

**COAST GUARD ACADEMY COMMENCEMENT**

**MAY 20<sup>TH</sup> 2015**

**INTRODUCTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES**

**ADM PAUL F. ZUKUNFT**

**COMMANDANT**

Mr. President, Governor Malloy, Ambassador Gegeshidze, Secretary Johnson, Senators Blumenthal and Murphy, Congressman Courtney, Mayor Finizio, naval and coast guard colleagues from around the world, distinguished guests, friends, family and – of course – Coast Guard Academy class of 2015!

It is truly an honor to be here today on this beautiful New England day to graduate and commission the newest members of our Coast Guard officer corps.

To the class of 2015: As I have said to you every time we've met, I cannot get you out to the fleet...to flight

school...or to our Sectors fast enough. You are the future that will continue a 225 year tradition of sustained mission excellence. And, at a point in time when global requirements placed on the Coast Guard have never been greater.

Some of you will head to MOHAWK, BEAR, or VENTUROUS, Medium Endurance Cutters that are underway today on the Caribbean Sea interdicting smugglers and severing the cash flow of transnational criminal networks. You will be part of the international effort that is disrupting the illicit flows of drugs, people and money responsible for the violence that is fueling regional instability in Central America and causing death through drug violence and over doses in the homeland. To this end – our intelligence enterprise is paying huge dividends tracking down TCO's where they are most vulnerable – on Coast Guard “home turf” – the sea. Intelligence driving operations is why Cutter BOUTWELL has returned to San Diego with nearly \$1 Billion dollars in cocaine in two consecutive patrols.

Some of you will head to the Arctic this summer aboard the ice breaker HEALY or in a National Security Cutter. These vital assets protect our nation's sovereignty while preserving safety of life at sea and the environment in a region that is undergoing a sea of change as ice gives way to open ocean – and with it – the full suite of Coast Guard missions.

Some of you will head to seagoing buoy tenders or domestic ice breakers, like cutter MACKINAW, that are critical to facilitating commerce on our Maritime Transportation System – the marine highway that is critical to maintaining the United States' global lead in production of Natural Gas and Petroleum. Others of you will support the safety, security and stewardship of American ports and waterways at our Sector Commands, where you will regulate, inspect, and license commercial vessels and the mariners that sail in them. You will be front and center in our role to prevent and respond to

maritime incidents along our nation's 95,000 miles of coast line, while saving those in peril on the sea.

And, some of you will head to flight school where you will enable all Coast Guard missions and maximize the effectiveness of all our shore based units and surface assets.

Yes, you are about to become leaders on a team that frequently serves on all seven continents. Coast Guard members returned from Afghanistan just last Monday, and three of our six patrol boats in the Persian Gulf are underway as I speak. Your new teammates are in Liberia, Saudi Arabia and throughout Central and South America achieving national objectives and...I can't get you out there fast enough, but I am certain you will hit the deck running! Be assured – despite this urgency – you will be afforded those 30 days of leave before reporting to your first unit.

Today, it is my great privilege to introduce your graduation speaker – who shares not only the Coast Guard’s enduring commitment in Service to Nation, but also our birthday of August 4<sup>th</sup> – Coast Guard Day. Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome our Commander-in-Chief, the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Barack Obama!