

Purpose: Provide remarks at Commonwealth North (CWN) breakfast event titled, “The U.S. Coast Guard in the Last Frontier.”

Audience: Approximately 65 members of CWN, a non-profit organization with a mission to “foster educated decision making on issues that matter to Alaskans, and to lead Alaskans to develop policies that enhance our quality of life for this and future generations,” as well as other Alaskans with a good knowledge of public policy issues with diverse political and organizational affiliations.

Media: On-the record. The event is open to local press (print, radio, and TV) and will be recorded and posted on the CWN website.

Strategic Objective: Bolster third-party advocacy

Duration / Sequencing: The entire event is scheduled to last 1 hour, 0730-0830. You will be introduced by the CWN Mead Treadwell (who will also recognize Senator Sullivan) and will have approximately 30 minutes for remarks followed by Q&A for any time remaining.

OPENING

[Extemporaneous Greetings]

What a great way to end my week here in Alaska – the Last Frontier! It really is my honor to be here with you.

I want start by going back 7 years, to when I was the Federal On-Scene Commander of the largest oil spills in U.S. history – Deepwater Horizon.

I had to decide whether or not to use Corexit – an oil dispersant.

Let me just say, there were differing views on the subject. So I asked, “What’s worse? We let millions of gallons of Louisiana Crude impact those fragile Gulf Coast mangroves...

get into that system and stay there for decades to come? Or, use the dispersant?”

6 months later, I got an answer.

So you have to take decisive action. We used the dispersant and it looks like, in hindsight, it was the better call.

But this was the Gulf Coast. We've had natural seeps there for decades and countless studies have been conducted. But we still didn't know enough.

So, then I look to the Arctic. Where we know so much less... unlike the Gulf, the Arctic has always been covered in ice. So, what we do know is changing (i.e. melting) before our very eyes.

HEALY SKIMMER TESTING

As the sea ice continues to recede... as the estimated 13% of the world's undiscovered oil and 30% of the world's undiscovered natural gas becomes accessible... as traffic increases... the chances of oil spills or other disasters become more and more likely.

The Coast Guard, in close and vital collaboration with state, local, tribal, and international partners, is doing what we can to prepare on this front.

I was on the CGC HEALY on Tuesday. The crew just finished testing the Aqua-Guard Triton RotoX, an ice-capable oil skimmer.

- **[The RotoX, designed and built in Canada, is a self-propelled skimmer prototype that was designed to collect oil in broken ice. It features ice-cutting teeth, 10-inch thrusters, and a brush designed to collect oil.]**

We, more or less, have packed ice figured out... and open ocean (as long as it's calm enough)... but those technologies aren't sufficient for broken ice.

The HEALY's testing was great step toward finding and refining the best solutions for this fragile region.

And this was really a partnership between HEALY, the Coast Guard Research and Development Center, our National Strike Force, the Navy Supervisor of Salvage and Diving, the Oil Spill Recovery Institute of Cordova, and the State of Alaska.

As we all know, getting ready, being ready, and responding to whatever comes our way truly takes a group effort.

INCREASED TRAFFIC

I was in Nome on Monday. The day before, the C/S Crystal Serenity was there. And a few days before that, the C/S Bremen was there. The Serenity has 1,725 persons on board. The Bremen, approximately, 265.

We've taken precautions. We have contingency plans in place. We have incredible partnerships to rely on. But there are no risk-free scenarios, especially when you consider there are just four emergency room hospital beds in Barrow...

PRESENCE

But the Coast Guard has been here since the beginning... and will continue to be here as far over the horizon as I can predict.

In fact, we were here the day we became an Arctic nation. In 1867, when we purchased the Alaskan Territory, it was a revenue cutter that carried the U.S. delegation here for the transfer ceremony.

And this year, we celebrate 150 years!

Seward's folly they called it...

\$7million for this gem. Best deal we ever made!

I only dream of the day I make such a “folly!”

Our earliest patrols up here were in reaction to the large scale foreign poaching of fur seals. They were threatened with extinction. In between 1874 and 1913, two different cutters named RUSH served on this Bering Sea Patrol.

These patrols, over 100 years ago, were the start of sustainment efforts that carry on today... efforts that honor the native Alaskan culture as well as livelihood... efforts that were highlighted for me just yesterday, during my visit with the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission and subsistence fishing camp.

Back then, to avoid these cutters’ RUSH, seal poachers would try to conduct their illegal hunts before the cutters arrived... a practice that coined the phrase, “Get there early to avoid the Rush!”

But the RUSH came through, time and again.

In fact, my pinnacle command afloat tour was on our last CGC RUSH. It was nearly 17 years ago when I had multiple patrols up here in Alaska on the RUSH – here in one our most

remote and challenging operating areas. I remember one night [insert anecdote].

I, just like each of you in this room, have seen the challenges we face in this region first-hand. I have seen it, both on the RUSH and during my many of travels here over the years, culminating this past week.

And the RUSH legacy will continue! In approximately 2023, one of our brand new Off-Shore Patrol Cutters will be stationed in Kodiak and will be christened RUSH! She will carry the legacy and serve this region to meet the ever growing challenges.

It is by no mistake that some of our first OPCs will be stationed here – OPC hulls #3 and #4.

And the first FRCs that were stationed on the West Coast came to Alaska, as well. 2 are here in Ketchikan, with 4 more to follow.

Our C-130Hs out here are being converted to J's – AIRSTA Kodiak will be only the second Air Station nationwide to get this upgrade and it will make them faster, make them fly farther, and make them more effective overall.

And I'm fighting with everything I've got to get our first of 6 heavy icebreakers out of the starting blocks so the Coast Guard – *our Nation* – can have access - anytime, anywhere - to exert our sovereignty and ensure our security.

When I look globally to pinpoint CG strategic priorities, the Arctic is at the top of that list.

Everybody else is preparing up here – for the Arctic that is coming – Russia, Canada, Norway, Denmark, even China... And so must we.

CLOSING

The evidence of this urgent and growing need to prepare was made all too clear for me on Monday, when I visited Shishmaref and spoke with the local villagers. And there are 31 other Alaska Native villages in "imminent danger" of the same fate.

Our time in the Arctic is now.

Admiral McAllister (D17) is the only District Commander I am aware of that expressly lists "prepare for the future" in his Commander's Intent.

Nothing could be more fitting for the Commander of this Last Frontier!

I want to truly thank each of you for what you do – for helping to amplify this message – because you get it – you are here.

I really look forward to what questions or ideas you may have for me! And thank you all again.