

**Purpose:** Provide remarks at the CG Officer Candidate School Class of 1-18 and NOAA Basic Officer Training Class 130 Graduation Ceremony.

**Audience:** 96 graduates (73 Coast Guard; 17 NOAA; 6 International (Bahamas, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mauritius, Seychelles, & Philippines)), family, friends, and faculty.

**Strategic Intent:** Engage the service

**Duration:** 12 minutes

## **COMPLEX WORLD [VUCA]**

**Congratulations Graduates! I'm sure each of you woke up this morning with a proud sense of completion. About to cross the finish line! After 17 demanding weeks – today you graduate!**

**But this day has another name. It's also called a commencement. And today – even more significant than graduating you are about to commence a journey of a lifetime.**

**And you are our Nation's next leaders in a time that poses more challenges - and more opportunities - than I have ever seen in my 44 years in the United States Coast Guard.**

**In fact, there is an acronym out there that you might of heard... as if your 17 weeks here wasn't filled with enough acronyms, I'm going to give you one more: VUCA. It stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity.**

**And yes – however daunting it may sound - those words are good descriptors of our global landscape today.**

**Volatility [Cyber] – the rate of change. Look no further than the digital world. The internet... technology... cyber... the speed of this evolution is truly remarkable.**

**Our incredible response during this hurricane season was so successful because savvy members embraced new technologies. Because command centers monitored Instagram and Twitter.**

**It will continue take that kind of innovation moving forward.**

**Uncertainty [WHEM] - the lack of predictability. Just look at North Korea. The jockeying of China and Russia. The East and South China Seas. And right here in the Western Hemisphere there is violence, instability, and weakened governance caused by ruthless transnational criminal organizations that profit off our Nation's consumption epidemic.**

**Complexity [MTS] - the confounding of issues. 4.6 trillion dollars in economic activity flows on our Nation's greatest geographic attribute – our waterways. Facilitating that movement – keeping our waterways safe, secure, and efficient – it is a task that is quickly overwhelming.**

**In the morning, one of our marine inspectors might be on a 40 year old container ship... after lunch a brand new state of the art LNG container... The next day, a cruise ship... the next, a partially autonomous ship.**

**And make no mistake, autonomous vessels aren't science fiction anymore. You tell me... how do you meet Rule 5 with an autonomous vessel?**

**Ambiguity [Arctic / Sea Level] – lack of clarity. Well, one thing that *is* clear is that the waters in the Arctic are opening and shipping is on the rise in those pristine waters.**

**And with rising sea temperatures, fish stocks will shift. Most people don't realize that nearly 3 billion of our global population of nearly 7 billion rely on protein from those fish.**

**Sea level is rising. Storm surges intensifying. The only thing that is not ambiguous about it is that – yes – these will be issues our next leaders – *you* – will face.**

**VUCA. Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity.**

**So 'graduating'? Yes.**

**But more importantly – you are commencing a journey where you – our future leaders – will be the ones to tackle these challenges and more.**

## **PARTNERSHIPS / TEAMWORK**

**How?, you might ask.**

**Well, first, you're not alone. Look to your left and right, in front of you and behind you.**

**17 weeks ago you walked through the front gates as individuals. But you will walk out as members of the world's best team.**

**I'm talking about a team that comprises the United States Coast Guard and NOAA... the entire interagency... and also our international friends.**

**As you commence your journey, remember that you learn best by talking to people who are not like you. People with different ideas. Different experiences.**

**2 weeks ago, I was at the commencement of the World Maritime University in Malmo, Sweden. Representatives from 48 countries walked across that stage. It was a powerful sight.**

**Inclusivity and teamwork is how you will succeed.**

**In all that you are called upon to do in your careers and in life – you stand the best chance if you do it together.**

## **LEADERSHIP**

**And never underestimate those around you and those you will lead.**

**I just sponsored a recruit company at Cape May, New Jersey – the birth place of our entire Enlisted Corps.**

**These young men and women that you are about to lead will blow your mind.**

**At least 1/3 of my recruit class had been to college. There were Bachelors degrees and some Masters. And every one of them already knew more about the world of cyber than I do.**

**Leadership is not a privilege it's a responsibility. And your job, as our future leaders, will be to enable the full potential of every person who works with you.**

**In this VUCA world – this is not optional... it's mandatory.**

## **PROUDEST DAY**

**Those recruits at Cape May also told me that the proudest day of their entire lives was the day they joined the United States Coast Guard.**

**Each of you should feel the same way.**

**I know it is the proudest day of many of those sitting behind you. It is not their own incredible successes that make them proud - even the likes of Congressman Yoho... or former DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson - it is you!**

**When you took that oath just a few moments ago – you joined the 1% who put service before self. You are now part of the world’s best. And you are our future.**

**So welcome aboard!**

**God Bless. Good luck. And *Semper Paratus!***