

**Coast Guard Headquarters Ribbon Cutting
Remarks by the Commandant
Washington, D.C.
29 July, 2013**

Good Morning Shipmates.

I can't begin to tell you how happy I am to be here this morning to accept the keys to this new Coast Guard Headquarters! And it's not just because it is such a beautiful facility – although that is certainly part of it.

It's because for the last 100 years or so, our Coast Guard Headquarters has had a nomadic existence.

For the *first* 100 or so years or so – from our founding in August of 1790 – things were pretty good. We had a home in the Treasury building – our parent Department back then - and although it wasn't a building of our own, at least there we had stability. We were there until 1914.

But then... things began to change.

As both Treasury and the Coast Guard began to grow, we were forced to find a new location. And over the last 100 years, we've moved a lot.

First to the Munsey Building on Pennsylvania Avenue in 1915, then the Bond Building on New York Avenue in 1919, then the Darby Building on 14th Street in 1921.

During 1930's, our Headquarters was split between several locations to accommodate our growth as a Service – including Treasury Annex Number 1, the Wilkins Building on H Street in Northwest, and the Liberty Loan Building on 14th Street S.W.

And then in 1942, we consolidated those offices into the Southern Railway building on 15th Street in N.W. We stuck around there until we became part of the *new* Department of Transportation, and in 1970 we moved into their headquarters the Nassif Building – now known as Constitution Center. We were there for just nine years until we moved into our current home just across the river from here.

So as you can see, we have been a nomadic people for the last 100 years. But I think we have now reached our Promised Land. A Headquarters to call our very own has been a long time coming, *but it is truly good to be home!*

And we will indeed make it a home. As it stands here now, it is just a building. But as beautiful a building as it is, it only steel and glass and cement and stone. But a week from today, Coast Guard men and women will began moving in and bringing it to life.

This community will be our home, too. We are an organization of almost 60,000 active, reserve and civilian personnel. And that doesn't include our 32,000 volunteer Auxiliarists. We have people and units literally all over the world.

But we take great pride in being an integral part of the *communities* we live in.

As a service, we are globally connected. We have people and ships and units all over the world, from Japan, to Rotterdam, to Bahrain – and we use our unique partnerships and capabilities to shape the increasingly interconnected global maritime environment.

We are also nationally deployed. Anywhere your go along the almost 13,000 miles of U.S. coastline, you will find us on watch, ready to mobilize critical response capabilities when and where our Nation needs them the most.

But, most importantly, we are locally based. When I visit our Coast Guard units, I'm always impressed by how many of our people are active in their local communities. You all know the amazing things our Coast Guard men and women do on the job - but our people don't stop caring, don't stop wanting to help, don't stop being involved just because they go home for the evening. It's just not something we can turn off. In fact, we've already started to build our Partnership in Education programs with Eagle Academy Elementary School, Kramer Middle School, and Ballou High School, and this Saturday we will have our Coast Guard Day Birthday Celebration just down the road at Anacostia Park. We look forward to being great neighbors and great partners with everyone here in Anacostia!

Being here today reminds me of an occasion several months ago when I was privileged to preside at the commissioning of one of our newest Coast Guard Cutters.

When we commission a new ship, there is a point in the ceremony where the ship's sponsor – someone whose spirit and presence is invested in the ship and guides it through its service life – steps forward and asks the officers and crew to lay aboard and bring the cutter to life.

The ship's company then boards the cutter and mans the rails. The Quartermaster of the Watch then hoists the flag, the ship's systems are energized, and the engines roar to life. It's at that point the presence of the crew breathes life into the cold steel hull and it becomes a Cutter in the commissioned service of the United States.

It is much the same today. But instead of a single sponsor, we have many sponsors here whose hard work and dedication made this day a reality.

And while the whole crew won't run aboard this morning, over the coming months our crew will start to man the rails, energize the systems, and hoist the flags of your United States Coast Guard!

We are truly excited about coming aboard and turning this new terrific new house into a home.

On behalf of all the men and women of the United States Coast Guard, thank you to everyone who made this day a reality.

Semper Paratus!