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15 Jan 2026

MEMORANDUM


From: K. E. Lunday, ADM
Commandant


P. N. Waldron, MCPO
Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard

To: All Commanders, Commanding Officers, Officers-in-Charge, and Command Senior Enlisted Leaders

Subj: PERSONAL FOR: DIRECTION AND EXPECTATIONS FOR COMMAND

Ref: (a) Executive Order: Prioritizing Military Readiness and Excellence (27 Jan 25)
(b) Coast Guard Regulations, COMDTINST M5000.3 (series), Ch. 5-6
(c) Commander's Intent (15 Jan 2026)

1. This sets forth my direction and expectations of you as Commanders, Commanding Officers, and Officers-in-Charge (OIC), and Command Senior Enlisted Leaders.

2. The Coast Guard has placed special trust in your leadership and abilities by assigning you to serve in command. Command is one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of a professional career. Your authority, responsibility, and accountability in ref (b) are clear:

"The responsibility of the commanding officer for that command is absolute, except when, and to the extent relieved there from by competent authority, or as provided otherwise in these regulations. At the commanding officer's discretion, portions of that authority may be delegated to subordinates for execution of details, but such delegation of authority shall in no way relieve the commanding officer of continued responsibility for the safety, efficiency, and well-being of the command. . . The authority and responsibility of an OIC corresponds to that of a commanding officer."

3. You must command and lead as if your lives depend on it. Your life may depend on it. For certain, the lives of the men and women in your charge will depend on it. And the lives of the American people we serve depend on it.

4. Put your mission and people before self. Lead your crew to achieve the mission while taking the best possible care of them. Do this with every ounce of energy you have, leading through courage and personal example. I will demand your very best because our people and the public deserve nothing less.

5. Follow the chain of command and ensure clarity of orders and directives. I will do the same.

6. Communicate early to your senior commander your operational priorities, scheme of maneuver, and how you are framing operational risk.

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7. Empower and rely on the Chiefs. Chief Petty Officers are the backbone of the Service. Their leadership and proficiency are essential in every unit and staff.
8. Focus on readiness—*Semper Paratus*. The readiness of every Coast Guard man and woman, and their families, is the cornerstone of unit and force readiness. Start there, then ensure your crews are well-trained, equipped, and proficient for both normal operations and for crisis. Communicate gaps in readiness to your senior commander, what you are doing to address the gaps, and what you need from higher command.
9. We are a military service. Always maintain the discipline, high standards, and military character of the Coast Guard in all you do, regardless of your unit's mission.
10. Be an inspiring leader and instill a disciplined culture in your unit. We do not tolerate toxic leaders in the Service. Nothing demoralizes crews and destroys readiness more.
11. Know your people. Ensure every member of your crew is safe and secure, on and off duty. Act early and decisively if something is amiss, applying intrusive leadership when required. Take action within your command to prevent suicides, starting with suicide intervention skills training for yourself, the Chiefs, and other leaders within the crew.
12. Focus particular attention on combating rape and sexual assault—violent crimes that cause devastating trauma and destroy unit readiness. Create a command where rape and sexual assault, and the criminal behaviors that fuel it (sexual harassment, harassment, bullying, hazing), are never tolerated and people do not fear reporting these crimes. Ensure all are fully aware of their reporting options. Your obligation to appropriately respond to any allegation is absolute.
13. Act ethically at all times to safeguard the sacred trust with your crew and the American people we serve. We must do more than follow the rules. Consider how your actions may be perceived by others, even out of context, and act accordingly.
14. Command is the most challenging assignment there is and the most professionally and personally rewarding. Demonstrate that and inspire others to achieve command.
15. The end result of everything we do is to enable Coast Guard crews at the tactical edge to successfully carry out dangerous and demanding missions in an unforgiving environment and safely return. Our crews are frequently cold, wet, or tired, working in dangerous conditions or against those who would do them harm. Our people and families increasingly face the hardships of moves, storm evacuations, and other challenges. Command and lead with this in mind, bringing the same sense of urgency and bias for action. Seize the initiative, be decisive, and take warranted risks. We will fully support you. We are honored to serve with you.

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