

Purpose: Provide keynote remarks during the 2017 Coast Guard Ball. The emcee will welcome the VIPs & Distinguished guests.

Theme: Above and Beyond Heroes: Past and Present

Strategic Intent: Engage the service.

Duration: 15 minutes

OPENING

Good Evening! Let me first echo the praise for everyone involved in making this night such a success! This year's Ball Committee... the Coast Guard Band... our Silent Drill Team... all the volunteers. Thank you!

It's so important that we take time like this – with our spouses and friends – to recharge, enjoy the company of our shipmates, and to celebrate our incredible Service together.

Especially given our Service's OPTEMPO of late...

REFLECTION

It's hard to believe tomorrow is October already. It seems like I blink an eye and another month has gone by. With yet another month coming to a close, I've taken some time to reflect on all that our men and women have done in just those 30 days.

[HURRICANE RESPONSE] Of course, we started off the month in the wake of Hurricane Harvey. The Gulf took hit after hit

and drowned in nearly 52 inches of rain. Harvey was the wettest tropical hurricane on record in the contiguous U.S.

But, even with practically no visibility. Treacherous winds. No reliable common operating picture. Our helicopters were in the air. Our punt boats on the flooded streets. And as they were saving lives, the rest of us eyed Irma barreling our way.

The U.S. had never been hit by two Category 4 or stronger hurricanes in the same season – but, we faced two *in less than two weeks*. But the month was not done with us yet with Maria aimed at Puerto Rico.

In the face of these historic storms, our incredible men and women mobilized to action; literally, they ran toward these storms that others wisely fled. We saved nearly 12,000 lives. That is not just a number, it's human beings.

And many of those responders – those stationed in Houston, Port Author, Galveston, New Orleans... Florida Keys... Puerto Rico – they were facing their own crushing losses or trying to prepare for the next hit. The houses of some of our shipmates have been completely leveled. Nearly 10 percent of our *entire* Active Duty workforce were displaced.

So let me take a moment now to recognize every spouse or family member here. It was the spouse that evacuated with

the kids, the pets, the grandparents... and then returned to dig out while the member stood the watch.

Here in D.C., when your spouse was deployed on a moment's notice, you were left to re-rack your schedules... pick up the kids and take the full load by yourself.

Truly, our family members are the backbone of our service and make it possible for our Coast Guard men and women to do all that they do. You do not take an oath, but you serve right by our sides. Thank you!

[potential pause for applause]

I went down, after the worst of both Harvey and Irma, to shake some hands and say thank you. I met one Chief that had been up for 72 hours – he just couldn't leave knowing there were more people that needed rescuing. That's our character. Always, service before self. But, as your Service Chief, it also concerned me.

Of course, our response to these hurricanes was an all hands on deck evolution. People deployed from all over and those that did not deploy either directly supported from afar or picked up the increased workload at home. Right here in D.C. a 65+person call center stood up with volunteers when 911 and the Coast Guard's local numbers became inundated.

And I was told by countless people that, hands down, we would not have succeeded in the Gulf without our incredible Auxiliary. Volunteers that show up and just know what needs to be done... and then do it.

Every part of our 88,000 active duty, reserve, civil servant, and auxiliary team was needed. And every part answered the call.

And make no mistake, this impacted our entire service. Training was cancelled... maintenance deferred... there were significant upticks in watch schedules... people lost much needed down time. This pushed us, and I charge the leaders of our organization to ensure we take the time we need to recover...

But, even as we recover, I do not have the luxury of calling a timeout.

OTHER MISSIONS CONTINUED

The demand for the Coast Guard has never been greater, and it is only growing.

And we certainly didn't press pause on our other missions while responding in the Gulf.

[MTS] While the rescues were still underway, crews and inspectors worked to reconstitute our ports and waterways –

the geographic blessing of our Nation that accounts for \$4.6 trillion of economic activity annually.

[WHEM] And during the five busiest days of our response to Harvey, Coast Guard Cutters in the Pacific seized nearly 9,000 lbs of cocaine and took into custody 20 smugglers. I brought Attorney General Sessions to an offload in San Diego last week - over 50,000 lbs of cocaine and heroin!

[Arctic] During the response we continued to ready ourselves for the opening waters in the Arctic. As shipping increases and access to precious resources grows, we have to be ready. So this month we had assets off the coast of Iceland conducting the first ever full-scale Arctic search and rescue exercise in one of the most unforgiving climates on earth.

[Agility] Nationwide, our men and women executed search and rescue cases, halted poachers, cleaned oil spills, investigated collisions, inspected vessels... they did it all for the safety, security, and prosperity of American citizens.

All in just one month!

FUTURE DEMANDS

And as I look at the months ahead, I don't see a world breaking out in tranquility. The demand for Coast Guard services is on the rise.

We are the world's best Coast Guard! Every other coast guard and many navies want to be just like us – but they do not have our people.

HEROES / CLOSING

The video earlier showed Ellsworth Bertholf, Nate Bruckenthal, Dorothy Stratton, Terrell Horne... Our 227 years overflows with examples of heroes.

And given the proof of this past month, we are anything but in short order of heroes today.

So, to each and every one of you, to the incredible families who stand by your side and support you... God Bless. And always, *Semper Paratus!*