain Tim Barelli and the Sector San Diego Team: thank you for hosting my third State of the Coast Guard Address. Thank you, Secretary Mayorkas, represented here by our local DHS teammates in attendance. To my fellow Coast Guardsmen, thanks for your participation today.

A little over a year ago in Charleston, my annual address showcased the work of the Service through the actions and efforts of extraordinary Coast Guardsmen. We reflected on the impact a single member can make towards unit mission success. That message continues to ring true today! Across the Service and around the world, I see individual Coast Guardsmen contributing to their communities, securing the Homeland, enhancing our economic prosperity, and advancing our National interests across the globe.

Since that address, our Nation and our Service, have encountered many challenges, some which have altered our lives and truly tested our resolve.

Against the backdrop of a global pandemic, our communities witnessed a national awakening for social justice, and as an organization, we continue to look inward and evaluate our actions with renewed determination to achieve a fully inclusive Coast Guard.

2020 was a record year for destructive fires here in the West. It was also the most active Atlantic Basin hurricane season on record, requiring many Coast Guard members to first evacuate their homes and then join response efforts.

The past year has been difficult for so many in our work force—particularly for those members of our team juggling childcare, online schooling, and in some cases care for elderly family members. It's been especially demanding for units and teams balancing these demands while providing new services—like the Coast Guard Academy that implemented on-site COVID surveillance testing so that classes could continue; or like Training Center Petaluma that quickly adapted to online training; or like Base San Juan's Enlisted Dining Facility that following the closure of local restaurants and supermarkets, increased service to provide meals to Active Duty, contractors, civilian personnel, and families.

Thank you for being so agile and adaptive; that mindset has enabled our success!

Undoubtedly the greatest burden has fallen on the shoulders of our deployed forces. COVID protocols and restrictions made already demanding in-port training and cutter maintenance all-the-more challenging, and crews experienced extended restriction-of-movement periods as they readied for deployed operations. Some crew members aboard our newest National Security Cutter STONE, had to physically isolate themselves for two week stints – seven different times! To keep crews healthy and COVID free, cutters deployed without port calls or shore-side liberty. Our deployed forces had to be incredibly resilient and creative to get the job done, to maintain morale, and to stay safe. To our deployed forces - Well done, and thank you for going above and beyond!

In reflecting on the past year, I'd be remiss if I didn't thank both Coast Guard Mutual Assistance and the Coast Guard Foundation for their amazing support of Team Coast Guard!

Today I will focus my remarks through two lenses: the first is a look within our Service; and second, a look to the external demand signals and opportunities facing our Global Coast Guard. I hope this approach allows you to see what I see every day - amazing efforts by Coast Guardsmen working together because we are stronger together.

Let's start with you—our Coast Guardsmen— You provide your units, your communities, and our Nation technical competence and unmatched professionalism. You approach your duties with a bias for action to save mariners in distress, thwart illicit activities, and respond to contingencies. And you engage across a wide range of international, interagency, Joint Service, and maritime organizations to forge networks to solve problems and achieve common goals. Coast Guardsmen absolutely excel in building and leveraging human-to-human partnerships across the Globe.

Today, our Service remains at an inflection point, and at the heart of that inflection point sits "Service Readiness!" The demand for Coast Guard capabilities is increasing, both domestically and in support of the DOD Combatant Commanders and American Embassies across the world.

Coast Guard Readiness is at the core of our ability to meet both current and future mission demands. Readiness includes recruiting, training, and retaining a capable and skilled workforce. Readiness requires empowering our workforce with the information, knowledge, skills, and support systems that allows them to excel across the full spectrum of Coast Guard operations. When we provide our workforce both with an inclusive environment in which all members can

thrive, and the tools to get the job done, therein resides mission success and high employee satisfaction; therein we remain an “employer of choice!”

To foster a truly inclusive environment we are updating our training courses, leadership competencies, and evaluation systems. We are also exploring “A” school ASVAB qualifying scores – the gateway to our enlisted ratings – to maximize opportunities for all.

Units across the Service are implementing our “Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan” in innovative ways. By summer’s end, we will have trained 125 “Change Agents” who will connect with hundreds of units per year to deliver training and facilitate conversations about the power of diversity and inclusion. District Nine and Sector New York leaders engaged with their units, hosting “listening sessions” and small group discussions to foster inclusive environments. In Maine, Station Southwest Harbor’s Petty Officer Christine Hemphill demonstrated deck plate-level leadership when she formed a “Cultural Climate Team” with local law enforcement agencies. The team creates a way to educate local citizens on issues facing under-represented minorities in their community, as well as fosters better working relationships between law enforcement, schools, and local citizens. Well done, MK2 Hemphill!

And we know access to mentors is important, that’s why we are piloting a new “mobile-enabled” mentoring program to connect mentees and mentors across our entire workforce. I’m pleased to announce that the “Coast Guard Mentoring Program” will be rolled-out by summer and will offer traditional “1 on 1” mentoring, but also flexibility to foster inclusion and connection within our many Coast Guard communities.

We also know that our members are life-long learners, therefore I am pleased to announce that effective immediately, we will increase the annual amount of Tuition Assistance by 66% to better support our members pursuing their first certificate and college degrees!

Knowing that we will onboard about 2,000 new afloat and support billets for our future cutter fleet, our Deputy Commandants for Operations and Mission Support, in conjunction with our Area Commanders, have stood up a Sea Duty Readiness Council to challenge ourselves to think differently about how we crew and maintain our cutters. To think differently about how we appropriately recognize the challenge and sacrifice of going to sea. I have challenged this group to explore all “out-of-the-box” ideas.

Our complex operating environment and challenging missions makes it critical that we harness the full power of the background, experience, and imagination of every member of our

workforce. I challenge each of you to put your shoulder into this endeavor. This is Commander's Business and essential to remaining Semper Paratus – Always Ready!

Our Mission Ready Total Workforce includes 8,900 civilians who provide critical technical skills and leadership, ensure continuity, and inject invaluable perspective and sage advice.

2020 showcased our civilians' ingenuity and resolve, perhaps none more so than our skilled and dedicated Coast Guard Yard employees in Curtis Bay, Maryland who completed the Service Life Extension Project on our 140-foot ice breaking tugs and continued both scheduled and emergency repairs on our afloat assets– all in an environment that doesn't lend itself well to social distancing. Our Coast Guard Yard employees also enabled the logistics of moving Cutter HEALY's 140-ton spare main propulsion generator from its Coast Guard Yard storage facility onto a barge for the 6,000 mile trip to meet HEALY in Upper San Francisco Bay. Our Surface Forces Logistics Center successfully completed emergency repairs on the HEALY, returning her to homeport in preparation for a historic Arctic patrol this summer. Bravo Zulu to everyone who contributed to these herculean logistics and repair efforts!

Bolstering the strength of our Service are 22,000 Auxiliarists who primarily enhance our boating safety program. However, 2020 clearly showcased our Auxiliarists' ingenuity. Of note, our 75 Auxiliary clergy members more than doubled the number of our own chaplain corps, providing spiritual and mental health support for our members under considerable stress. Today, Auxiliarists with expertise in engineering and cybersecurity actively support 20 on-going Research and Development innovation projects, injecting diversity, unique skill sets, and fresh perspectives to our R&D teams. Thank you to the best volunteers in the world!!

This past year our 6,000 Reservists answered the call, providing both surge capacity and force augmentation. Today, Coast Guard Reservists deployed across the country are supporting FEMA's nationwide COVID-19 vaccination roll-out.

Last Spring 500 Reservists were mobilized in support of COVID-19 response efforts, including staffing our Permanent Change of Station assist teams that helped 13,000 Coast Guard members and families carry out a PCS move when every state had different COVID risks and safety measures in effect.

Reservists at Base Kodiak's PCS Support Team assisted twelve-hundred members rotating to and from Alaska. The Assist Team offered "1-on-1" counseling to disseminate time sensitive travel information, provide up-to-date guidance on State testing protocols, and helped create

alternative options for those who experienced travel delays because of shutdowns on the Alaskan Marine Highway Ferry system. Truly amazing work!

In 2019, I announced that Reservists would be utilized to backfill Active Duty personnel taking parental leave upon the birth or adoption of a new child. This initiative has enabled our new parents to fully leverage expanded parental leave authorities. In 2020, Coast Guard Surge Staffing assigned Reserve Component Volunteers to cover down for 123 such Active Duty leave situations.

Reservist First Class Petty Officer James Reeves, a fire-fighter and medic in his civilian life, filled an ME2 position at Maritime Safety and Security Team (MSST) Kings Bay for 4 months so that a permanently-assigned active duty member could take parental leave. Within one week of reporting, Petty Officer Reeves recertified as a Boarding Team Member, and earned 3 new competencies. He also forward-deployed with the MSST to the Eighth District in response to 4 named tropical storms, and trained 23 new flood responders from 4 different Coast Guard units, enhancing Atlantic Area's Deployable Specialized Forces response capability. Talk about a win-win. Thanks for your service, Petty Officer Reeves!

This summer we instituted "Flex-PAL" which allows Reservists to train closer to where they live. We are also creating billets around hubs where we can rotate reservists through different unit types within a geographical region.

For members who leave Active Duty, but continue service in our Reserve Component, we now offer an option to defer involuntary activation for one year from the date of Reserve affiliation.

On the recruiting front, the Coast Guard is now offering two-year Active Duty enlistments, designed for candidates interested in serving but reluctant to commit to a longer contract. The program is also intended to grow the Reserve Corps, as those who use this option serve for two years on Active Duty, followed by four in the drilling Reserve, and finally two as Individual Ready Reserve.

Over the next five years, the Coast Guard is projected to commission approximately 2,500 Active Duty officers, over half of whom will come through non-Academy accession sources. To aid in broadening the diversity of our Officer Corps, we have on-boarded a new Officer Recruiting Team to better reach under-represented candidates.

And today we're striving to work smarter and more collaboratively. For years, individual programs have looked at their portfolios through a straw — a single view of sorts. For example, recruiters . . . recruit; assignment officers . . . assign; and trainers . . . train. We must push ourselves to look at “inter-related” programs and activities. We must adopt a kaleidoscope view to see and act on this inter-relatedness!

Given the keen importance of talent management, we're developing a new “Ready Workforce 2030” strategic vision focused on how we collaborate to recruit, train, support, and retain our Mission Ready Total Workforce.

Many of these initiatives require a strong foundation in technology. At last year's State of the Coast Guard, I announced a “Tech Revolution.” Since then, we've leaped-frogged ahead and, with the help of Congress, put the Coast Guard on a much better trajectory with regard to C5I. In the past year, we've migrated to a cloud-based suite of collaboration tools and have increased the ability to connect our workforce, whether that be improved cutter connectivity both underway and in port, or greatly enhanced telework capability.

And to build on our increased cutter connectivity successes, we will pilot “underway WiFi” on two cutters this year, enabling our deployed crews to stay connected with friends and family while underway.

We're modernizing our financial ledgers to improve transparency and efficiency across the Service. This will accelerate parts delivery to our frontline units; reduce the administrative burden for operators; and leverage big data for cost-savings.

We're leveraging telehealth capabilities to increase the reach of 13 new mental health professionals and 8 soon-to-be-recruited Regional Nurse Case Managers while exploring the employment of enlisted Behavioral Health Technicians to better support our workforce's mental health needs.

To increase the mobility of our workforce, starting with several First District units, from Station Cape Cod to Sector Long Island Sound, we will replace old desktops with new mobile workstations such as two-in-one tablets, enabling our workforce to work on the job, while on the road, or from home.

This year FORCECOM will leverage 3,000 “two-in-one” tablets and a new wireless service at our major training centers to increase training effectiveness both in and out of the classroom.

At last year’s Address I announced the creation of an enhanced capability to communicate with and across our workforce. Our small but incredibly talented Public Affairs team has recently launched “My Coast Guard,” both a website and a mobile app, enabling you to get Coast Guard information and news at your fingertips.

All these initiatives improve our readiness and serve to attract and retain our talented workforce.

In order to maintain this critical momentum and close the “Coast Guard Readiness Gap” - our Service needs sustained “Operations and Support” budget growth of 3 to 5% per year.

Why? Because the Coast Guard delivers solutions. No one can do what we do, particularly on the budget we operate with! Our ability to seamlessly integrate into both joint and inter-agency operations, our broad mission authorities, and our unrivalled on-scene initiative, creates a growing and persistent demand for Coast Guard services.

Our Coast Guardsmen listening today are part of a 57,000 member work force, augmented by our 22,000 volunteer Auxiliarists, dispersed across the Nation at more than 1,000 different units, with many deployed around the world. Here at home in the United States, our duty stations cover the 361 seaports and 25,000+ miles of navigable waterways that serve as a key economic driver for American prosperity!

We pride ourselves on being ‘always ready’ for enduring missions that protect our commercial fishing fleets and recreational boaters from Guam, to Alaska, to Puerto Rico, and everywhere in between; and we’re always ready to support emerging demands such as increased manned space flights and rapidly developing offshore energy production.

Day in and day out, wherever needed, our Coast Guardsmen answered the call, frequently relying on just true grit and ingenuity, like this rescue, reminiscent of our Life Saving Service history.

[Video: North Bend SAR]

This powerful story not only captures the strength of our workforce, including the Sector North Bend Command Center, and crews from Air Facility Newport and Station Yaquina Bay, it also showcases empowerment of junior members who exercise a bias for action daily in a multitude of missions.

Just weeks ago, I heard of another heroic 13th District rescue. Air Station North Bend's Rescue Swimmer Trevor Salt was lowered from a Dolphin helicopter to assist two stranded hikers, one who had fallen 50 feet from a cliff and was critically injured. AST2 Salt created shelter from the wind, spent 12 hours overnight on the steep and frigid mountainside with the patient, administering medical care and making preparations for a next day evacuation by an Oregon National Guard helicopter crew. Well done, Petty Officer Salt!

Every Coast Guard mission like these begins and ends at a facility—the 'hub' for our Coast Guard workforce. We launch boats and cutters from small boat stations and piers; aircraft from hangars and runways. Watch standers coordinate operations from command centers, and Mission Support professionals enable our frontline operators from bases and logistics centers. Our Coast Guard units have galleys that feed our crews, barracks that house our members, and warehouses that store and ship critical parts. To remain "always ready" we MUST invest in, and update, these shore facilities to meet today's standards for efficiency and resilience.

Across the Service we have dozens of facilities requiring significant engineering support and investment.

Here's an example of what we do when we get an inject of funds: In 2013, we constructed new facilities at Sector Houston-Galveston with the help of Congress through an appropriation of supplemental hurricane funds. The new Sector building houses a modern 24-hour command center, a Vessel Traffic Service that guides over 175,000 vessel transits annually on one of America's busiest waterways, a 400-person conference room that transforms into a regional Incident Command Post, and a Coast Guard medical clinic that supports 2,400 outpatient visits a year.

This building was designed and built to modern codes and hurricane standards. In 2017, it stood up to Category 4 Hurricane Harvey, one of the most significant tropical cyclone events in United States history, delivering heavy winds and 52 inches of rainfall in Houston. This modern, more importantly - resilient - Sector Houston-Galveston building, enables the work of 1,700 personnel who conduct Coast Guard operations in the area. Work that ensures maritime safety, security, and environmental stewardship. Work that advances our economic prosperity. Work

that also supports our national security as the Port of Beaumont is one of the nation's key military strategic seaports.

Investments, such as that in Sector Houston-Galveston show what we can accomplish in other locations. With support of the Administration and Congress, like that provided in the 2021 Appropriations Act, we can upgrade facilities to provide our dedicated workforce the infrastructure they need to best address the maritime needs of the Nation.

With support provided, we are working on Coast Guard housing in locations around the country, including Jonesport, Maine, where residents begin moving in next week! In partnership with the Alaskan delegation, Congress has appropriated funds for three new phases of government housing in Kodiak, Alaska.

Renovations span new construction contracted by Coast Guard Civil Engineers, as well as smaller "self-help" projects initiated by recently prototyped "Housing Assistance Teams." Such efforts mean a lot to our families who reside in any one of our roughly 3,200 Coast Guard homes. But I note that less than 10% of our Coast Guard members live in government housing, a stark difference from our DoD counterparts. The shortage of adequate housing in remote locations, and in many of the high-cost cities we operate, is a recurring concern we hear from our crews— a concern we look forward to addressing with the continued support of the Administration and Congress.

In April, we break ground on our first new aviation unit in more than two decades—located right here in Southern California. Air Station Ventura County will significantly enhance our aviation multi-mission capability in the region.

Looking 15 or so years down the road at our Rotary Wing aviation program, we likely find ourselves linked to DoD's Future Vertical Lift initiative. But before then, we need to strategically manage our legacy MH-65 Dolphin and MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter fleets to remain "Always Ready" for America's call.

Looking across our two rotary wing fleets, we find that the Jayhawk has a robust domestic industrial base that can help buy down our operating risk in the decade ahead. Two weeks ago in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, I observed our first MH-60T Jayhawk outfitted with Blade-fold/Tail-fold capability that will enable deployment aboard National Security Cutters, and our future Polar Security and Offshore Patrol Cutters.

This year we will transition Air Station Borinquen in Puerto Rico from a Dolphin to Jayhawk unit, adding additional reach and contingency response capability to the Eastern Caribbean, not to mention a likely land-based Aviation Use of Force capability. Air Station New Orleans will be the next to transition!

We will transition Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point from decades-old C-130-H fixed wing model aircraft to modern, sophisticated C-130-Js, and provide a hangar to protect and support these new platforms. The C-130-J's greater speed and endurance make the aircraft ideally suited for standing the watch over U.S. interests in the vast Oceania region.

In support of NORTHCOM and NORAD, we have started engineering work for Link 16 installs aboard our National Capital Region Air Defense facility helicopters. This tactical data link will better network our aircraft that perform this important National Capital Region mission.

From Air Stations to Boat Stations, American communities depend on their locally-based Coast Guard to have the tools and technology to safeguard our economically vital waterways, protect critical port infrastructure, and rescue mariners in distress.

Make no doubt about it, we are a maritime nation, and America's waterways provide our country with tremendous global advantage. Our ocean routes, coastal ports, and inland waterways make up our Marine Transportation System. Our energy, consumer goods, and other commodities —representing 26% of our Nation's Gross Domestic Product—are transported on these waters, providing 31 million American jobs. Our seaports are the gateways for 90% of America's international trade. From our Marine Inspectors who inspect vessels to the National Maritime Center that credentials operators, the Coast Guard helps to oversee this economic engine that ensures products arrive at businesses in every corner of our country.

And I have to give a shout-out to our credentialed U.S. Merchant Mariners who form the backbone of the Marine Transportation System. Last year, the Coast Guard made sure these marine operators were categorized as essential workers— annually, they are responsible for \$5.4 Trillion dollars of economic activity that Americans depend on. Throughout this global pandemic, these professionals kept products moving to ensure stores were stocked with medicine and critical supplies.

Our Nation's INLAND waterway system includes 12,000 miles of commercially navigable channels and some 240 locks. These "inland marine highways" enable tugs and barges to annually transport 570 million tons of cargo valued at \$230 billion dollars. It would take an extra 21 million tractor trailers on American roadways to move the same amount of cargo as U.S. barges do each year.

[MTS B-roll in background]

Here you see Coast Guard Cutter KANAWAH, a 75-foot river tender pushing a 100-foot aids to navigation barge as it marks a channel. Work horses like KANAWAH service more than 28,000 marine aids to navigation, provide a federal presence on our inland waterways, and keep this system moving. The average age of this inland fleet is over 50 years. I'm excited to say that we will issue a Request For Proposal this year to replace our legacy fleet of tenders with new Waterways Commerce Cutters. We anticipate awarding a detail design and construction contract in the Spring of 2022. These new cutters will offer more afloat opportunities for women.

Our inland cutters and heartland Sectors responded to over eleven hundred (1,100) marine incidents in 2020 including marine casualties, oil discharges, hazardous material releases, and various security threats. These marine incidents can close ports and waterways resulting in lost economic activity - measured in millions of dollars each day!

As I mentioned earlier, last year was a record hurricane season in the Atlantic Basin, with 12 making landfall in the United States. Every one of them affected maritime commerce and marine stakeholders. Coast Guard Captains of the Port in the Eighth Coast Guard District alone closed and safely re-opened ports along the Gulf Coast 35 times!

Reconstituting waterways after an incident or a storm is an "All Hands-on-Deck" effort. Major storms block channels with debris, sunken vessels, and displaced buoys. Hurricane Laura created \$10 billion in damage, and it took the leadership of Marine Safety Unit Port Arthur, in conjunction with other port partners, to get the critical Calcasieu and Sabine-Neches waterways back in business. These waterways rank as third busiest in the United States in terms of cargo tonnage.

After Category 4 Hurricane Laura passed through Louisiana in August, Coast Guard crews from across the Southeast, repaired 80 navigation aids, including retrieval of buoys adrift off-shore.

These hard-working crews received top-notch support from Sector Field Office Galveston, Civil Engineering Unit Miami, and even Maritime Administration's CAPE TEXAS, a Ready Reserve Vessel that housed our crews in the Port of Beaumont during the storm. In just 4 days, they enabled deep water traffic to resume transporting America's vital energy resources.

In response to successive natural disasters in the Eighth District, members of our Director of Operational Logistics, including Damage Assistance Teams, Repair Teams, Command Support Elements, and the Mobile Support Unit, undertook the massive effort of helping local units restore operations, and in some cases assisted members with their damaged homes. Well done to all!

Hurricanes are not the only threat to the Marine Transportation System. We stood up the Maritime Cyber Readiness Branch within our Coast Guard Cyber Command to lash together cybersecurity and port operations to better protect maritime infrastructure and vessels from a cyber-attack. This branch investigates all reported cyber incidents in the Marine Transportation System and shares important findings with maritime partners and other stakeholders to build a more resilient network. Combined with our Cyber Protection Team that is certified, trained, and deployable for Prevention and Response operations, the Coast Guard is taking important and necessary steps to increase safety and security where physical and cyber threats converge. We maintain strong relationships with our U.S. port partners, we hold leadership roles on Area Maritime Security and Harbor Safety Committees, and we have the technological expertise to integrate cyber awareness and resilience within the Marine Transportation System.

Building collaboration in such an environment is a hallmark of our Service. This year the Nation witnessed the Coast Guard and its partners respond to a never-before seen maritime challenge.

[Video: Cruise Ship Offload]

Truly, a strength of the United States Coast Guard is our ability to bring people together to get things done!

The Coast Guard's unique authorities and capabilities provide maritime safety and security at home and abroad.

For over thirty years, the Coast Guard has worked with the Department of Defense, leading Joint Interagency Task Force South, the “gold standard” for Joint-interagency intel-driven maritime operations. JIATF-South is comprised of representatives from 16 U.S. agencies and 21 international partners from around the world.

These partners’ seizures are distinct and additive to the 2.4 million pounds of illegal drugs the United States Coast Guard has interdicted at sea over the past 5 years.

JIATF-South orchestrated interdictions at sea account for almost four times the total quantity of cocaine seized by all domestic and border law enforcement efforts combined! Our Coast Guard teams operating far from our own borders capture drugs in bulk quantities at-sea where they are most vulnerable to interdiction.

Drug smuggling fuels corruption, violence, and instability in Central American countries, accelerating migration towards our Southwest land border. Human smugglers exploit this environment and profit from pushing the most vulnerable members of these fragile Central American countries on extremely dangerous journeys north.

Just yesterday, I was joined by our Department of Homeland Security partners to witness the off-load of 7,000 pounds of illicit narcotics from the decks of National Security Cutter BERTHOLF, right here in San Diego. The event highlighted our collaboration in this important fight.

The drugs our teams interdict at sea are not “just” drugs kept out of our communities or off our streets, nor do they “just” represent billions of dollars less purchasing power for Transnational Criminal Organizations. The interdiction of these drugs symbolize the enduring commitment of the broader U.S. government team to enhance regional security in Latin America — a commitment that matters here in America!

And just as Transnational Criminal Organizations keep innovating to move their product, so too, must we innovate to stop them.

We’re employing new tactics . . . and getting new results.

In Texas, we have a team of Coast Guardsmen working in concert with Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations to support their unmanned aerial vehicles currently forward deployed in Central America and proving to be an exceptional maritime patrol asset. Unmanned surveillance platforms increase our capacity to detect illicit behavior at sea and most effectively allocate finite end-game interdiction assets. Interdicting illicit narcotics at-sea requires a “team of teams” approach!

The counter-drug mission is just one example of our global maritime operations. Throughout our 230+ year history on the global maritime stage, we have earned the reputation of being a “preferred partner” for like-minded countries who support the international rules-based order.

[Video: Global Coast Guard]

As our Commander-in-Chief says, the United States is a “preferred partner,” because “we lead not only by the example of our power, but by the power of our example.”

Our broad authorities, multi-mission capabilities, and suite of international agreements with partner nations and allies make the U.S. Coast Guard a “preferred partner” to strengthen the United States Government’s multi and bilateral relationships in key regions. Our Coast Guard presence in these areas influences maritime security, and I note that with maritime commerce underpinning the global marketplace against the backdrop of an increasingly complex threat-scape, maritime security is in fact national security!

In contemplating national security concerns in the High Latitudes, the Arctic continues to be a region of growing geo-strategic importance where the maxim “presence equals influence” rings true. The United States Coast Guard has provided 150 years of presence in the Bering Sea, and our cutters and land-based units have set the example of how an Arctic nation responsibly governs its maritime activities while building and enhancing partnerships with an eye towards environmental stewardship and maritime security.

Our new Polar Security Cutters will ensure year-round access to uphold United States’ sovereignty, represent national interests, and vigorously compete for advantage in the remote polar regions.

Three weeks ago, 45-year young Coast Guard Cutter POLAR STAR returned from two months of operations and training in the winter Arctic for the first time since 1994. Typically, POLAR STAR

supports the National Science Foundation with an annual re-supply mission to McMurdo Station in Antarctica, but last year the NSF cancelled the trip because of COVID. As a result, we redirected the POLAR STAR to uphold and project American interests in the Arctic.

Last summer we also sent two of our 270-foot Famous Class Medium Endurance Cutters further North in the Atlantic than any other ships of that class had previously ventured. Today, along with Global Affairs Canada, we are planning a Northwest Passage transit for Cutter HEALY later this year.

This year, we will assign a Coast Guard Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Copenhagen to service Denmark and Norway. This Attaché will advance our National interests and work with our allies and partners to ensure a safe, secure, and cooperative Arctic as our strategic competitors maneuver for advantage in the region.

We see emerging opportunities for U.S. influence in other areas of the world, too. In November, we placed our first-ever Coast Guard Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Canberra Australia, who will also provide regional services to New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. And, the new Singapore Coast Guard Attaché will arrive in country next year. I see these strategically placed Coast Guardsmen making a big impact with our global maritime partners!

This is part of our effort to increase our footprint in the Indo-Pacific, doubling-down on operations and engagements with like-minded island nations and Quadrilateral Security Dialogue partners. This footprint includes three new Fast Response Cutters with terrific expeditionary capabilities homeported in Apra Harbor, Guam. Our Fast Response Cutters have proven to be extremely capable and are making major contributions wherever they operate.

One driver for increasing demand of Coast Guard capabilities is the threat of Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing. In September, we released an IUU Fishing Strategic Outlook as a call-to-action to amplify global awareness of IUU Fishing as a threat to global food sustainment, marine ecology, and national security. This Strategic Outlook sets forth our Service's vision to enhance "unity of effort" –spanning non-government organizations, government agencies, and international partnerships— and to sustain our global fish stocks and protect maritime sovereignty world-wide.

By increasing awareness of the behaviors of bad actors and fully employing existing resources, enforcement tools, and legal authorities to coordinate action, the Coast Guard and our partners will combat IUU fishing in the most effective way possible: together.

That's why we sent National Security Cutter STONE to South America: to re-kindle relationships with Guyana, Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay in coordinated exercises against IUU fishing. And with only five days notice, Medium Endurance Cutter BEAR deployed to Cabo Verde at the request of the host nation, in the Gulf of Guinea, to strengthen maritime awareness in the AFRICOM area of operations and thwart IUU fishing and piracy.

But the real key to spotlighting bad behavior is maritime domain awareness. Last Fall, our Research and Development Center tested the ability of unmanned surface vessels to augment traditional ship and aviation capabilities for operations in the far reaches of the Pacific Ocean. We learned that the future of our unmanned systems strategy will most likely rely on more diverse systems and effective integration of machine-learning to unlock actionable data for Coast Guard operators. These are valuable lessons as we stand-up an Unmanned System element within our Coast Guard Requirements Shop to consider how unmanned technology can augment our future fleet.

The good news is that we are building the future fleet NOW and work continues on the 10th National Security Cutter named after our first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard – Charles CALHOUN. Work on NSC #11, named after pioneer American code-breaker Elizebeth Smith Friedman follows. Cutter ARGUS is currently under construction—the first of a future fleet of 25 highly capable Offshore Patrol Cutters. And tomorrow, we will place the 42nd Fast Response Cutter – ROBERT GOLDMAN into service. The recently enacted Fiscal Year-21 appropriations bill funded the acquisition of the last 4 Fast Response Cutters, completing our FRC program of record of 64 hulls. We look forward to commissioning FRC numbers 43 through 64 and placing them into operational service.

Later this month, National Security Cutter HAMILTON will head across the Atlantic to support DOD's European Combatant Command while escorting two new Fast Response Cutters to the Mediterranean Sea on their way to start replacing the six 110-foot patrol boats operating for the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility.

The acquisition of 11 National Security Cutters, 25 Offshore Patrol Cutters, 3 heavy Ice Breakers, and 64 Fast Response Cutters provides our Nation with over one hundred highly capable ships that model the rules-based order. While the Department of Defense is rightly focused on hard power lethality, the U.S. Coast Guard provides soft power, multi-mission flexibility, trusted access, and non-kinetic options to advance U.S. interests, preserve U.S. security and prosperity, and address wide-ranging threats and challenges.

We bring a range of maritime capabilities to bear across what I like to refer to as the “cooperation-competition-lethality continuum.” While we train and operate across the entire continuum, it is in the “cooperate and compete” areas where we thrive and best demonstrate our value to the nation in support of the Tri-Service Maritime Strategy - “Advantage at Sea” - which the Chief of Naval Operations, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and I jointly released in December. The future of our Naval Services is joint. We are truly more effective when we work together!

And while this look ahead is exciting, I’ve often noted that in order to excel in the future, we must understand our past. There is no doubt that the years ahead will look significantly different than our first 230 years of Service. But unlike the Navy, the Marine Corps, the Army, and the Air Force, our United States Coast Guard has no facility to showcase the expansive history of our forerunners, nor to capture history being made today by our heroic Coast Guard workforce.

[Video: CG History]

As I wrap up and reflect on this organization and our rich history, I am convinced that we need a National Coast Guard Museum. Ours’ is a story America needs to know!

All the efforts I spoke of today were executed by those who serve in our United States Coast Guard, who continue to stand the watch at sea and on shore, who continue to advance the Service, who continue to create innovative solutions to evolving challenges, who continue to forge new partnerships during challenges, and who continue to make history! Our Nation is grateful for your history making moments, your sacrifice, and your devotion to duty.

Our history is a history of togetherness. We are the formation of multiple services. Together we have created the World’s Best Coast Guard. Our value proposition is our ability to work with our fellow Armed Services, across the inter-agency, and with international partners. And our strength is our people working together, be it the boarding team, the boat or air crew, or the incident management team.

I am thankful for the support of local communities where we operate every day, the support of our Department, the Administration, and the Congress. I am forever grateful to you – our nearly 80,000 member Mission Ready Total Workforce, and Coast Guard families who make sacrifices for our Nation every day. The State of the Coast Guard is truly agile, adaptive, and resilient.

State of the Coast Guard 2021 by ADM K. L. Schultz, U.S. Coast Guard
11 March 2021

While we continue to face challenges, this past year has reinforced that we are indeed
“Stronger Together!”

Thank you and Semper Paratus!