

As delivered

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
USCGC SEQUOIA Commissioning
Introductory Remarks
23 August 2003

Good morning! I'm very pleased to be here with you today for the christening and launch of our newest cutter to join the fleet, Coast Guard Cutter SEQUOIA.

We are honored to have Deputy Secretary England and Mrs. England here with us to share in this special day. Thank you both for being a part of this special event in Coast Guard history.

[Recognize other VIPs].

A very warm welcome also to the friends and family of a Marinette and Coast Guard hero, LTjg Gerald Stuart, who gave his life rescuing the crew of a downed Navy plane off the Chinese coast during the Korean War. Tomorrow, LTJG Stuart will be honored in Peshtigo with a plaque dedicated to his memory. We are honored to have you join us today – and honored to say LTjg Stuart was one of ours.

I also will take a moment to say “thank you” to the men and women of Marinette Marine Corporation, for their outstanding workmanship in building this beautiful ship here before you. You've done a terrific job and my hat's off to you.

This fine ship before you is the Coast Guard cutter SEQUOIA, the 15th of our 16 new 225-foot seagoing buoy tenders. SEQUOIA will be a proud member of the Coast Guard's Aids to Navigation fleet, our “black hulls” – otherwise known as our “working” cutters, but don't tell our white hull sailors I said that!

Among all of her sister ships, SEQUOIA wins the award for longest trip to her new homeport – hands down! SEQUOIA's homeport is Guam, so her crew will get a few miles under their belts getting her from here to there – something in the order of 13,000 miles.

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I'm sure all of you are aware of the Giant Sequoia tree, among the largest and oldest of all trees on earth, and probably some of you are also familiar with the Presidential yacht, Sequoia. I bet far fewer of you know about the U.S. Lighthouse Service's SEQUOIA, commissioned 95 years ago in New Jersey. She served the Lighthouse Service in San Francisco. When, in 1939, the Lighthouse Service merged with the Coast Guard, SEQUOIA became a Coast Guard cutter. In 1946, she was decommissioned and transferred to the Philippines, where she served another 24 years, before retiring in 1960, after 52 years of dedicated service!

Throughout America's rich maritime history, there has always been a need for dependable aids to navigation to prevent loss of life, protect our shores, and provide for our economy. Over 95% of the United States' commerce is carried through our seaports. More than 7,500 ships and 200,000 mariners make 51,000 port calls every year in the United States. And those ships carry 6.5 million passengers, 1 billion tons of petroleum, and 6 million containers a year. With those numbers in mind, it's easy to see why it's so important to maintain our aids to navigation and guard our nation's rich tradition of safety at sea.

Since the early days of buoys and buoy tenders, both the aids and the ships that tend them have dramatically evolved. The ship you see before you is the 15th of the JUNIPER-class of sea-going buoy tenders. Along with her 13 sister ships that have already been delivered, and the 14th which will be delivered in October, SEQUOIA is purely state-of-the-art. Her twin diesel engine propulsion system supplies the speed and maneuverability necessary to tend both coastal and offshore buoys. She also comes with a new Dynamic Position System, which uses DGPS to fix a position. Her integrated Ship Control System coordinates input from RADAR, satellite navigation, and computer-generated charts with the ship's controllable-pitch propeller, rudder, and thrusters, allowing her to maneuver, navigate, and station-keep with unparalleled ease and safety. The crew of SEQUOIA will literally be able to maintain the vessel's position within a 10-

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meter circle in up to 30-knot winds and up to 8-foot waves, with a margin of error near zero.

And she will need those capabilities. Although she will be home ported in beautiful Guam, her area of responsibility is quite expansive. SEQUOIA will have to service 99 aids to navigation throughout 3 million square miles of the Pacific Ocean. She will help guide and light the way for all who sail in her territory.

Now, it is my honor to introduce our next speaker. Deputy Secretary Gordon England is a Baltimore native, graduating from the University of Maryland with a Bachelors in Electrical Engineering. He also earned a Masters Degree in Business Administration at Texas Christian University. Secretary England came to the Department of Homeland Security from the Department of Defense, where he served as the 72nd Secretary of the Navy. Prior to his service as SECNAV, Mr. England led General Dynamics Corporation as executive vice president for four years.

And on January 24th 2003, after receiving Senate confirmation, he became the first Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Ladies and gentlemen, Deputy Secretary Gordon England.