

## **ADM K.L Schultz “State of the Coast Guard 2022” – Air Station Clearwater, 24 February 2022**

Thank you, Master Chief Vanderhaden! To Captain Joe McGilley and the Air Station Clearwater Team: thank you for hosting this year’s State of the Coast Guard Address. Thank you, Secretary Mayorkas, represented here by our local DHS teammates in attendance, and to my shipmates across the Coast Guard: thank you for your participation today.

Today, the “State of the Coast Guard” is strong, maybe stronger than ever before, because we are “United in Service,” adapting to new challenges and opportunities presented by a rapidly changing maritime domain.

We’ve seen massive ships pushing the limits of both ports and waterways; evolving autonomous vessel technology, including the recovery of spacecraft at sea; growth in offshore wind energy; increasingly busy shared-use waterways; escalating cyber threats to vessels and critical infrastructure in our ports; and more frequent and costly weather events.

We have monitored distant water fishing fleets who set lines and nets more than 9,000 miles from their native shores, absent any flag state oversight to assure responsible behavior; and we’ve observed what were historically frozen waters become increasingly navigable. In addition, we have been both organizationally and personally affected by disruptions to our inter-connected, global supply chain.

These changes trigger a persistent demand for more “coast guard work.”

This transformational change in the maritime domain, and its blistering pace, is not confined to the United States –rather, it is global! These changes taking place in coastal waters act as a forcing mechanism, compelling coastal nations worldwide to establish or bolster their own coast guards, and to adapt or expand their existing maritime security capabilities. For it is “coast guard work” to ensure safety of life at sea, to protect marine environments, to promote economic prosperity, and to generally maintain “good order and governance” in waters of coastal state jurisdiction.

In response, the U.S. Coast Guard has done what it has always done... we’ve continued to evolve. We are a “learning organization” with a growth mindset: continuously adapting to emerging national and international challenges and opportunities. Our enduring success throughout our 232-year history, accentuated by these uniquely challenging past three years, is because we are ever adaptive... agile... and resilient. We succeed because we are “United in Service”... and because we are “United in Service,” we are Always Ready!

Almost four years ago, we launched a strategic framework for a Ready, Relevant, and Responsive Coast Guard to address America’s most complex... and dynamic... maritime challenges. Because we are

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“United in Service” within our own communities and across the organization, with our Department of Homeland Security counterparts, with the Department of Defense Joint Force, and across the inter-agency and with our international partners, we’ve driven forward our strategic plan and are building the Coast Guard the Nation needs today and well into the future.

While we adjust course to best address enduring and emerging challenges, one constant remains: the need to deliver the assets, resilient infrastructure, and capabilities necessary to accomplish the mission.

Our Coast Guard is amidst the largest shipbuilding effort since the 2nd World War as we build the fleet that will serve the Nation for decades to come. In June, the 10th National Security Cutter, to be named for the first Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard - Charles Calhoun, will be christened.

Detail design work remains underway in preparation for construction of our first Polar Security Cutter... It’s a state-of-the art ship that requires exacting designs, complex steel work, and systems integration. Today, I am excited to announce the name of the first... That name will be: POLAR SENTINEL.

When our fleet of Polar Security Cutters becomes operational, the work of these uniquely capable assets will be essential to protecting our economic, environmental, and national security interests in the Polar or High Latitude Regions.

Our first Offshore Patrol Cutter... ARGUS... is over 60% complete, with OPC hull number two... CHASE... well on its way. This spring, we anticipate awarding the largest acquisition contract in the history of our Service for the next 11 Offshore Patrol Cutter hulls in “Stage Two” of the OPC program. The OPC program of record is 25 cutters, and delivery of this full fleet is critical to recapitalizing the capability and capacity provided by our 28 Median Endurance Cutters... many of which are 50+ years old. This legacy fleet loses nearly 500 patrol days annually due to unplanned maintenance and repairs. If these lost patrol days were dedicated exclusively to counter-narcotics operations... and if these days were just “average” in terms of mission productivity, another 20 metric tons, or 44,000 pounds of illicit drugs could have been interdicted at sea and prevented from reaching our shores. Replacing this legacy fleet at best speed is vital for the Coast Guard to effectively carry our evolving missions forward.

We’re making progress on the acquisition of 30 Waterways Commerce Cutters. These new tenders will have greater endurance, speed, and deck load capacity to efficiently maintain 28,000 aids that mark over 12,000 miles of navigable inland waterways. These aids to navigation are a critical component of our Marine Transportation System on which cargoes and commodities comprising 25% of our Nation’s gross domestic product moves. And, for the first time in history, our entire inland fleet will be able to accommodate mixed-gender crews, providing all junior enlisted members these unique afloat

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experiences. In the interim, we are creating additional afloat billets for our women shipmates, like Third Class Boatswain’s Mate Hailey LaRue, who operates aboard Cutter WIRE for Sector New York.

And much change is afoot in our aviation community where we are re-capitalizing and changing the composition of our fleet, delivering new and upgraded fixed-wing platforms, and strategically relocating assets. We now have two long-range HC-130-J Super Hercules in Hawaii where aircrews have greater capability to conduct missions in a region that knows the tyranny of distance. Our medium-range HC-144s sited in Miami, Mobile, Cape Cod, and Corpus Christi, as well as our C-27-Js in Sacramento, are instrumental to meeting mission objectives, too. Both platforms are receiving upgrades to their capabilities, including installation of the Minotaur Mission System that enables our aircrews to better gather, process, and share critical tactical information in real time with units underway and onshore. And, by this time next year, the new C-27-J simulator at Aviation Training Center Mobile will be operational.

As I talk about Coast Guard aviation, I’d like to thank the top-notch professionals at Elizabeth City’s Aviation Logistics Center... around seventeen-hundred strong, who form the hub of Coast Guard aviation support... keeping our 200+ aircraft flying. The Aviation Logistics Center continuously adapts and continues to amaze, including their recent blade fold/tail fold MH-60 conversion. From depot-level maintenance, where they entirely de-construct and rebuild aircraft with new components and mission systems, to organically manufacturing critical spare parts, the team at Aviation Logistics Center enables our crews to fly 47,000+ sorties every year.

Take a look at this impressive rescue by two of these aircraft operating out of Cape Cod.

Every operational commander knows that Coast Guard missions begin and end at a facility. During my last State of the Coast Guard Address, I emphasized that to remain “Always Ready” we MUST invest in our shore facilities—a message that was heard, loud and clear. We have seen historic support for our infrastructure, including \$429 million in the recently enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to address critical shore needs, funding 18 distinct projects across the Coast Guard. Thanks to Congressional support, we have many sizable construction projects underway right now at 8 small boat stations, like Station Key West, at the Coast Guard Yard, and at 3 new cutter homeports; AND we are building the first new Coast Guard Air Station in decades from the “ground up” in Ventura, California... scheduled to be complete this time next year. We are currently executing about \$1.4 billion dedicated to improving shore facilities across our Service and we anxiously await \$200 million of additional funds in the Fiscal Year 2022 budget, which will allow us to tackle another 11 infrastructure projects.

I would be remiss if I did not thank the hardworking civil engineers and contracting officers who will make these projects a reality. Acknowledging these increased demands on this community... a good problem to have... our Fiscal Year 2022 budget includes 26 new Civil Engineering positions. We must

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continue to invest in this workforce and enable them with the people, tools, and technology to rebuild facilities needed to execute our missions. We MUST ensure every dollar invested in shore infrastructure provides maximum impact.

In addition to investing in facilities that support our missions, we’re investing in facilities that support our workforce. Did you know the last time we built a new child development center was 10 years ago in Petaluma... and before that, 25 years ago in San Juan? No longer. Thanks to Congressional support, we’ve received \$120 million in funding for new construction of childcare development centers in Alameda, Kodiak, Mobile, Astoria, and Elizabeth City, and modest improvements to our childcare center in Cape Cod!

As Congress remains supportive to updating our infrastructure, building to climate informed and resilient standards is at the forefront of our minds.

In late January, I visited Training Center Petaluma to break ground for the Coast Guard’s newest sustainable energy project: a solar grid designed to provide 10-days of self-sustaining power for the entire Training Center campus. Initiatives like this enable our Service to remain “Always Ready” as we adapt to more prevalent and severe natural disasters such as wildfires in the West and hurricanes striking our Atlantic and Gulf coast regions.

We’re also making tremendous progress in the “Tech Revolution!”

Our new medical health record system ... “M.H.S. Genesis” has gone “live” Service wide, making patient record retrieval easier and faster, reducing administrative errors, and allowing electronic information exchange with the Department of Defense, Veteran’s Affairs system, as well as commercial care providers. And we have shifted to DoD 365 Cloud Computing ahead of our “DoD counterparts” allowing our members to access their work accounts from personal computers with the use of a simple Common Access Card reader device. This capability especially helps our Reservists, who can now access their Coast Guard email and collaboration tools from anywhere.

By August, we anticipate our Personnel Electronic Records Management System will also go live to enable our members, as well as those retired or separated from the service, to have “on demand” access to their military personnel records.

We’ve started replacing all 48,000 Coast Guard standard computer workstations with modern mobile hardware. Twenty-thousand laptop units are scheduled for delivery this year... which will enable both faster and more powerful computing and provide additional mobility for our workforce.

Mobility is a key enabler that enhances the innovation of our personnel. Thanks to the ingenuity of FORCECOM and the Coast Guard Headquarters Commercial Vessel Compliance Team, we’ve modernized training delivery for Apprentice Marine Inspectors and Vessel Examiners. These members will soon utilize “on-demand” e-learning and unit-administered “on-the-job” training. This hybrid delivery method for professional development, known as the “Marine Inspection Performance Support Architecture,” is part of the Prevention Readiness Initiative and carries great potential to influence training and readiness within other enterprise programs.

In addition to adapting how we deliver training, we are “United in Service” modernizing how we collect, use, and interpret data.

Modern computing will soon be informed by “Surveyor,” a “big data platform” under development. “Surveyor” will integrate data across the Coast Guard enterprise from systems we are all familiar with... Direct Access, ALMIS, MISLE, and others... to not only reduce the burden of manual data entry by Coast Guard personnel, but to also empower our workforce to make data-driven decisions that allocate finite resources judiciously towards the highest risks and threats to our marine environment and our maritime security. Even our most remote operators will be able to access this data as the C5I community continues to improve their support to our globally deployed assets.

Today, our cutter crews have an increased ability to perform their mission while underway with improved access to Coast Guard software applications. In addition, our crews both ashore and at sea can now enjoy secure access to personal email, social media, and even video messaging with family back home. In the coming years, all afloat platforms will benefit from forward-thinking “Next Generation Cutter Connectivity,” designed to significantly increase bandwidth, resilience, and even provide Wi-Fi underway. While there is still a long way to go before this improved connectivity is available across the entire fleet, we are moving swiftly in the right direction.

These recent tech initiatives are indicative of a healthy “evolution in attitude” within our Service towards data and I.T. investments... Today, we see I.T. for what it has always been: an “operational platform” that supports a more “ready” Coast Guard, a platform that is essential for us to be “United in Service.” Acknowledging the critical importance of such technology, and making the requisite investments, is essential to the success of any modern organization. And we are grateful for the \$275 Million appropriated by Congress since I became Commandant to support our Tech Revolution, which launched the first wave of transformational changes in how we deploy mobile, reliable, and integrated information systems to our extraordinarily capable people.

New platforms, processes, and technologies are indeed “enabling functions.” They enable and empower our workforce—the backbone of our Service—to work smarter and more effectively. As I’ve said since early in my tenure: when we provide our workforce with an environment in which all members can

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thrive, and the tools to get the job done, therein resides mission success and high employee satisfaction!

As we move forward, we must honor and be informed from our past. Yesterday, I commissioned the John Scheuerman, the 46th of 64 new Fast Response Cutters... and the fifth of six FRCs destined to support the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. As FRCs are named after Coast Guard enlisted heroes, each commissioning ceremony adds a new chapter to our storied Coast Guard history.

Our rich history deserves to be celebrated, and that will be the case at the forthcoming National Coast Guard Museum in New London, Connecticut, our top philanthropic priority... our Service’s most significant philanthropic initiative to date. I encourage you to learn more about this important project led by the National Coast Guard Museum Association.

And when we talk of FRCs, three will be homeported here in the Tampa Bay area at Sector Saint Petersburg.

Our modern vessels are different in size, complexity, and capability than the legacy platforms they replace; they have more systems, more parts, more tonnage, and greater range. Accordingly, the Mission Support enterprise is “United in Service” to provide integrated, responsive, and innovative support for our operators.

Traditionally, the responsibility of “in-port” maintenance has been placed largely on our cutter crews, but we are making substantial moves to ease the “in-port workload” and “improve work-life balance” for those assigned cutters. Forty new cutter support billets will be added upon enactment of our current-year budget, including port engineers, machinery and weapons technicians, and quality assurance personnel.

Meanwhile, our logistics workforce is innovating enhanced, steady-state support to our cutters... both inport and underway... through the stand-up of an “Expeditionary Logistics Group” to help provide down-range logistics capabilities to optimally support our deployed assets. This capability, still in its infancy, is modeled after processes used in our land-based contingency efforts... like hurricane response.

When Ida struck the Gulf Region as a Category IV hurricane last year, the scale of destruction to Louisiana ports was matched by the disruptive impact to our workforce, including the displacement of over 1,600 Coast Guard personnel and their families. Reconstituting the region’s ports and waterways, and assisting our families affected by the storm, required responsive, integrated, and innovative mission support... and the Mission Support enterprise delivered. “United in Service,” the Director of Operational

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Logistics, in conjunction with Bases New Orleans and Galveston, coordinated with the Eighth District and Atlantic Area Commanders to create the “Family Assessment Support Tool” to track and respond to Coast Guard personnel needs. This tool enabled the expedited securing of temporary lodging for over 700 Coasties and their families, as well as coordinated delivery of medical care for 32 members displaced from their regional providers.

Our spouses, parents, siblings, and children often share the responsibilities and burden of military service... I thank each-and-every family member for your support! And I’d be remiss if I didn’t thank both Coast Guard Mutual Assistance and the Coast Guard Foundation for their critical support of “Team Coast Guard!” Most impressively, these organizations continue to find new ways to best support our personnel and the broader Coast Guard family, which in turn, enables our workforce to deliver mission excellence anytime, anywhere!

We are an agile, adaptive force whose greatest value to our Nation resides in our ability to rapidly shift our missions and efforts to meet national priorities during both steady state and crises. And it seems that we are more frequently responding to crises. While the agility, strength, and resilience of our 42,000-strong Active Duty force continues to impress, we could not have performed all that was asked of us if not for our Reserve Component and volunteer Auxiliary.

Last Fall, Coast Guard personnel supported 13 contingency operations occurring simultaneously, on top of steady state business. In every major operation, Reservists and Auxiliarists were “United in Service,” side-by-side with our full-time personnel. They were among one hundred medical personnel deployed to the Southwest Border, supporting Customs and Border Protection operations, they supported FEMA, and they were among the medical contingent who delivered CDC-recommended vaccines to Afghan Nationals in support of DHS’s Operation “Allies Welcome.”

Auxiliarist Mark Perni helped ensure that our own workforce expeditiously received COVID vaccines. I am grateful to our dedicated medical personnel consisting collectively of just 800 medical officers, physicians, pharmacists, administrators, health service technicians, and Auxiliary volunteers. “United in Service,” these professionals strengthened our readiness posture. Thank you!

A robust readiness posture enables us to lead in crisis. Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach Commander - Captain Rebecca Ore, led in crisis as the Nation watched, establishing a Unified Command and leading 1,800 first responders, public safety professionals, assessment teams, and response workers to clean Southern California’s waters, beaches, and wildlife.

The Coast Guard Navigation Center (NAVCEN), employed a data-driven approach to provide timely visuals for the Unified Command to use in their risk-based decision-making to optimize the placement of finite resources in those areas most affected by the oil.

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NAVCEN’s input, Captain Ore’s leadership, and the strong partnership between federal, state, and local agencies, “United in Service” with scientists, wildlife care experts, and technical specialists, was critical to the success of the 13-week clean-up operation.

And our robust readiness posture enabled the U.S. Coast Guard to be the first responder on-scene in August 2021 after a devastating 7.2 magnitude earthquake struck the Tiburon Peninsula or Southern Claw of Haiti. At the request of the Haitian government and coordinated by the Senior U.S. Defense Official in Haiti, Reserve Coast Guard Captain Gregory Duncan, we surged aircraft and crews to help Haitian citizens.

Here on the hangar deck of our largest Air Station, let me ask the members of the Clearwater team who supported these Haiti earthquake operations to stand... Well done team!

The United States Coast Guard was on-scene within just 24 hours of this tragic earthquake. Our adaptability, agility, and responsiveness allow us to get into places before anyone else. And the MH-60 Jayhawk, with its endurance and power, proved invaluable during the Haiti response efforts. This past year, we transformed Air Station Borinquen into a Jayhawk unit to provide the 7th Coast Guard district with more rotary wing capability...And we look forward to the innovative ways aircrews will employ these helicopters further down-range.

As threats to our national security—and our Nation’s prosperity—evolve, so too must we evolve.

Our Nation’s economic prosperity relies on free and open maritime trade. This begins with the safety, security, and efficiency of America’s 360 ports. This past year, Americans came to recognize the interconnectedness of the global economy when many were personally affected by the temporary closures of the Suez Canal and the Colonial Pipeline, as well as ship congestion off Los Angeles and other ports.

Much of the responsibility to assure a safe and efficient port relies on our “Shore Forces Enterprise”—15,000 personnel assigned to 37 Sectors located across the Nation. Theirs’ is a dynamic job as they adapt operations to meet a “triple challenge:” sustaining a safe marine and maritime environment for all users; responding to industry’s efforts to increase ports and waterways throughput, and keeping pace with continuously advancing technologies. Now, and well into the future, effective waterways management and port stakeholder collaboration will enable the safe utilization of our Nation’s shared waterways. We intend to grow our waterways workforce in the coming years to meet new demands.

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The risk of cyber-attacks to maritime critical infrastructure and maritime organizations threatens the resilience of our Nation’s Marine Transportation System. This past August, we released an updated “Cyber Strategic Outlook” that lays out how the Coast Guard is adapting to protect the MTS, as well as defend our own network, and operate in cyberspace. These efforts range from prevention and response strategies; leveraging relationships with interagency partners; and building a robust cyber workforce...a workforce that I’m excited to announce, includes a new Cyber Mission Specialist rating with its own Chief Warrant Officer specialty!

Clearly the maritime domain is changing. Global fish stocks are dwindling, the threat of piracy endures, and storms have become more frequent and destructive. As nations confront these challenges, they increasingly look to coast guards... and they see our Service, the United States Coast Guard, as a global standard bearer. The White House, too, has recognized the value of sharing our “centuries of experience” with like-minded navies and coast guards. The Administration’s recently released Indo-Pacific strategy calls to “expand U.S. Coast Guard presence and cooperation against [other] transnational threats.” Advancing “coast guard work” with key partners across the globe is a charge we accept with vigor!

In the Indo-Pacific, we are active now. Our sea-going buoy tenders and Fast Response Cutters conduct expeditionary patrols across Oceania, exercising bilateral agreements; and our Deployable Specialized Forces strengthen partners’ maritime domain awareness and law enforcement capabilities. National Security Cutters operate with the maritime forces of Japan, Australia, and numerous Southeast Asian nations. And this summer, National Security Cutter MIDGETT will work with partners, perhaps as far away as the Indian Ocean.

Last spring on the Black Sea, National Security Cutter HAMILTON conducted exercises with regional naval forces, including the Ukrainians, Turks, and Georgians, to strengthen relationships with partners and allies.

For three successive years, cutters deployed to West Africa to participate in the African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership, commonly referred to as AMLEP, a program we’ve also supported with Coast Guard Deployable Specialized Forces and Mobile Training Teams since 2010.

These operations showcase how we are “United in Service” with the Joint Force, supporting every geographic combatant command and every numbered U.S. Naval fleet, playing a critical role to secure our national interests and confront threats and challenges before they reach America’s shore. Two weeks ago, I had the privilege to engage 36 defense leaders from the African continent at U.S. AFRICOM’s Chiefs of Defense conference, describing how the United States Coast Guard might help them develop their skills and capabilities. This work advances the Tri-Service Maritime Strategy with our U.S. Navy and Marine Corps teammates.

Pivoting to the CENTCOM theater, here’s a specific example of how the Coast Guard supports the joint fight. In both May and December 2021 in the Arabian Gulf, the Coast Guard’s Advanced Interdiction Team, an element of our Maritime Security and Response Team East, interdicted thousands of assault weapons and “hundreds of thousands” rounds of ammunition, pictured here. These efforts by our highly trained and dedicated teams prevented illicit weapons from reaching those who threaten our U.S. forces and our coalition partners. Such efforts help ensure legitimate commercial shipping can transit freely.

This past year, National Security Cutters KIMBALL and BERTHOLF deployed to the Bering Sea, the gateway to the Arctic, a region from which 50% of our nation’s fish and shellfish are harvested. While there, they monitored a Chinese naval Surface Action Group which was operating 50 miles off the Aleutian Island coast.

Without question, warming air and rising sea temperatures are increasing the number of actors and their activities in the Arctic. Elevated activity increases risk to maritime safety, national security, and the marine environment. To that end, for over 150 years, the U.S. Coast Guard has maintained a consistent presence in the geo-strategically important Arctic. With the planned delivery of polar security cutters in the years ahead, that presence will continue.

Last year our medium icebreaker HEALY completed a historic circumnavigation of North America via the Northwest Passage. Today, our sole heavy icebreaker, POLAR STAR, is wrapping up work in Antarctic waters. After enabling replenishment of McMurdo Station, STAR continued south to set a new world record...transiting to the southernmost navigable waters on the planet. Our ice breakers sail with a diverse contingent of crewmembers, scientists, key partner nation naval officers, and even some Auxiliarists. As I continue to unequivocally note - in the high latitudes, ‘presence absolutely equals influence!’”

Here, in the Western Hemisphere, we remain “United in Service” with inter-agency and international partners to thwart bulk shipments of narcotics smuggled at sea. Last week, I joined the crew of National Security Cutter JAMES for their second large drug off-load in six months. Collectively, JAMES off-loaded 130,000 pounds of illicit drugs interdicted across 40 separate seizures by various cutter crews and Law Enforcement Detachments deployed aboard U.S., Canadian, and Dutch naval vessels. Interdicting bulk quantities of narcotics at sea keeps drugs off American streets and deprives Transnational Criminal Organizations of illicit revenue streams. Well done to all those who feed the interdiction cycle of success!

Our hemispheric neighbors to the South have a lot at stake in this fight, as Transnational Criminal Organizations gravely threaten their way of life, their economies, and their individual and collective security. Persistent inter-agency training and collaboration across the vast Joint Interagency Task Force South operating area has been tremendously successful. In 2021, Panama, Colombia, and Costa Rica

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collectively removed 225 Metric Tons... that’s nearly 500,000 pounds of illicit narcotics from the maritime transit zone. They are highly effective counter narcotics partners.

Perhaps, a joint-interagency framework to counter Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated fishing could yield similar successes... the United States Coast Guard looks forward to contributing a leadership role towards such ends!

Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, commonly referred to as IUUF, is certainly a global challenge. This past year we launched an implementation plan to support our IUUF Strategic Outlook released in September 2020. Our efforts to help counter IUU Fishing behaviors have created new avenues to collaborate and share best practices of “coast guard work.”

All these initiatives... modernizing our assets, capabilities, support functions, and operations... and countless others... were informed, created, supported, and implemented by you, our incredibly talented, agile, and dedicated Coast Guard workforce.

The key to our success has always been our people... our diverse workforce of Active Duty, Civilian, Reserve, and Auxiliary volunteers. In 2019, I asked you to join me in building a “tidal wave” of energy to ensure all members of Team Coast Guard were respected, empowered, and included... and you have! Informed by our partnership with the Rand Corporation to deliver the “Women’s Retention” and “Under-Represented Minority” studies, and inside our lifelines work through our LDAC’s and Affinity Councils, we have been “United in Service” to create a more fully inclusive Coast Guard... A Service where every member of our team can experience a strong sense of belonging!

While there is still much work to do, I ask you to celebrate our work in progress, and recommit to marching the ball even further down the proverbial inclusion playing field.

As we work hard to achieve a Coast Guard representative of the population we serve, we’ve placed new officer recruiter positions in D.C.; Hampton Roads; Atlanta; Miami; and Houston. This past November, we formally established our fourth... and largest to date... Coast Guard Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps, or J-ROTC, program right here in this county at Pinellas Park! 170 local students are already participating in this program! Having our young Americans engage with our front-line Service members in an area like this replete with many operational units, is the best way to generate interest in the Coast Guard. Have you seen Station Destin’s BM3 Justin Lebeouf teach the “Smarter Everyday” host how to whistle? The youtube video, posted a month ago, has received over 4.4 million views! I imagine Petty Officer Lebeouf may have helped recruit many a future Coastie. Well done, BM3!

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We are “United in Service,” eliminating barriers to success. Since 2019, Congress has provided an additional \$6 million for our childcare subsidy program, expanding the pool of eligible members, and providing targeted financial relief to those living in high-cost childcare areas. The program nearly tripled the number of enrolled children in just two years. And we’ve received funds to make major improvements to Coast Guard housing in Alaska; New York; and California. And we’ve advocated for and anticipate funding in our FY22 appropriation to start replacing our sub-standard recruit barracks at Training Center Cape May, the home of our enlisted workforce.

We’re developing geographic centers of gravity, creating more Coast Guard hubs like Portsmouth and Alameda... These new or improved operating hubs will be in Charleston, Seattle, Pensacola, Los Angeles, and Newport, Rhode Island... These operating hubs will allow us to better support our operational assets, and to further support the geographic stability of our workforce.

We also continue to derive tangible benefits from our initiative to provide reservist back-fills to allow active duty members to optimize their parental leave, like Chief Schwartz [from the video]. Three-hundred sixty-five active duty Coast Guard members have taken advantage of this opportunity, improving their work-life balance, and affording some exceptional active duty opportunities to our highly capable Reservists!

We’ve made significant improvements in telehealth capabilities, and have increased mental health care access, strengthening the resilience of our workforce. These efforts include the hiring of 10 mental health doctors, 5 regional nurse case managers, and 14 regional behavioral health providers...with more to follow. We’ve quadrupled our Auxiliary chaplain corps, who augment our 46 Active Duty chaplains, providing more touch points with our geographically distributed workforce.

We continue to benefit from our robust co-location policy for members married to members, and we’ve implemented screening requirements for advancement to Master Chief Petty Officer to ensure our best leaders emerge from our senior enlisted ranks. We’ve also taken great steps to improve career management for our workforce, creating enlisted career guides and additional career counselors to guide career progression and improve transparency in the advancement process. Soon we will publish “Ready Workforce 2030” building on these changes and describing the strategic vision for how the Service will approach talent management and modernized ready-learning in the next decade.

In addition to achieving your professional goals, we want you to achieve your educational goals. Last year we raised the Tuition Assistance cap to \$3,750. Nearly five-thousand members participate in the Tuition Assistance program and over twelve hundred took advantage of the increase. Today, effective immediately, the Coast Guard is increasing Tuition Assistance by another 20% to \$4,500, the maximum level authorized across the military services!

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These are just a few of the many examples of how your Coast Guard is “United in Service,” making investments in, and adapting policies, to attract and retain our dedicated workforce.

And while there’s always room for improvement, I’m pleased to report that our collective efforts to retain our workforce are working. Today more women are remaining in our Service longer. Today we have 375 more women in the Service at the critically important E6/E7 and O-4 mid-grade leadership ranks than we had five years ago in 2017... that’s a 28% increase of women at these mid-career pay grades, and a trend that out-paces their male counter-parts. The “rising tide lifts all boats” aphorism applies here as today we’re retaining 60% of our Active Duty workforce at the 15-year time in Service benchmark... that’s impressive!

This encouraging trend amidst corporate America’s “Great Resignation” speaks to the Coast Guard’s growth mindset and the comprehensive efforts we are taking to value and hence retain our talented workforce.

We must continue this progress, because we cannot be the U.S. Coast Guard our Nation needs without each member of our workforce. You, the extraordinary members of our Mission Ready Total Workforce, are the change agents who maximize our team’s potential. You are the inspector who shapes novel vessel construction. You are the storekeeper who provides a much-needed part to a frontline operator. You are the voice on the radio who gives hope to a distressed mariner, and the first responder who pulls that mariner from the sea. You are the systems developer who collaborates and who innovates to get the mission done.

Individually, you are valued. “United in Service,” we are invaluable!

As your Commandant, I am ever thankful for the support of the local communities in which we operate, the support of the Department, the Administration, and the Congress.

The State of the Coast Guard is indeed strong at a time when the demands for our services and capabilities have never been higher, and the challenges on you and your families uniquely difficult. You are the most talented, tenacious, and inclusive team of shipmates and Coast Guard families that I’ve been blessed to serve with over the past four decades. On behalf of your senior leadership team, the many coast guard and maritime agencies we partner with across the globe, and all Americans, I offer my deepest gratitude and admiration! Today we celebrate your accomplishments and successes, forever “United in Service.”

Thank you and Semper Paratus!