

Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Reserve Force Mark Allen's Remarks

to the

Fleet Reserve Association

July 27, 2011

Good afternoon, East Coast Region!

I am so excited to finally attend my first FRA East Coast Region Convention, after more than a decade of membership in the FRA. It is good seeing our Shipmates today.

Good afternoon:

- Roanoke Mayor David Bower,
- National FRA President Jim Scarboro,
- National Vice President Jeff Gilmartin,
- National Executive Director Joe Barnes,
- PRPEC Paul Gunther,
- Past National President, George Kaye
- Past National President, Donald Mucke,
- Past National President, George Hyland
- Past President Bob Deese
- Past President Bob Bastian.
- and Shipmates

Thank you for inviting me to share with you today an overview of the amazing service that our Coast Guard (*and especially our Coast Guard Reserve*) members are performing for the American people.

I affirm to you that these Coastguardsmen are able to do these great things because of the examples that you of the East Coast Region have set - when you were wearing the uniforms of this Nation.

And these Coastguardsmen are able to serve today, also in great part because of the amazing support of the Fleet Reserve Association. We Coasties are deeply grateful for the support you give to our troops, and especially to our enlisted crew members.

That support is particularly visible in the generous scholarships and awards you sponsor, and in the important work FRA does as an advocate for the rights and benefits of our service members.

As a lifetime member of the Fleet Reserve Association, a member of Rockville, MD Branch 182, and a former Chair of the Central Liaison Committee; I am well aware of the forethought and care that goes into supporting the crew. Thank you.

I could not be more proud to stand before you today representing the United States Coast Guard *Reserve Force*.

With our unequalled surge capacity, our Reservists perform admirably in a wide range of missions.

That performance has allowed us to make significant contributions to the ability of our Service to prepare for and respond to a wide array of contingencies and incidents. The Coast Guard Reserve plays a vital role in enhancing the safety and security of the American people.

This past decade alone offers some potent examples of the mission critical work Reservists do at home and abroad.

We were there in the days following the savage attacks on American soil on Sept. 11, 2001.

From New York to Boston and throughout our nation's ports, Reservist shipmates quickly responded and deployed. All were impacted personally and professionally, and all felt a commitment to serve.

Reservists here at home have proven especially successful in thwarting potential terror threats by providing security for critical military out-load operations.

Reservists have served capably alongside our DOD shipmates at home and abroad during Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, and Operation Enduring Freedom.

Operation Iraqi Freedom led to the Coast Guard's largest overseas deployment since the Vietnam War.

As I speak to you today, Coast Guard Reservists are serving in Afghanistan, Iraq, Cuba, and many other places far from home.

I recently stood on hot tarmac, shaking many sweaty hands of Reservists as they climbed into a transport plane enroute to a foreign land where some people threaten their lives.

Some of these troops had many such deployments on their records, others had looks of fearful determination in their eyes, and yet others fought back tears as they had just bid goodbye to their spouses and infant children.

Throughout our nation, Reservists have helped implement sweeping changes outlined in the Maritime Transportation Safety Act of 2002, which strengthened and standardized security measures at U.S. ports. Specifically, Coast Guard Reservists have helped:

- board and examine high-interest foreign vessels
- implement the 96-Hour Advance Notice of Arrival rule for vessels, and
- conduct vital port state control work on vessels whose countries failed to implement requirements.

Augmenting our active component counterparts, Reserve crews have been integral to assessment of safety on ferries, Liquefied Natural Gas vessels, and barges with dangerous cargo. Capitalizing on skills and experience garnered in their civilian work, they have helped establish invaluable risk-based profiles that help keep our ports secure.

In 2005, Coast Guard Reservists played a huge role in our well orchestrated response to Hurricane Katrina *on a scale that nearly defies description.*

Their efforts helped ensure the safety of more than 33,000 citizens under challenging conditions. Once again, Reservists' military and civilian skills and experience helped extend the value of our Service to the American public.

There were other responses during this busy decade that span the range from recovery efforts in the aftermath of the space shuttle Columbia disaster, to flood responses and a bridge collapse in Minnesota.

For three decades, Coast Guard reserve crews also played a major role in ensuring the safety and security of America's shuttle program at Cape Canaveral.

During one of our nation's worst environmental disasters – the 2010 BP Deepwater Horizon Gulf Oil Spill- nearly 2,500 reservists responded. Once again, the military and civilian skills Reservists had added benefit during the immense response.

Our Reservists bring considerable experience in working on interagency projects to the operational work they perform in the Coast Guard.

Some provide geographic and cultural resource knowledge vital to crafting a well executed response, while others help problem solve.

During the Deepwater Horizon response, they devised innovative ways to recycle water used to clean oil from hulls of response boats, and implemented ways to track Reservist crews deployed throughout the Gulf - all at a cost savings.

Reservists quickly tapped into their diverse experience to help solve large problems. Their ingenuity and innovation makes them remarkably valuable and successful.

We also learned valuable lessons on mobilization and demobilization efficiencies from such an unprecedented, massive deployment – which engaged more than one-half of our available Reservist Force.

Through it all, the Coast Guard is cognizant of a changing world with changing weather and natural disasters that require vigilant monitoring and constant training to maintain a force that can rapidly deploy.

We must maintain 8,100 members, strengthen the mobilization and demobilization process, and ensure training and augmentation are priorities. Recruitment and retention of the best qualified shipmates is vital to our success.

This week, Walter Reed Army Medical Center closed its doors, ending a proud era. It reminded me how important it is to take every opportunity to visit our wounded warriors and to seize every chance to thank our men and women in uniform.

We of the Coast Guard, *and especially of the Reserve Force*, will remain grateful to you, our Shipmates ---- and especially those in the FRA East Coast Region ---- for your past military service and for your *continuing* support of our troops.

In Loyalty, Protection, and Service. Thank you.