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iCommandant

Web Journal of Admiral Thad Allen

Showing newest 23 of 27 posts from December 2008. [Show older posts](#)

Wednesday, December 31, 2008

The Challenge of Contracting Large Complex Projects -- A Case Study of the Coast Guard's Deepwater Program

Guest Post from [RADM Gary Blore](#), CG-9

Over the last year, a number of Coast Guard senior leaders and members of our acquisition staffs participated with a project sponsored by the [IBM Center for the Business of Government](#); entitled "[The Challenge of Contracting for Large Complex Projects: A Case Study of the Coast Guard's Deepwater Program.](#)" While much has been written about the Coast Guard's original Deepwater acquisition strategy, how it was meant to work, and how it actually performed -- this is the first comprehensive overview I have read constructed from validated data. Pulling information from a variety of sources, the authors: Trevor L. Brown, Associate Professor, John Glenn School of Public Affairs, Ohio State University; Matthew Potoski, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Iowa State University; and David M. Van Slyke, Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University and Senior Research Associate, Campbell Institute of Public Affairs; detail the motivations behind the original acquisition strategy, why it was chosen, what worked well, what disappointed, and how the structure of the original contract supported and sometimes impeded Coast Guard recapitalization. The authors then go on to demonstrate how the Coast Guard reacted to the "new reality," and "stepped up to the plate" to [reform our acquisition processes](#). A second report will continue to assess how well the Coast Guard's acquisition and contracting changes have fared.

The report draws three final conclusions as "Lessons for the Future;" that the effective acquisition of complex products requires: (1) an expanded and more highly skilled acquisition workforce; (2) a better understanding of risk; and (3) an investment in learning. As the Coast Guard's Assistant Commandant for Acquisition, I think they "got it right" -- and agree that these three precepts are necessary to the success of any large, federal acquisition enterprise. I'm also confident that the acquisition [reforms that the Coast Guard has made](#) over the last two years have fully incorporated the authors' recommendations, and we are a much better organization for having done so.

Rear Admiral Gary T. Blore
Assistant Commandant for Acquisition (CG-9),
Chief Acquisition Officer

Posted at [12/31/2008 12:03:00 PM](#) [0 comments](#)



Tuesday, December 30, 2008

Reservist Magazine -- Modernization Edition

Another OUTSTANDING edition of [Reservist Magazine](#) hit the streets yesterday. It comprehensively and clearly presents the vision of our organizational modernization, including the integration of our Reserve component. Great job by RDML May, CAPT Contratto, CWO Kruska, MCPO Smith and Mr. Rose.

PDF Version here: [/ModernizationSpecIss2008%5B1%5D.pdf](#)

Posted at [12/30/2008 02:08:00 PM](#) [2 comments](#)



Monday, December 29, 2008

Current State of Coast Guard Financial Management

My post, "[Why modernize? An Historical Perspective.](#)" introduced the first in a series of posts that chronicle our cause for action to modernize. Since then we have discussed "[MLC Realignment](#)", "[WHEC to WMSL: Our Trackline to an Agile Mission Support Organization](#)" and "[Human Resources and an efficient Coast Guard.](#)"

This installment, provided by RDML Keith Taylor, CG-8, focuses on our financial management systems. You have read previous posts where I discuss how we arrived at our current state over the last twenty years. This is a look at where we are going. A future post will discuss the current condition of the surface fleet. Through this series we hope to provide a comprehensive narrative that helps to explain where the Coast Guard is today, how we got here, and where modernization is intended to take us. It is important to understand that while I issued 10 Commandant Intent Action Orders in 2006, they are all linked to develop an improved mission execution and mission support structure. As RDML Taylor points out, you can't separate financial management from any facet of mission execution or support. You are an important part of that discussion. I have enjoyed reading your 30+ comments so far on this series and hope to hear more from you.

 Guest Post by RDML Keith Taylor, CG-8 and CFO.

When I originally outlined this guest blog in my mind I was thinking it might be valuable to discuss some of the Coast Guard's financial management history in order to provide a context. But, as I began writing I decided to focus more on where we are today and where we are going with financial management. This is a complex subject with many related areas of emphasis, so I hope this first installment will serve as a jumping off point for a regular discourse on financial management.

Without a doubt, this is an exciting time to be in the Coast Guard. Never have we been more relevant to the Nation, providing maritime safety, security and stewardship around the clock and around the globe. Premier mission execution is always the goal. All of us in the Coast Guard remain steadfastly focused on that imperative...it is our "outcome" and we can never compromise that end-state. With that said, for many years we have had business processes and systems, including those involving financial management, that have not kept pace or been updated to serve us well today or into the future.

We must Modernize the Coast Guard and our cause for action is clear. We must also modernize financial management. These two efforts are inextricably linked. We cannot achieve the goals of Modernization without a modernized financial management enterprise (people, processes, systems, internal controls, organization structure, etc.). The new standardized Coast Guard business processes, including product line management, configuration control, bi-level support, enhanced acquisition structures, unified human capital management, all require a robust, sound and efficient financial management enterprise to be successful. After assessing where we are over the last several months, I am absolutely convinced that we cannot achieve required financial management improvements, including a "clean" audit opinion, without Coast Guard Modernization.

Without a long discussion of how we got here, we have some fundamental, structural deficiencies that are preventing us from achieving a financial audit opinion. For example we have multiple General Ledgers (The general ledger is where accounting transactions are posted as the official financial record of an organization). You have already heard the Commandant discuss the independent financial linkages between the Aviation Logistics Center and Coast Guard Yard with the Treasury. In and of itself that might not be a showstopper, but these ledgers are not integrated, are not compliant with U.S. Standard General Ledger criteria and are derived from separate financial systems. These financial systems do not meet federal standards for security, auditability and standardization. Over many years we have created a highly decentralized financial management execution structure. While the focus has been on maximizing operational flexibility at unit level (a very good thing), this philosophy has not served us well from a financial management perspective. People at our units spend too much time accounting for budget authority, making financial transactions and, then later also reconciling those transactions. Today we also lack the internal controls, the policy rigor and the information systems to support a modernized Coast Guard. We also lack a robust human capital strategy to ensure we have the financial management expertise we need to be successful in the future. Finally, and this is clearly my opinion, we have over the years not been rigorous with Financial Management Technical Authority and this has contributed to a severe lack of standardized policy, processes and systems that continue to hurt us today. When I use the term "Technical Authority" it is the same function that our engineers perform in regard to technical issues associated with building a new cutter. It involves an accountable, competent authority to insure appropriate standards are set, and that those standards are met. None of these issues are new, but they all must be addressed as we move forward.

In FY2008, as one major component of financial management modernization, the Vice Commandant chartered the Audit Readiness Planning Team (ARPT). Building upon deliberate remediation work completed in FY2006 and FY2007 and the foundational work of the Financial Management Transformation Task Force (FMTTF) that Admiral Allen chartered in one of his original Commandant Intent Action Orders, (CIAOs) this cross-functional ARPT team, working under my guidance, was comprised of senior CG, DHS and external subject matter experts. They addressed root cause conditions of our material weaknesses (identified in previous audits and our own self assessments) and developed a holistic, actionable plan focused on implementing effective internal controls, remediating and supporting financial reporting, achieving audit readiness, and improving accountability across the enterprise. This work resulted in Version 2.0 of our Financial Strategy for Transformation and Audit Readiness (FSTAR) and in close cooperation with the DHS CFO, we established the following focus areas for FY2009 and FY2010:

- Improving Entity Level Controls (this includes our organizational structure, leadership focus, control environment, etc.
- this is a complex subject that would be worthy of a future discussion) -- We will continue to enhance financial

management governance and enterprise-wide management controls.

- Remediating Funds Balance with Treasury (think of this as our checking account with Treasury) -- Representing over \$5B on our balance sheet, we will focus on reconciling Military Payroll transactions (over \$3.7B of activity in FY2008) with both Treasury and our General Ledger. We have never been able to do this in our history and this represents a critical first step forward.

- Remediating Actuarial Pension Liabilities (this is the unfunded liability we carry on our balance sheet for estimated future military pension requirements) -- At over \$25B (yes - \$25 billion!) this is the largest line item on both the DHS and CG balance sheets. Fixing this is critical to a consolidated DHS clean audit opinion.

- Remediating General Property, Plant and Equipment (includes all of our cutters, aircraft, boats, shore plant, etc.) -- At over \$8B (this is net, original cost less depreciation) this is the largest asset on our balance sheet and requires a two pronged effort -- fix the process we use for new assets as they come on-line and clean up the information concerning current assets. This area touches the entire CG.

This plan was developed in close coordination with the DHS CFO, has been reviewed by the DHS IG and OMB, and was delivered to Congress on December 1st as part of our Financial Management Improvement Plan (FMIP)

While the ARPT was underway, we continued to address weaknesses and made some noteworthy progress. First and foremost, and as reported in the DHS Independent Auditors report, the entity level controls finding for DHS was reduced from a material weakness to a significant deficiency (this is a big improvement in a financial audit) -- the DHS CFO told me directly that this would not have been possible without the strong effort and progress we made in the Coast Guard in this area. This is the first time since we joined DHS that we have reduced any of our material weaknesses.

We also achieved another first in FY2008 -- we fully supported our balance sheet investment balance of \$2.9B. In essence, we were able to prove, to the high standard required, that the balance was complete, accurate and properly recorded. Not only was this significant for us, but this line item has a material impact on the DHS balance sheet and our effort moved the Department closer to an auditable position. We also fully supported our contingent legal liabilities balance on the FY2008 balance sheet. Finally, we continued to make substantive progress in the areas of military payroll reconciliation, property, plant and equipment, and construction in progress. We will continue to build upon this work as we execute FSTAR 2.0 and modernize our financial management enterprise.

As a close out of the FY2008 financial management cycle, and as an update to all hands on financial management modernization, I just released [ALCOAST 619/08](#). I hope you find it interesting and helpful. At the end of the day, we have a lot of work to do and we are underway on the correct course. Like Coast Guard Modernization, financial management modernization will be a multi-year effort that will make our Service fundamentally better and in the future equip our service with the authoritative information, systems and processes needed to make sound and transparent decisions.

I am excited by the opportunities in front of us...

Happy Holidays

Keith Taylor
Rear Admiral
Assistant Commandant for Resources
Chief Financial Officer

Posted at 12/29/2008 08:00:00 AM [Comments](#)



Friday, December 26, 2008

Shipmates,
I received a very thoughtful e-mail from Auxiliarist Robert Dittman regarding access to our posts in the .com domain. Robert is an active member of my Diversity Advisory Council. While he is visually impaired he demonstrates great vision and his comments raise some good questions. Some of them touch on the issues raised earlier by Senior Chief Vitone regarding our Human Resource IT systems. Both will be addressed in a series of future posts. For commenters that encounter access problems on the internet, you can send comments to ccgcomms@uscg.mil and they will be reviewed and posted in accordance with our published policy.

My thanks to Robert for his continued participation in the DAC and his support for the Coast Guard.

ADM A

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I am emailing you directly, as I am unable to post directly to your blog due to the CAPCHA (The letters and numbers required to tell the blog system you are not a spammer). As I am sure you are aware, section 508 of the rehab act of 1973 that provides guidelines for disabled persons to access web pages, is not across the internet as of yet, and as this sight is outside of the Coast guard's control, we should find ways around this so that everyone has equal access to comment. One way is to provide an email address such as "blogcomments (AT) USCG.MIL that your staff could repost comments to the blog for those who are unable to post directly. Another thought is to invite persons who can not post direct to email you direct. This would keep with transparency, and prevent "gate keeping." Just a thought. I forwarded that thought to CG-635 when I was at HQ this October briefing you as part of the DAC. I am sure they will act on it, but as you know, things take time.

As you asked that comments be given, and for us to "find our voice," I must say that I read the blog every day as it gives prospective to what the Commandant is up to, and provides insight onto the major issues that our Coast guard

face each day. Keeping up to date with such issues even if they do not directly touch my duties helps me, and I am sure, others be Semper Paratus to reacting to them and thus being better able to complete our duties no matter where we sit in our Coast guard.

I would like, if I may, to comment on the personnel support command's post. Although the Auxiliary was included, I must ask if the Auxiliary is always kept in mind when standing up the new systems. Web outlook, CG Central, T-PAX, Direct Access, are all systems that are currently unavailable to many Auxiliarists. While it is true that many Auxiliarists in the normal execution of their duties do not have need to access the systems on a day to day bases, when an Auxiliarist attempts to complete a STTR, or a travel claim, or, to check if completion of Coast guard training such as the LAMS or IDC course has been recorded, lack of access to these systems poses a problem. You may also be aware that the personnel records of Auxiliarists are largely paper based, and are kept at the district director of Auxiliary's office. This paper based records system lends itself to errors, inadvertent omissions such as awards that are awarded outside of the Auxiliary not being included, or other documents that should be in the records not being there. This results in the Auxiliarist having to keep their own copy of their personnel record, or, having to write the director of Auxiliary to enquire what documents they have on file, and if needed, mailing documents for inclusion into their personnel record. ADM, I hope you understand this is through no fault of the staff assigned to the Director of Auxiliary offices, but rather the system being paper based and in many ways out dated. Also taken into account is the two systems of "AUXDATA" that serves the Auxiliary functions", and "People soft" that serve the rest of our coast guard.

ADM, while this is not the time or the place to raise many concerns regarding these topics, I felt it would be a place to ask if such concerns are always in mind as these new systems are stood up.

I have always believed if I don't ask, you can't say "Yes", and looking to what the Auxiliary could be in five, ten, fifteen years, and the level it will bring to enhance our Coast Guard, I must ask these questions to as many people, and as many times as it will take until we bring the auxiliary on part and parcel with the level of support given to our active duty, reserve, and civil service components. This includes I.D. cards accepted and recognized as Coast Guard credentials, a personnel system that fully integrates the Auxiliary's personnel with the rest of the Coast Guard and so on. These questions are best answered by the new command that will be servicing the personnel of our Coast Guard now, and that is why I comment on them here.

ADM, I am sure you would agree that if it could be done, Such practices should be put into place now from the get go rather than trying to slip them into place after the new command is underway and making steam.

The problems are not going to be solved over night, although, we have taken many steps and made progress to this end. There is still much to do, and these steps will call for progressive thinking and support from the Auxiliary, and our active duty shipmates, one effort from the whole Coast Guard.

if we all sing to the same music, that of support of our people to enhance mission execution, we will reach our objective.

I hope you will find these questions, comments, and concerns in keeping with the postings of the blog. I thank you for your time.

Very Respectfully, and Semper Paratus,
AUX Robert D. Dittman
"I am a Guardian"

Posted at 12/26/2008 11:50:00 AM @comments



Wednesday, December 24, 2008

iCommandant 100th Blog

Shipmates,

As we posted the Top Ten Videos for 2008 we noticed that we were approaching our 100th blog entry. I thought I would note number 100 with some thoughts on the future.

Our journey into social media has been challenging and rewarding. We are gaining competency as an organization and a better understanding of how the synergy of information technology and social networks can improve our performance. Looking ahead I see a migration to a larger Coast Guard blog enabled by the new Coast Guard Portal. We will have the opportunity to broaden the scope of the content and engage more voices as posters and commenters. The Coast Guard Magazine will become web based with refreshed content that is not possible between printings. We will look to post our annual posture statement and budget materials for full access and will explore how to keep our members updated as we move through the appropriations and authorization process with the new Congress and new Administration. I have challenged my headquarters staff to embed wiki-type platforms to manage knowledge from hearing preparations to foreign travel. We also need to explore using social media as a means to improve and shorten our rulemaking process. This won't happen overnight, but we must make continual progress. At the same time, we will be ever mindful of security and privacy requirements.



[Blogging between meetings in the car.](#)

Originally uploaded by [uscgpress](#)

I look forward to updating all of you on our transition activities after the first of the year. On 20 January we will have a chance to celebrate the genius of our Constitution that provides the framework for the peaceful transition of government where we will honor our current and new Commander in Chief.

I thank all who have posted and commented thus far. I appreciate people following the guidance we have published in previous ALCOASTS when crafting their remarks. Remember, we are Guardians to each other just as we are Guardians to the maritime public.

For those of you who are holding back I ask that you find your voice.

ADM A

Posted at [12/24/2008 02:12:00 PM](#) [4 comments](#) 



Tuesday, December 23, 2008

Human Resources and an Efficient Coast Guard

Guest Post by LCDR Patrick Knowles (CG-1221) on behalf of CG-12

"The Coast Guard succeeds through the courage, devotion, and sacrifice of its people. Our Service members epitomize core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty in words and deeds. Our future success hinges upon our ability to continue building competencies to meet emerging demands and mission responsibilities." (U.S. Coast Guard Posture Statement, February 2008).

As a part of the larger Coast Guard modernization effort, the Commandant challenged us to Create a new human resource strategy to support our organizational changes. But why must we change? It goes back to April 2001, when the President established The President's Management Agenda (PMA). PMA mandated all federal agencies and departments to improve the management and performance of the federal government by emphasizing results. Admiral Allen provided us insight as to why it should be important to us. In his [ALLHANDS SITREP # 4](#), he stated, "For support personnel, this means there will be fewer layers between you and the field units you support, which equates to more timely service and support."

We probably all know that we have two types of people in the Coast Guard, whether they are civilian, reserve, active duty military or Auxiliary...those who execute mission, and those who support mission execution. Which is more important? Just ask 10 different people and you'll likely get 10 different answers. It's a question with no right or wrong answer. Hopefully, the best answer includes statements about each member of Team Coast Guard contributing to our national success. For example, our helicopter crews and boat crews performed in typical excellent fashion during the response to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005. Why? Because they were professionals, with the right resources and excellent leadership, but also because of the HR support structure that recruited, accessed, oriented, indoctrinated, trained, promoted, rewarded and compensated them, not to mention the health care system that made sure they were ready to go and monitored their health and safety before, during, and after they came back.

Imagine that you received a call Saturday night in late August 2005. Your presence was needed in the Gulf Coast. Your go-bag was ready, you kissed your spouse goodbye, you drove to your Sector, and...you had to wait 4 days for a set of orders, traveler's checks, and a series of immunizations. While you were sitting there waiting, anxious to get on-scene, your HR system was holding you back. Now, for us at my Sector, that didn't happen. I know because, as Logistics Officer, the YNs and SKs were called in right away -- orders were completed based on data from one of our HR systems, Direct Access. And the HS2 was ready to make a couple of house-calls to provide immunization updates. Thanks to another HR tool, Coast Guard Business Intelligence (CGBI), the corpsman could quickly check to see if immunizations were missing, and made arrangements to take care of them. Because CGBI was in place, medical readiness was high before the Hurricane hit, and only one or two people needed updates. So the HS2 was ready to make house-calls, as opposed to ordering extra immunizations and lining everyone up outside medical. Instead of the HR systems delaying our personnel from getting on-scene, it allowed them to deploy immediately and start serving in the Joint Field Office in Baton Rouge, or saving lives and the environment in New Orleans and Gulfport.

There is one thing our HR system is currently lacking, and that is system integration. For example, CGBI is a robust system, but it doesn't "talk" well with Direct Access. Many users must check multiple systems to gather the detail needed to ensure we can deploy the right people to the right place in an emergency. These systems were built focused on a particular target, whether it was medical or the standard HR data set including name, address, phone number, employee ID number, etc. They were not built holistically to integrate multiple HR functions. To overcome this, the hard-working HR personnel spend inordinate amounts of time pulling the data they need. When the YNs or SKs can't pull the data from existing systems, you feel the effect in one of those "Headquarters data calls." We also have all those layers! The chain of command is vital to a successful military organization, but bureaucratic layers of management can frustrate people and hinder results. I bet at least once, you've had a quick question, but you had to call the Sector, who called the ISC, who then called MLC or Headquarters. Messages were left on voicemail, you played "phone-tag" as someone missed the return call, you had to wait on that answer. We've all been there. Compound that over all those layers of management and it can take 3-4 days to get an answer on something that was simple and was required yesterday. Ultimately, we will devise an HR organization and the necessary systems to free you and support personnel from bureaucratic layers of management and time-consuming tasks.

We are getting closer with the upcoming stand-up of DCMS, Deputy Commandant for Mission Support with five Logistics/Service Centers. The new Personnel Service Center (PSC) is designed as your HR support center. The current Personnel Support System has a number of layers; ISC, MLC, that works for the Area, the Coast Guard Personnel Command who works for CG-12, and the Personnel Service Center in Topeka, Kansas who works for CG-10. This is not to say the jobs they perform are unimportant; just the opposite. Those jobs are so important, that it is vital to get those services to the field faster, which means with less bureaucracy. What you get back as we modernize the Coast Guard's HR system early next year is one Personnel Service Center, located in Ballston, Virginia, that will be capable of providing you one-stop shopping for your HR needs. Like the 6-million dollar man in the 1970s, it will be "better, stronger, faster." Then the question becomes, "What about the Reserve functions that are being performed at the ISCs and MLCs?" PSC Ballston will take on a larger role in reserve member assignments, while most reserve management functions will be cross-walked to Sectors and Districts, providing Reserve expertise at operational levels. This direct, more localized oversight and management of Reserve personnel is not intended to separate the Reserve

workforce from the Active Duty, rather to further integrate management and support that was not provided during integration efforts in the mid 1990s.*

As the Coast Guard changes to better adapt to threats and challenges, the HR system behind it must also adapt...not to keep up, but to stay ahead, to stay flexible and agile. We must be strategic in analyzing, forecasting and planning our personnel needs so we can anticipate and adapt, and ultimately improve the service and support you all deserve.

*--iCommandant Note: There will be a specific post discussing the new Reserve Force Readiness System in January.

Posted at 12/23/2008 02:08:00 PM [3 comments](#) 



NTSB and Coast Guard Memorandum of Understanding

Shipmates,

We have had a long and productive partnership with the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). While we have independent authorities regarding investigative responsibilities we are a team that serves the Nation. There are situations defined in statute where the NSTB has primacy and may choose to be the lead and there are requirements for the Coast Guard to conduct investigations into marine accidents. As we deal with more complex transportation systems and equally complex causes for accidents it is important that we have clear, unambiguous procedures to establish lead agency roles in accident investigations. The current Acting Chairman of the NTSB, Mark Rosenker and I have had a series of discussions over the last year as to how best to improve our coordination and sustain the performance expected of both agencies. Last week that collaboration resulted in a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that lays out our respective roles, responsibilities, and obligations. Below is our announcement of that agreement with a link to the MOU. Let me congratulate Acting Chairman Rosenker for his leadership and our staffs who worked so hard to make this a reality.

ADM A

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Joint NTSB/USCG Statement on their new MOU:

We are pleased to announce that the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and the United States Coast Guard (USCG) signed an updated [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) on Friday, December 19, 2008.

This document replaces a previous memorandum that has been in effect since September 12, 2002, and is the latest in a series of MOUs our two agencies have shared since September 28, 1981, when we entered into our first agreement. The revisions reflect our agencies' commitment to continuous improvement.

As maritime technology becomes more complex and international and national legislation evolve, the need for improved capabilities and closer relationships between the NTSB and the USCG has also evolved. This version of the MOU, built on years of cooperation, documents the processes and procedures we will use for continuously improving marine accident investigations.

In the Memorandum, our two agencies reaffirm interagency cooperation and mutual assistance in marine casualty investigations, and swift implementation of safety improvements, all of which are essential for efficient, effective agency operations and for the public welfare.

The agreement also sets forth the notification and investigative roles of the National Transportation Safety Board and the United States Coast Guard in marine casualties. There will be enhanced marine casualty investigation training for our Investigators, and better sharing of information, testimony and evidence during investigations.

The agreement is good news for the marine industry and the traveling public. It provides clear guidance for maritime accident investigations in this country, and reaffirms the spirit of cooperation between the National Transportation Safety Board and the United States Coast Guard that we have enjoyed for years. It is an excellent example of how federal agencies can work together to fulfill their missions

Mark V. Rosenker, Acting Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board

Thad W. Allen, Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard

Posted at 12/23/2008 12:00:00 PM [3 comments](#) 



Year-in-review and Holiday Wishes

2008 was another historic year for the Coast Guard and its Guardians. Through your relentless vigilance you have kept our nation safe. You have secured our national, economic, and environmental interests both at home and abroad. As your predecessors have done for the last 218 years, you have stood the watch and answered the call. These [videos and accomplishments](#) are just a few of the shining examples of our shipmates that underscore their courage and devotion to duty. Your selfless dedication drives our commitment to ensure that you have the best resources and support available to meet the complex and dynamic hazards and threats of the 21st Century.

Our thoughts also include our brother and sisters in arms in our partner services as well as our DHS partners who [protect and defend the Homeland](#). Together America's Team will be standing the watch keeping us safe and secure during this Holiday season. Pam and I appreciate your steadfast commitment to the Nation. I also send the best wishes from my father Coast Guard Chief Damage Controlman (retired) Clyde Allen and my mother Wilma who missed their share of holidays when my Dad was deployed around the World, from the Philippines to the Bering Sea.

Finally, look after your shipmates this Holiday Season so we can all enjoy a healthy and productive 2009...It is going to be a great one!

[2008 Top Ten Videos](#)

Posted at [12/23/2008 08:42:00 AM](#) [1 comment](#) 



Monday, December 22, 2008

Coast Guard in Iraq

The Pentagon Channel recently aired a series of stories on our cooperation with the Iraqi Military. These stories demonstrate first hand how our Coast Guard teams are operating side-by-side with the Iraqi military to help them increasingly carry the burden of securing their country and the vital economic pipeline of the North Arabian Gulf.


(Note: On the CGDN, click on the text for the video)

[Small Boat Sales](#)

[Boarding Training](#)

[Defensive Tactics Training](#)

[Rapid Talon](#)

Posted at 12/22/2008 07:30:00 PM [0 comments](#) 



Saturday, December 20, 2008

From WHEC to WMSL; Our Trackline to an Agile Mission Support Organization



Guest Post from [VADM Clifford Pearson](#), Chief of Staff.

In my Dec. 17 guest blog entry, "[Modernization Update: MLC Realignment](#)," I noted the importance of the Coast Guard's effort to develop a centralized mission support organization. The development of this organization will be crucial to the Coast Guard's ability to maintain the highest standards of operational readiness. The organizational transformation now underway is part of a comprehensive process of [modernization](#) that will impact every aspect of how we plan, resource, execute and support our missions.

Among the areas affected by the modernization process, our shipbuilding program and naval engineering disciplines are fundamental to ensuring the fleet's operational capability and readiness. Our progress in major shipbuilding projects shows the transformation that is taking place in these areas. We have delivered and commissioned a remarkably high quality first-in-class vessel, the Legend-class 418-foot [National Security Cutter BERTHOLF](#). Our naval engineering and logistics community is transforming infrastructure to better support our legacy platforms, such as the [Hamilton-class](#) 378-foot High Endurance Cutters as well as our sophisticated [new assets](#).

In the Commandant's Dec. 4 All Hands message on [High-Endurance Cutter sustainment](#), ADM Allen underscored the declining materiel condition of some of our WHEC platforms, not solely to draw attention to deficiencies but rather to emphasize the need for continued momentum in modernizing our organization and our business processes. We already have made progress, in the 40-plus years since we acquired WHECs, and we have gained much experience that directly contributed to the acquisition of the NSCs. It is imperative that we internalize and apply the lessons we have learned from these projects as we undertake the monumental task of recapitalizing our fleet for the future.

Of experience, Ralph W. Emerson wrote that "the years teach much which the days never know," and that certainly has been true in the history of the Coast Guard's shipbuilding program. In January 1965, when we laid HAMILTON's keel at Avondale Shipyard, New Orleans, she was the first-in-class of the first major cutter project in 20 years. We learned a lot.

When we delivered HAMILTON in 1967, we immediately experienced significant reduction gear and superstructure cracking problems. We properly addressed these challenges and the 378s have served us well for more than 40 years.

When the 378s were 20 years old, we realized these cutters needed additional work to take them to the end of their service life. So, the Coast Guard launched the Fleet Rehabilitation and Modernization (FRAM) program. While FRAM extended the service life of the WHEC fleet, it proved to be a costly exercise due to inadequate configuration control over the first two decades of their service. Our lack of configuration management discipline led to cost and schedule overruns. Our ongoing modernization and acquisition activities are very focused on configuration management as a key component of our cost control efforts and effective business processes.

In the 1990s, we studied options to solve our fleet's block obsolescence challenge. When we conceived the Integrated Deepwater System program, and the NSC as its centerpiece, we believed at that time that a new organization, independent from our acquisition and engineering offices would quickly lead the recapitalization of our materiel assets. The prevailing wisdom at the time argued that to be successful Deepwater needed to be unhindered by close interaction with the technical authorities or the sponsors. We of course have now changed that paradigm by institutionalizing close coordination among acquisition, technical authorities and the sponsors as we take on a greater role as lead systems integrator for all acquisitions, including shipbuilding.

One of our most important lessons is that success in our acquisition programs depends upon close partnership with the Coast Guard's technical authorities, with the sponsor and with third-parties such as the U.S. Navy's Naval Surface Warfare Center enterprise. We are building just such a collaborative organization, as part of the movement to modernize the entire Coast Guard. The fact that we [delivered BERTHOLF](#), our most technologically complex white-hull patrol cutter, with significantly fewer discrepancy reports than any other previous first article delivery is a testament to how far we have come.


We are modernizing our support infrastructure through the stand-up next month of the Surface Forces Logistics Center. Taking a page from our book on aviation support, SFLC will be structured according to dedicated product line support, strict discipline to configuration management principles, bi-level maintenance requirements, and total visibility of our parts inventory.

We are applying our experience in acquisition, having developed a professional and certified acquisition corps skilled in business and financial management, program management, systems engineering and other disciplines. We have begun to institute repeatable and scaleable processes that will ensure quality output from shipbuilding and other acquisition programs. Among these efforts, we have revised and updated our Major Systems Acquisition Manual, and strengthened our alignment with the Department of Homeland Security Acquisition Executive. At the same time, our engineering and logistics community is making necessary changes to our support infrastructure that will ensure disciplined configuration management within like classes of vessels and centralized management of resources for support above the unit level.

Today's working relationship between the directorates for Human Resources (CG-1), Engineering and Logistics (CG-4), Command, Control, Communications, Computers & IT (CG-6) and Acquisition (CG-9) is very different from the past. We are building synergy between these organizations and acquisition sponsors to develop greater capacity for the life cycle management of the Coast Guard's vital surface platforms. A current and direct benefit of this improved working relationship is the significant success of the WMEC and WPB [Mission Effectiveness Projects](#) being conducted at CG Yard. The DCMS partnership is already resulting in the improved mission capability of 270s, 210s and 110s, as demonstrated by Naval Engineering readiness measures.

Experience teaches us that our organizations and our people are very capable of reacting to the challenges of the day. However, we must establish an organization that is driven more deliberately by strategic intent, an organization that is proactive, not just reactive.

The bottom line is that, in our shipbuilding program as elsewhere in our mission support organization, we have set the right course for the future. We have linked acquisition and sustainment. We have instilled discipline in our processes and procedures. I have every confidence in our people and their capabilities to deliver the quality products that the Coast Guard requires to meet its mission requirements into the 21st century and beyond.

Posted at [12/20/2008 08:44:00 AM](#) [6 comments](#) 



Wednesday, December 17, 2008

Modernization Update: MLC Realignment

Guest Post from [VADM Cliff Pearson](#), Chief of Staff.

Shipmates:

Recently the [Commandant authorized the realignment of Maintenance and Logistics Commands](#) (MLCs) in the Atlantic and Pacific areas to the Chief of Staff, effective January 15th, 2009. While this may seem like a small internal change, it is in fact a major waypoint on our journey towards [Coast Guard Modernization](#). For the first time in history, all of our Service's global mission support structure will be aligned into one organization under what I envision with Congressional authorization will become the Deputy Commandant for Mission Support (DCMS).


The civil and electronic engineers, financial managers, health professionals, safety inspectors and other personnel in these two MLCs play a vital role in mission execution by ensuring the operational readiness of Coast Guard vessels and shore infrastructure. I can't say often enough that the Coast Guard's reputation and success lies in the exceptional professionalism and dedication of our combined military and civilian professionals. With this in mind I want to again point out that modernization planning is being carried out with every effort to minimize impacts on our workforce.

Under DCMS, I envision centralized responsibility for all facets of workforce and life-cycle management from acquisition through decommission of assets, including personnel, ships, planes, buildings and information technology. Logistics and support services will be centrally managed through five logistics and support centers to increase efficiency. These logistics and service centers form the organizational construct to allow the Coast Guard to fully realize the benefits of the Logistics Transformation Program Commandant started in 2005.

These centers will manage mission readiness through centralized product lines executed regionally through detachments of each logistics or service center to reinforce uniform delivery of services. This bi-level approach was pioneered by the Aircraft Repair and Supply Center (ARSC), now the newly formed [Aviation Logistics Center](#) (ALC), which was the first logistics center to stand-up on October 30, 2008.

Over the next month, you will hear more detail about plans for standup of our other Logistics/Service Centers, including the Personnel Service Center, Surface Forces Logistics Center, Shore Infrastructure Logistics Center, and the C4IT Service Center.

I again encourage the entire Coast Guard to continue to review the "Modernization Section" on CG Central and look for future updates here in order to stay up to date on the positive changes underway for our Service.

Posted at [12/17/2008 10:00:00 PM](#) [Comments](#) 



Updated ---Why modernize? An historical perspective

Shipmates,

I am republishing this post with the following comments.

First of all, thank you for commenting. We understand there are many views and some concerns regarding modernization. I also assume the first two commentors are both active duty members of a Chiefs Mess. We need to hear from the Chiefs and, more importantly, we need them to be involved in this important effort. That is the reason I addressed both the CPOA Convention and the Reserve Chiefs Call earlier this year.

I also thank you for stating up front "the question isn't why modernize." I agree the case is clear and the cause for action compelling.

Let's discuss the concerns raised.

The first time I heard the phrase "we're simply not ready" was in 1986 when I was briefing the recommendations of the Gilbert Study to flag officers in the Coast Guard. As noted by Admiral Gilbert in his article that was the reason we didn't consolidate our financial management system and the reason we are still not ready to pass an audit.

Perceived readiness for change does not change the requirement to change. I announced the need for modernization the day I became Commandant, two and a half years ago. I also told the Service that we would take several years to implement the changes so we could align billet changes with the military assignment process and provide proper notification and consultation with our civilian workforce and unions. We have done that and will continue.

The need for modernization exists independent of whatever resource levels we are provided. Let me be clear on this. It would not matter whether we were experiencing exponential growth, no growth, or downsizing. Our business processes and command and control structure do not support mission execution in any funding environment. Regardless of your salary, you need to be able to balance the checkbook.

Fund base transfers associated with organizational change are difficult and made more difficult by the lack of a core financial accounting system. In 1987, we had to separate cutter maintenance funds which were managed at the district and centralize them at the Maintenance and Logistics Commands. However, for many years districts had moved funding back and forth between cutter support and small boat support (between what is now AFC 30 and the 4X accounts) and it wasn't clear what the right level of basic support for each really was. We did the best we could but it was surgery with a meat cleaver. The major obstacle?...the lack of reliable financial information on the costs to operate our small boats and cutters. How do I know this? I was the first budget officer at MLCLANT and I was responsible for identifying and recommending the levels of fund base transfers.

Regarding access to support, we intend to create one stop shopping through product line or service line managers at our logistics and service centers. Questions regarding maintenance on small boats, configuration on cutters,

TRICARE access, employee assistance programs, or government vehicles will be referred to a single point of contact and accountability in the Coast Guard. The implementation planning for this new business model is underway and in some cases, like HEC maintenance and small boat maintenance, we have accelerated the process.

Regarding the impact on the Chiefs Mess, I will ask Master Chief Bowen to provide comments in a subsequent post. I have been involved in Chiefs Call to Initiation and Indoctrination and the "predecessor activities" for nearly 40 years. The Chiefs Mess at a particular unit provides critical leadership and is indispensable. However, when I think about the "Chiefs Mess" I tend to think in broader, symbolic terms. I think of the cohesion chiefs bring to our Service. I think of the critical role Chiefs play in translating command intent into action. I think of my Dad. Chiefs are not divided by organizational charts. They are united by commonly held values and the critical role they play in mission support and mission execution. They are indispensable.

ADM A

The original post follows:

Our current [modernization effort](#) seeks to address a number of mission execution and mission support challenges, including the Deepwater program, the current condition of our surface fleet, our financial management system, and recent changes in our human resource system. These are all products of a multi-decade challenge to maintain and recapitalize our assets and adapt our workforce to changes in mission demands in a constrained fiscal environment. This is the first in a series of posts that chronicle how our need to modernize evolved and why I have made it the centerpiece of my tenure as Commandant. The end goal is to better integrate internal Coast Guard structure and business processes to meet the increasingly complex demands of the 21st Century.

This attachment was written by RADM Marshall Gilbert, director of the Gilbert Study, which resulted in the Coast Guard's major realignment in 1987. It is a good datum from which to begin a discussion of the current and desired future state of our mission support systems. [/GilbertStudy.PDF](#)

Consider the Coast Guard in 1986:


- Area Commanders controlled no assets.
- Districts owned large cutters homeported in their Area of Responsibility.
- All naval, civil, and electronics engineering support functions were located in districts.
- Districts were stand-alone financial entities...financial systems were not networked. There was no unified general ledger from which to create financial statements.
- Personnel and pay transactions were carried out at the unit and district level.
- E-City (ARSC) and the CG Yard were, and remain, stand alone financial centers dealing directly with treasury.

After the realignment of 1987:

- Major cutters were placed under the control of Area Commanders.
- Districts retained control of buoy tenders and patrol boats.
- Maintenance and Logistics Commands (MLC) were established (one for each area). Naval, civil and electronics engineering were consolidated on each coast, but not centralized.
- Financial accounting, contracting, and bill paying consolidated at each MLC with the exception of ARSC, the Yard, and payroll. This was immediately understood to be a mistake and a short time later our Finance Center (FINCEN) was created.
- Personnel and pay moved to Pay and Personnel Center but separate from FINCEN
- E-City (ARSC) and CG Yard still stand alone financial entities.

The Gilbert Study (I was the junior member as a Lieutenant Commander) was the starting part of our current cause for action to modernize. Even at the time of this reorganization we knew that it was not THE fix, but it was an improvement. In his own words, Admiral Gilbert said, "Early in our study we concluded that the Coast Guard's accounting functions cannot be regionalized or centralized at this time."

Two decades ago these changes were seen as revolutionary by the Service and the change was hard because of our evolved culture of independence by field commanders and the perception that only they could make effective decisions regarding mission support. We had just fielded the standard Coast Guard Work Station based on a proprietary operating system. Our IT systems remained largely stove piped and it would not be until the mid 1990's, (another decade) before we would move to a more open architecture and openly compete our workstation contract. In those two decades a number of independent reforms have been started, stopped, and in some cases started again. In each case, there was well-meaning intent, but limited integration, and thus limited progress. We will discuss these more in our next installment...

Posted at 12/17/2008 02:54:00 PM [24 comments](#) 



ME Rating Manpower Requirements Analysis Survey


Guest Post from RADM Sally Brice-O'Hara, Deputy Commandant for Operations. *This was originally a comment to my [Maritime Enforcement Specialists post](#) yesterday. It is updated to promote participation in the ME Rating Manpower Requirements Analysis Survey.*

16 December was certainly an historic moment for the Coast Guard. I was honored to be among this dedicated cadre of law enforcement and security professionals, and excited at what the future holds for the ME rating, and our Service. The ME Implementation Team has made great progress since ADM Allen's decision to stand up the Law Enforcement and Security Rating last June. Yet, while much has been done, much remains to be accomplished in order to meet the 01 January 2010 full implementation date.

The focus of effort now shifts away from the Implementation Team to you, the nearly 22,000 enlisted men and women performing law enforcement and security duties across the Coast Guard, in cutters, at stations, DSF units and sectors. We need your help in capturing the time you spend executing law enforcement and security tasks. Many of you will have already participated in the LETSGO II survey. We turn to you again, and ask a wider Coast Guard active and reserve audience, to take 30 or so minutes to complete the ME Rating Manpower Requirements Analysis Survey.

I am counting on Coast Guard leaders to spread the word, encourage widest participation, and carve out the time necessary from busy operational schedules. I can't overemphasize the importance of careful completion and accurate responses to the survey questions. Your diligence will enable us to clarify workload requirements and make the right decisions concerning the size of the ME rating and the distribution of ME personnel. Look for details in a forthcoming All Hands message from ADM Allen and please complete the survey as soon as possible.

RADM Sally Brice-O'Hara
Deputy Commandant for Operations

Posted at [12/17/2008 10:37:00 AM](#) [@comments](#) 



Tuesday, December 16, 2008

The first Master Chief Maritime Enforcement Specialists

Shipmates

History was made at Coast Guard Headquarters today, when we announced the selection of the first Master Chief Maritime Enforcement Specialists (MECM).

I [approved the establishment of the rating](#) in June of this year.

01 January 2010 is the full implementation date for the rating. This is the first milestone in the creation and implementation of the Maritime Enforcement Specialist rating.

The first members of the new rating are:

MECM Gordon Muse: Rating Force Manager
MECM Steven Lowry: Senior SWE/Non-Resident Course Writer
MECM Randy Krahn: ME A School Chief
MECM Sam Allred: PS Rating Force Manager



[The first four Master Chief Maritime Enforcement Specialists](#)

Originally uploaded by [uscgpress](#)

The new MECMs will now join the ME Implementation Team and play an instrumental role as we move to the 2010 milestone. I approved last week the addition of PSCM Sam Allred to the previous announced list. As the current PS Rating Force Manager he will continue in that capacity and following the 2010 active duty implementation will assist the ME RFMC in ensuring a smooth transition of those Port Security Specialists changing ratings to ME.

I extend my personal thanks to all who worked so hard to make this day possible including Master Chief Bowen, Master Chief Jeff Smith, Master Chief George Ingraham, and RADM Tim Riker for whom this was a true labor of love.

The New Year will usher in 2009 and will also mark the 30th Anniversary of a seminal event in Coast Guard history. In 1979, the Coast Guard in response to the implementation of the Fisheries Conservation Management Act (200 mile limit) and an increase in drug trafficking issued a directive that created a standard use of force policy and mandated that all boardings would henceforth be armed. This continued the evolution of the post World War II/Cold War law enforcement mission which began with our international and domestic fisheries enforcement efforts in the 1950s and 60s.

It has been a thirty-year journey of evolution and adaptation as we saw immediately in the Mariel Boatlift of 1980, the shift from bulk smuggling of marijuana to cocaine, the entry of DOD in the counter-drug mission in 1989 (leading the stand up of JIATF-South), mass migration responses in the mid 1990s, continual migrant interdiction operations in the Straits of Florida, and domestic and international fisheries enforcement.

During that same period we disestablished the old Boating Safety Detachments (BOSDET) that conducted recreational vessels boardings, we created Tactical Law Enforcement Teams (TACLET) and Law Enforcement Detachments (LEDET), and we implemented airborne use of force against non-compliant surface vessels.

As a Lieutenant and Group Commander at Atlantic City (the old black shoe group) I was a field commander faced with implementing a policy that not all service members supported. In fact, some members chose to leave the service rather than become involved in law enforcement. In retrospect, I cannot imagine where this Nation would be had we not adapted to a changing external environment by creating new competencies and capabilities.

I have asked both Master Chief Bowen and Master Chief Smith to add comments and additional context from where they sit.

Let us celebrate this important milestone as further organizational adaptation to our external environment. Effective organizational response to changing demands is the service wide competency we are seeking in modernization...a change centric Coast Guard.

ADM A

Posted at 12/16/2008 12:39:00 PM [5 comments](#)



Shipmates in National Security

My shipmate, Admiral Stavridis, head of the U.S. Southern Command, [posted](#) this week on our outstanding relationship in his AOR.

ADM A

Posted at 12/16/2008 12:14:00 PM [0 comments](#)



Sunday, December 14, 2008

Retired Coast Guard Reception at Vinson House

Shipmates,
Pam and I had a wonderful time with some current and past shipmates at a Coast Guard Retired Association reception held at Vinson House in McLean, VA on Sunday, 14 December. Great fellowship and memories. Jim and Randy Gracey joined the festivities. My old watchstanding partner from RCC San Juan in the early 1970's Jack Frost was in attendance. He has just returned from Mexico where we are in the process of exchanging information on computer assisted search planning. A Lot of conversation about modernization and I promised to hold a lunch or coffee in the future where we could exchange information and extend the discussion. More pictures on Flickr.

ADM A



Two Commandants Admiral Gracey & Admiral Allen
Originally uploaded by [uscgpress](#)

Posted at 12/14/2008 08:05:00 PM [0 comments](#)



Thursday, December 11, 2008

Presidential Meeting on Reduced Drug Use -- Part 2

Shipmates
This post provides more detail following the meeting at the White House today per my earlier post.

The Office of National Drug Control Policy released an [interesting report](#) today on illegal drug use in the United States. Of particular interest to you would be pages 10 and 11, discussing the impact of increased seizures and their correlation to a dramatic increase in price.

We are just one part of this critical effort, but it is an important part. Campaign Steel Web is the Coast Guard's overarching drug interdiction strategy to reduce the supply of drugs to the U.S. by denying drug traffickers access to maritime routes in the six million square mile transit zone. The National Drug Control Strategy sets a 2014 target to interdict 40 percent of the cocaine en route the United States. The Coast Guard and our interagency partners have diligently worked to achieve this goal, producing significant interdiction successes in the transit zone (Eastern Pacific, Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico) in recent years. Working with our interagency and international partners, the Coast Guard removed 369,833 pounds (167.8 metric tons) of cocaine in FY 2008--the most in our history. The Coast Guard has removed, on average, 328,964 pounds (149 metric tons) of cocaine from the transit zone each year between fiscal years 2004-2008, the five highest removal years on record. These record removal rates can be attributed to three primary factors:

(1) More actionable, tactical intelligence: Through interagency cooperation, the Coast Guard benefits from the joint Department of Homeland Security and Department of Justice investigative task force known as Panama Express (PANEX), which provides real-time, actionable, tactical drug-related intelligence to the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South in Key West, FL.

(2) More capable interdiction assets: The Coast Guard has more capable assets in its armed helicopters and faster over-the-horizon cutter small boats. Through employment of Airborne Use of Force (AUOF) by the Coast Guard's Helicopter Tactical Interdiction Squadron (HITRON) and the United States, Dutch and British Royal Navies with Coast Guard Law Enforcement Detachments (LEDETs) embarked, the Coast Guard is able to stop the small, fast, 45-plus

knot vessels carrying multi-ton loads of cocaine.

(3) Negotiation of international agreements with our partner nations: Since 1981, the Coast Guard, in cooperation with the Departments of Justice and State, has negotiated 27 bilateral agreements with our drug interdiction partner nations in and around the transit zone. The value of these agreements is seen every day in the U.S. government's ability to gain jurisdiction over interdicted smugglers. The result is more prosecutions in U.S. courts and longer sentences under U.S. law for those convicted of drug trafficking. Most importantly, successful prosecutions in the U.S. provide investigators the ability to acquire actionable intelligence about drug movements and the illegal drug trade.

As I posted on earlier, we are [extremely appreciative of Congress'](#) passage of the Drug Trafficking Vessel Interdiction Act to counter the growing SPSS threat.

It is worth highlighting the great cooperation we have received from Mexico and Colombia.


This May I signed a joint Letter of Intent with Admiral Saynez, Secretary of the Mexican Navy, and General Renuart, Commander NORTHCOM. This letter paved the way for US/Mexico bilateral development of standard maritime operating procedures that have significantly enhanced our collective ability to share information and coordinate operations. These procedures, which are less than six months old, have facilitated the seizure of an SPSS and fishing vessel carrying over nine metric tons of cocaine, while also setting the foundation for closer cooperation across a broad range of law enforcement and security missions. The United States and Mexico will continue to fight together the scourge of drugs and narco trafficking that so terribly damages our common border and both of our countries.

I visited Cartagena last month and participated in the Colombian Navy and SOUTHCOM sponsored [Counter Narco trafficking Symposium of the Americas](#). More than 30 flag officers from Navies and Coast Guards from around the region attended this event and discussed opportunities to improve cooperation in the fight against illicit drug smuggling.

Maritime counter-drug cooperation with Colombia is superb; the Government of Colombia (GOC) continues to be one of the closest partners the USG has in the battle on drugs and continued cooperation is critical to ensuring continued success. The USG and GOC have an agreement to suppress illicit traffic by sea, which is used extensively to counter the large flow of cocaine that is trafficked north from Colombia. The Colombian Navy/Coast Guard (COLNAV/COLCG) has been very responsive and can be counted on to provide vital interdiction support. U.S. and Colombian Operational Commanders meet regularly to have tactical discussions and identify initiatives that improve our cooperative efforts. JIATF-South and COLNAV/COLCG routinely conduct combined operations. The USCG has both an Attaché and a Liaison Officer (LNO) at the U.S. Embassy in Bogota, and Colombia has a liaison officer at JIATF-South.

Maritime drug smuggling still remains a major challenge. A large majority of the cocaine that reaches the U.S. travels via maritime means, for at least part of its journey, all by challenging conveyances---self-propelled semi-submersible (SPSS) vessels, go-fasts via littoral routes that require the Coast Guard to shoot out the engines to stop them, secreted in sophisticated hidden compartments, and hidden among large volumes of legitimate commerce using containerized maritime cargo. We could not have achieved and cannot sustain this success by ourselves.

ADM A

Posted at [12/11/2008 01:46:00 PM](#) [@comments](#) 




Presidential meeting on reduced drug use in the United States.

Shipmates,
The President hosted a meeting at the White House today to discuss recent reductions in drug availability and use in the country. I attended with Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) John Walters along with community leaders from across the country. Included were Harry Connick, Sr. (yes Dad of Harry Jr.) who is a former District Attorney in New Orleans. Major league baseball player Josh Hamilton, a recovering drug user and star with the Texas Rangers shared thoughts from his book, "Beyond Belief." There are very positive trends in workforce testing and use among young adults. In addition, alcohol use and smoking have decreased substantially among teenagers. I provided comments on our drug interdiction efforts which have yielded two record seizure years in a row thanks to the help of our partners from DOD, DHS, and DOJ in addition to our international partnerships.



[Talking with Harry Connick, Sr. prior to meeting with the President in the Roosevelt Room.](#)
Originally uploaded by [uscgpress](#)

ADM A

Posted at [12/11/2008 12:58:00 PM](#) [@comments](#) 



Wednesday, December 10, 2008

Group photo at the Sector CO's Conference held at MITAGS in Linthicum Heights, MD.

Shipmates,
I met this morning with the Coast Guard Sector Commanders at their annual conference. I discussed the status of the current transition of administrations from both a DHS and DOD perspective. We also discussed the Maritime Strategy and forthcoming Naval Operations Concepts (NOC), congressional affairs, social media, and the FY 2010 budget. I will be followed by RADM Brice-O'Hara and RDML Ostebo.



[Group photo at the Sector CO's Conference held at MITAGS in Linthicum Heights, MD.](#)

Originally uploaded by [uscgpress](#)

Our Sector construct continues to mature under the leadership of these talented officers.

ADM A

Posted at [12/10/2008 09:42:00 AM](#) [2](#) comments



Tuesday, December 9, 2008

USMC/USCG Warfighter Talks

Shipmates,
This morning General Jim Conway and I held the first U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Coast Guard "Warfighter Talks." Warfighter talks are informal discussions between service chiefs on matters of mutual interest. We have a tradition of warfighter talks with the U.S. Navy and meet regularly. Today's talks were intended to provide interaction between the services' counterparts and to lay the groundwork for future dialogue, collaboration and coordination.



[USMC/USCG Warfighter Talks](#)

Originally uploaded by [uscgpress](#)

Attending were:

USMC:

- General Conway, CMC
- General Jim Amos, Assistant Commandant
- LtGen Richard Kramlich, Director, Marine Corps Staff
- LtGen George Flynn, Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration
- LtGen George Dunford, Deputy Commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations
- BGen Mark Clark, Director, Strategy and Plans Division
- BGen Andrew O'Donnell, Jr, Director, Capabilities Development Directorate.
- BGen James Walker, Staff Judge Advocate to the Commandant

USCG:

- ADM Allen
- VADM Vivien Crea, Vice Commandant'
- RADM Sally Brice-O'Hara, Deputy Commandant for Operations
- RADM RADM Brian Salerno, Assistant Commandant for Safety, Security and Stewardship
- RADM Bill Baumgartner, Chief Counsel, JAG
- RDML Joe Castillo, Director, Response Policy

A number of areas were discussed where we have mutual interests in the context of the 21st Century Maritime Strategy and the Naval Operations Concept. Included were Interoperability, Visit-Board-Search-Seizure (VBSS), the Special Missions Training Center at Camp LeJune, International Training, Theater Security Cooperation, and Piracy.

General Conway and I look forward to expanding our discussions and working more closely in the future. A terrific meeting.

Semper Paratus
Semper Fidelis

ADM A

Posted at [12/09/2008 06:12:00 PM](#) [3](#) comments



Monday, December 8, 2008

Updated and Bumped: Remembering Pearl Harbor

I updated and bumped this post. The Baltimore Sun published a nice [story](#) on the event.

The below photo and others from the event are available [here](#).



[Pearl Harbor survivor Thomas C. Talbott, USMC. On that infamous day, then Corporal Talbott was during roving guard duty on the dry docks. To this day he carries a watch he purchased at the submarine base on December 5th, 1941, which still remains in good w](#)

Originally uploaded by [uscgpress](#)

Shipmates,

We took some time out this morning from the press of business, the demands of the holiday season, and the ongoing activities associated with the transition to a new administration to reflect on what occurred 67 years ago at Pearl Harbor. A group of a hundred or so brave souls gathered on the fantail of TANEY in Baltimore's Inner Harbor in freezing weather to listen, reflect, and celebrate the spirit of the Greatest Generation. While my comments were sincere and well received, the show was stole by Pearl Harbor survivor Corporal Thomas C. Talbott, USMC. His short but eloquent description of that day and the impact on his generation was extraordinary.

Present also were the Chiefs from the Baltimore Mess who manned the O-1 deck behind the speakers throughout the ceremony. The Honor Guard fired the gun salute. We threw a wreath of flowers into the harbor to commemorate the day and honor those who paid the ultimate price to defend our freedom. Our Flickr site has more photos.

Thanks to Captain Brian Kelley of Sector Baltimore and the local units who supported this event.

Congratulations, as well, to Ken Appleton, CAPT USCG retired, who received the TANEY Voluntary of the Year Award for his skill with a needle gun!

As you watch football today, remember this day 67 years ago and those who stood the watch, survived, fought, and won.

ADM A

Posted at 12/08/2008 01:45:00 PM [2 comments](#)



Sunday, December 7, 2008

ASTC Mario Vittone ... A Guardian's Guardian

Shipmates,

Those of you who have read Martha LaGuardia's terrific book, SO OTHERS MAY LIVE, know Mario Vittone. If you don't know Mario, read Chapter 7, "Hurricane Baby... Mario Vittone." A Chief, Rescue Swimmer, Innovator, Leader, and the ultimate Guardian, Chief Vittone was thinking "out loud" about leadership on his Facebook page. Mario believes, as do I, that organizations that create an atmosphere where individuals understand what to do and do it without prompting achieve excellence. I asked and received his permission to post his thoughts on this blog. It is my honor to introduce my guest poster, ASTC Mario Vittone ...

ADM A

Inspired Versus Required

A traveler saw two men cutting stone from a mountain and placing the blocks on carts. He asked them, "What are you doing?"

One said, "Can't you see? We're cutting stones from this mountain."

The other man gave the traveler an understanding look and said,

..."We're building a church."

I am always screwing up; and I mean constantly. Not in big ways anymore, I've made all "those" mistakes and survived. But with little things, the things that aren't so obvious, I miss them all the time. Later, looking back, it's amazing how easy it was to do things right. Like my first real boss used to say, "I go to bed every night thinking I can't get any smarter, and wake up every morning wondering how I could have been so stupid yesterday." That's just life, I guess. But recently, I came across a goof not so easy to spot and even harder to correct. It's something we do readily, backed up by years of tradition and practice, yet I believe it is the single biggest mistake that any of us ever make in our work life. It causes us more unnecessary hassle and serves to incite more job dissatisfaction than anything, and until recently, I would never have guessed it was such a big problem, but it is. We use the chain of command.

I am not talking about the chain of command itself being a bad idea, because it isn't. And I am not referring to jumping the chain (though that is an effective tool for change agents). I am talking about giving orders. I'm talking about the whole idea that you can tell someone whom you out-rank what to do...and they'll do it. It's not the chain of command as much as it is what the idea of a "chain" implies to leaders. It's the whole idea of requiring action. It's the long ingrained idea that telling someone to do something and then them doing it is any kind of useful leadership. It isn't.

The Coast Guard is a chain-of-command gig, I get it. And the chief is the chief and someone has got to be in charge. So you would think I would be a big fan of decisive orders from the top, down to the ranks, and they do what you say. But I'm not. Regardless of my old-school chain-of-command upbringing, I knew a long time ago that the top-down management approach was ineffective. I knew it because it was how a lot of leaders managed me and it didn't work well. To understand just how ineffective it is, you have to compare this kind of leadership to it's alternative.

The insidious thing is that "Do this because I say so" works. The system is set-up that way. If you tell someone under you what to do (strongly enough), they will do it. What you get then is called required action. They will do what you tell them to, but often nothing more...and often only once. They will do what you required of them. It's a trap. When attempting to motivate or achieve results, chain-of-command top-down leadership is for combat and big SAR. It is for situations where the high-risk nature of the mission outcome requires a single-source of ultimate responsibility. You can use the chain of command on the day-to-day operations, and it will work; but it doesn't work effectively or efficiently because it always requires the constant input from that single-source (the boss).

Inspired Action:

Inspired action is a totally different thing altogether. Inspiring is hard work. It takes time, and integrity, and effort. It's harder (way) than giving orders. For old "do it cause I say so" types it requires a sometimes painful change from believing your people work for you, to making them believe that you work for them. You do, you know...you do work for them. That was the subtle idea that I had missed. I thought it was my job to tell my guys what to do. But the primary job of a leader is to make them believe they should be doing it.

"You don't just do a mission, you believe in it."

—Story Musgrave

The only way to create a truly great place to work is to ensure that each of the team members under you (read: next to you) are raging evangelists for the cause or...whatever your cause is. In my little corner of the Coast Guard, the "cause" is maintaining the survival gear for ourselves, our teammates, and the boating public; and also providing qualified and prepared duty standing helicopter rescue swimmers to help save lives. Yours is something else; but we all (E-5 through O-9 anyway) are responsible for causes. We call them missions or area's of responsibility, but what they truly are, are causes that are either believed in...or not.

Dr. Musgrave got it right. If you can get your team to believe in the mission, (your cause), then you can change completely the way they see the world and their place in it. If you can do that, you can create inspired action. They will automatically, because they want to, do the things that need to be done to achieve the mission. They will do all that is required, with minimal guidance from you, without being reminded. If inspired, they will do the things that need doing, often before you (the one in charge) even think of them.

The power of knowing (and better still believing) why you were doing something has always produced better results in your life than when you HAD to do something because you were forced without explanation. Think back on your career to any time you were thinking "this sucks" and I guarantee it was preceded by an order or requirement that bore no relation to your perception of the mission. The order came without explanation, without reason, and made no sense. That's why it didn't feel right. It may have been the best thing to do and absolutely supportive of the mission, but no one took the time to explain it to you. They failed to inspire. I'll bet you failed to do the best job you could have, too.

The Power of Why:

This is where the harder work starts. This is where you learn why so many people are locked in the chain. Inspiration requires more work than giving orders does. If you have a hard time with that (the hard work part), remember that the reason you get paid more when you advance is because the work is supposed to be harder. They are NOT rewarding

you for making it this far and now you deserve to coast. Rank does have it's privileges, but only because you earn (present tense) rather than earned (past tense) them.

So how do you do it? How do you inspire, instead of require? How do you move from top-down leadership to the lateral inspiration of your team? First, you must make sure that you are inspired.

You have to know why you are here:

Sorry, I hate to get all metaphysical on you, but this one is primary. You cannot inspire anyone else unless you first lock this one down. We all fall into basically one of three categories on the "Why am I here" issue:

1. You know why you're here and will never forget (some of us)...
2. You've been so wrapped up in doing it that you need two weeks on a beach in the Caribbean so you can clear your head enough to remember why you came here (most of us) ...or
3. You just needed a job and never knew why you came here in the first place. Or you didn't care, it was just something to do. (a rare animal...you I can't help too much.)

This is the Coast Guard. Why we are here is easy, although surprisingly, easy for some (or most) to forget. There is something about the day-to-day requirements of the over-reaching mission of the Coast Guard: Our primary "cause" requires such preparation and attention to the details of preparation that it becomes easy to forget about the thing that we are preparing for:

We are all here to save lives.

That's it. That's all. The primary reason that anyone in the Coast Guard has a job is to save lives. All jobs (ALL OF THEM) are in support of that mission. When I mention this fact to people, I get a lot of complaints. I have heard every logical explanation of missions that don't save lives or support the saving of lives. They have all been wrong and I can prove it. Take away saving lives as a motivation and watch the missions that disappear. SAR Definitely, but what about the others...Marine Safety? Why do we want it to be safe? To save lives. What about EMSST? Saving lives, no question. How about drug interdiction! Aha! ...no...wait...that saves lives too. How about a YN at Topeka? Lifesaver: No one gets paid...people quit...people die.

Though we started out as a bunch of tax collectors, the life saving aspect of all Coast Guard missions (and by default then, all Coast Guard jobs) is the primary reason for being. Everything else then, (i.e. stonecutting,) becomes a necessity in building that Church.

SK1 Saves Hundreds:

I spent some time in New Orleans during the Katrina rescue operation. I had my hands on victims and put them into the helicopter that flew them out of there. Two days before I arrived, SK1 Roy Tuck put 44 axes in the hands of 44 rescue swimmers so they could cut into rooftops. All the axes in Alabama had been sold to people preparing for the approaching storm. Our crews were having to leave people in their homes for want of a way to get in. When I told Roy that they were asking for axes in Mobile, and that we had one shot to get them on the next plane, I could see it in his eyes: Roy Tuck believed in his job and he knew what it was. He had an hour to get to town, buy axes, and get them on the C-130. It took him and his team 48 minutes. If it had taken him an hour and 48 minutes, many people would have died in the heat of their attics that night. For all my jokes about putting "the ready paperclip on the line", SK1 Roy Tuck saved more lives in under an hour than I have in 10 years.

So you think your people are fixing airplanes? Do you think the MK3 is repairing the engine on the 47 footer? Do you honestly think that all that Seaman Apprentice is doing is chipping paint? You're wrong. What they are doing is saving lives: fixing airplanes, and engines and painting are the ways that they do it. It's not only the asset that arrives on scene, but everything and everyone that got it there that saves lives. This is why so few of us ever leave this place (the Coast Guard): It is noble work. Every kid leaving Cape May KNOWS that's what they are here for and I think the difference between those who reenlist and those who don't is only about how well we support or tear down that belief.

Now do you know why you are here? Do you believe in your job, or do you still need a few weeks on a beach? If you do...go. Stop reading this and fill out a leave chit right now. Get yourself to a place where you can remember that feeling you had on the graduation field at Cape May, or New London, or Yorktown or wherever you first wore your uniform, and dig deep for the belief that brought you here. Don't like the beach? Then try visiting Cape May, New London, or Yorktown, but do something. Because I can promise you this, if you have lost that belief: that graduates belief; if you don't remember why you are here, then there is no way you are doing a good job anymore. You are just going through the motions. Your actions are no longer inspired, you are simply doing what is required, and that is no way to live. Not for you, and not for your people.

Write It Down:

Your first job in the inspiration of your team is to define for them what their part is. You have to spend some time thinking about it and then, most importantly, you must WRITE IT DOWN. Put it to paper! It is not enough to just "think about it". Writing it down is powerful and necessary. First of all, It forces you to really come up with the thing. If you don't write it down, it isn't real; it's just some stuff stuck in your head. The act of writing it down defines it clearly for you and makes the next step possible.

Share the mission and your belief in it. Put aside that feeling that you are going to look silly. You're not. The people

under you want to be inspired and they want that inspiration to come from you. The "pre-inspired" guys are tired of inspiring themselves and feeling alone in it. So suck-up the risk of embarrassment, sit your people down, and show them what you came up with. If you can do this away from the work place itself that's even better, but you at least have to make time to share your belief in the base mission and your supportive missions with the people on your team. Involve them in deciding the mission, trim the mission...decide what is NOT your mission...if they can convince you that what you wrote down isn't exactly right...change it. Be flexible in the creation of the mission. This solidifies everyone's belief (theirs and yours) in the thing. Then you can be clear with its implementation.

Continuing and Constant Reminders:

All that is left for you now is to "be inspiring".


Alright...time-out..."being inspirational" is not something that can be possibly contained in an article of this size. It's hard to contain in a library if you ask me, so before you read my humble list of idea's...realize that I know this is just me talking and your list (and you should come up with one) is just as good as mine and probably better. But, I had to include it. I didn't feel right saying "be inspiring" without some explanation of what I meant. So here goes:

1. Work harder on the mission than your people do. They are watching you and assigning levels of commitment, (theirs, in relation to yours) to the cause constantly.
2. Know more than they do, or at least try. If you get this inspire thing right, the only time your people are going to bring you a problem is when they are solving another one and need your help with a detail...knowing the answer, is inspiring in and of itself.
3. Catch them getting it right: When the miracle happens and most of your people do what is required before you know about it, make sure they know you notice.
4. Be dedicated to the success of your evangelists: Those dedicated to the cause. Don't let their dedication to the mission cloud their attention to themselves and their advancement. Be the watchdog of their best interests.
5. Get VERY familiar with the 1650.25C and the CG-1650. (If you don't know what those are and you've been a Chief for over a year...shame on you.)
6. Talk Up The Mission. Post it. Remind them of it. Remind yourself of it.
7. When assigning tasks or truly delegating authority, always clearly explain why it is important. Better yet, start telling them the "why" first and they'll often tell you the "what" before you finish.
8. Read about, watch shows about, and notice the people who inspire you...then act like they do or do what they did.
9. Write good things about the people on the team. If you notice someone on the team doing something great, write her/his boss and tell them about it (and a copy to the subject of the letter). This ALWAYS motivates.
10. Make your own list of ways to be inspiring.

I don't know what else to tell you. I'm not simply suggesting that a mission statement is something new and will solve all your problems: It's not and it won't. I guess what I am trying to convince you of (and I am) is that people want to feel part of something bigger than themselves. You'd think that it would be easy given that almost everything is (bigger); but if you make their work about completing required actions...because you're in charge...you rob them of that feeling. You are not the "something bigger" they had in mind. But, if you use your position and authority and privilege to inspire them instead, they will do what is required, even the mundane, with pride and commitment...and so will you.

If you stayed with me this far, I hope you can look past the part where I have no business telling you how to lead, and notice that I not trying to...I'm just trying to inspire.

Thanks Chief,
ADM A

Posted at 12/07/2008 02:53:00 PM [9 comments](#) 



Remembering Pearl Harbor



Shipmates
 We took some time out this morning from the stresses of business, the demands of the holiday season, and the ongoing activities associated with the transition to a new administration to reflect on what occurred 67 years ago at Pearl Harbor. A group of a hundred or so people gathered on the fantail of TANEY in Baltimore's Inner Harbor in freezing temperatures to listen, reflect, and honor the spirit of the Greatest Generation. While my comments were still fresh in my mind, I received an e-mail from a friend who had been a crew member of the TANEY during the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was a survivor of the attack and was on the O-1 deck at the time. He was a watchman on the O-1 deck at the submarine base on December 6th, 1941, which still remains in good w

Present were the Chiefs from the Baltimore Mess who manned the O-1 deck behind the speakers throughout the ceremony. The Honor Guard fired the gun salute. We threw a wreath of flowers into the harbor to commemorate the day and honor those who paid the ultimate price to defend our freedom. Our Flickr site has more photos.

Thanks to Captain Brian Kelley of Sector Baltimore and the local units who supported this event.

Congratulations, as well, to Ken Appleton, CAPT USCG retired, who received the TANEY Voluntary of the Year Award for his skill with a needle gun!

As you watch football today, remember this day 67 years ago and those who stood the watch, survived, fought, and won.

ADM A

Posted at 12/07/2008 02:48:00 PM 2 comments



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