

THE CHIEF

"In respect for those who have gone before us and as a guide for those who follow"
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CHANGING OF THE GUARD: OUR COAST GUARD IN TRANSITION

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An Honor to Serve By MCPOCG Leavitt

It has truly been an honor to serve the men and women of the Coast Guard and their families as the eleventh Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPOCG). Working with Admiral Bob Papp, his wife Linda Kapral Papp, Vice Admiral John Currier and many other senior leaders on challenges within the Coast Guard has been a very rewarding and humbling experience. I have also had the privilege of working with leadership at the highest levels within the White House, Congress, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Defense as well as numerous other government and non-government organizations on issues impacting our Coast Guardsmen and their families.

My career has been diverse and includes serving ashore and afloat at various operational units all around the country, including Alaska and Hawaii. I have also had the privilege to serve in many command positions. Other than serving for a few months as the Command Master Chief for the Deputy Commandant for Operations, this has been my first job where I haven't been navigating a ship or a small boat. Each of my previous jobs and experiences has helped frame my leadership principles, which help guide how I do and see things.



Upon being selected as MCPOCG, one of my primary goals was to enhance the leadership of the Chief and the Chiefs Mess. I firmly believe that the success of our missions and our people will always hinge on the leadership of the Chief and the Chiefs Mess. As such, we have completed countless initiatives in the realm of leadership and personnel. For instance, we updated the curriculums for our Leadership and Management Courses, Chief Petty Officer Academy, Senior Enlisted Leadership Course, and we changed our Chiefs Call to Indoctrination process to make it more of a learning experience. We changed our Chiefs Charge to better reflect expectations and to provide foundational leadership guidance. We also piloted an Apprentice Leadership Program in the 13th District with a focus on the Chiefs mentoring, coaching and counseling our junior personnel (E4 & below). Currently, we are aligning our enlisted evaluation system with our 28 Leadership Competencies. All of these changes and more will help shore up our leadership continuum.

As part of the Coast Guard Family Campaign, we have focused heavily on enhancing the quality of Coast Guard housing, availability of child care and access to medical and dental facilities, as well as building up our Ombudsman Program. Also, we implemented CG SUPRT, a very comprehensive personnel program that helps our members and their families deal with the stresses of military life by providing counseling services and general information on countless opportunities and challenges. Despite a very challenging budget environment, we have made and continue to make significant strides in all of these areas.

Over the past three-and-a-half years, we have had record high retention within our active duty enlisted workforce. As a result, some of our Coast Guardsmen have had to wait well over three years to attend "A" school. Furthermore, in some ratings advancement opportunities are very low, resulting in the need to implement workforce management tools that ensure advancement flow and career opportunities for all of our personnel, regardless of rating.

Consequently, we implemented the career retention screening panel (CRSP) and reinstated a high-year tenure (HYT), using a different approach than we used in the '90s. These programs and others are helping us better manage our workforce. But as we all know, workforce management programs put a certain amount of stress on our people and their families and we always need to be mindful of that.

In the future, the Coast Guard will continue to face challenges, but that is nothing new in our 223-year history. It is how we take on those challenges that will make the difference. So whether it is the recapitalization of our aging assets or implementing personnel management tools, we need to take on any challenge with a positive outlook, with optimism. We need to control the things that we can control. For example, frontline leadership can control the training and proficiency of their crews. They can be engaged and involved in every aspect of mission, operations and personnel, including families. They can understand the importance of maintaining a positive command climate and they can understand the importance of innovation, particularly during challenging times. Regardless of what the future holds, our people are what make us great as an organization. That said, balancing mission priorities with personnel and family needs will be key to our future success.

What Coast Guardsmen do is very important for our nation. Our country sees us every day, saving lives, setting buoys, conducting maritime law enforcement missions, meeting humanitarian service needs, responding to natural disasters like hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, responding to manmade disasters like Deepwater Horizon, and so much more. That's what we do; we prevent and respond to our nation's needs. That is our legacy and that is a legacy that I am very proud to be a part of. Thank you for all that you do. It has been an honor and privilege to serve with you. Take care.



Semper Paratus.

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5520-G Hempstead Way
Springfield, VA 22151

