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Secretary Brinegar's Remarks at the
Launching of U.S. Coast Guard Cutter
POLAR STAR

I am very happy to be here. I have learned in my 10 months as Secretary that the job involves many headaches -- bankrupt railroads, freight car shortages, urban traffic congestion and several other crises of equal dimension. I have also learned that the office has many delights -- and the best of these is working with the United States Coast Guard. And now to be involved with the Coast Guard as we are here today in the launching of a magnificent ship -- that is doubly satisfying.

I should like at the outset to congratulate everybody who helped build this fine vessel -- the employees of Lockheed Shipbuilding and Construction Company and its subcontractors, and the officers and men of the United States Coast Guard. The Cutter Polar Star is a magnificent vessel. You can be proud of your work.

Everything about the POLAR STAR is spectacular. Her size -- 400 feet. Her power -- 60,000 shaft horsepower. Her speed -- 17 knots in open sea. And her capability -- the POLAR STAR can crack ice that is 21 feet thick. All these are awe inspiring. But I also want to note that our new ship is a floating laboratory. She will carry on board a computer system designed solely for handling scientific data. She will also be equipped with laboratories for basic "wet or dry" marine studies. Provision is also being made for interchangeable, lift on - lift off laboratories equipped with whatever will be needed for ecological studies.

The POLAR STAR will, furthermore, have accommodations for 10 scientists and technicians.

I also want to call attention to the POLAR STAR's range -- 28,000 miles.

This pursuit of science -- and this ability to sail to all ends of the earth for a variety of purposes typify to me the widening range of Coast Guard activities. The mission of the Coast Guard grows every day.

Certainly there will be no diminution of the Coast Guard's historic role as a stand-by arm of our military forces. It's fine military abilities were demonstrated once more in the Vietnam War. If the situation warrants it, the Coast Guard will certainly again come forward as needed. In the meanwhile, the Coast Guard's peace-time mission will continue to expand as the Nation grows. While the Secretary of Defense struggles with a shrinking budget for the Army, Navy and Air Force, Admiral Bender and I argue only about the extent of the Coast Guard's increases.

That's the kind of argument you can have and still stay friends.

The direction of the Coast Guard's future growth is evident in our national priorities. We are, as a nation, focusing more and more on such quality of life issues as safety, environmental protection and energy conservation. And all of these are requiring Coast Guard assistance.

Our growing awareness of the wide range of environmental problems has tremendous Coast Guard application. I'm quite pleased to learn about the development of the new Vessel Control system that we are placing here

in Puget Sound and in San Francisco. This is an idea somewhat analogous to the work of our Federal Aviation Administration in controlling air traffic. It will manage ship traffic with the aim of preventing collisions and thereby eliminating oil spills. I can tell you from first hand knowledge that it is far better to keep a ship from spilling oil than it is to clean up the beaches and birds afterwards. I am hopeful that this Vessel Control system will be expanded to other crowded and perilous ship channels.

The energy shortage that has suddenly emerged in our country will also mean further new assignments for the Coast Guard. Waterborne freight is the world's best transportation system from the point of view of energy efficiency. We shall, consequently, be seeing an increase in ocean and waterway shipping. This, too, will increase Coast Guard's responsibility.

There will also be a need for increased supplies of fuel. We can, consequently, expect a sharply accelerated effort in offshore oil drilling with its accompanying armada of platforms, derricks, barges, and small boats -- all posing added problems for the Coast Guard.

We will also soon see the development in our offshore waters of "Deep Water Ports" that are needed to handle the really big deep draft oil tankers -- from 250 thousand tons up to 500 thousand tons. This, again, means new work for the Coast Guard.

The oil shortage is also turning our attention to the potential energy resources of Alaska. This brings us to the significance of our ceremony today.

Coast Guard icebreaking services began more than 100 years ago with America's purchase of Alaska. Soon after the purchase from the Imperial Russian Government, the United States Revenue Cutter LINCOLN was sent north to explore the new territory. Out of that voyage was born the Coast Guard's Bering Sea Patrol and other Alaskan activities -- some of which are still being carried on.

With the discovery a few years ago of oil on the North Slope, these Alaskan patrols have now taken on a new significance. I am sure that this new cutter, POLAR STAR, will see considerable duty in Arctic waters assisting in the development of these Arctic oil fields. The POLAR STAR will, by this service, be helping our nation at a time of need. You officers and men of the Coast Guard are to be congratulated for your foresight.

We have talked of the technological advances of our ship and the exciting mission she will fulfill. These are newsworthy. But the key element of her future are the talents and courage of the men who will serve on her. I have come to know these men of the Coast Guard and I respect them. My wish for the POLAR STAR, then, is this: may she prove worthy of the fine men who sail her.

I must observe, too, how fitting is the name of this new cutter ... POLAR STAR. This famed beacon in the north has guided mariners for thousands of years. The constancy of its location and the strength of its brilliance made our great explorations possible. I am certain that the glory of this new ship's name will be an inspiration to her crew.

And now it is time to release our ship. I wish the POLAR STAR success and a long active career. May she know on every voyage a favoring tide, a safe passage and an early landfall.

Thank you.