



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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REMARKS BY U.S. SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION JOHN A. VOLPE TO THE COAST GUARD OFFICERS ASSOCIATION, ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI, FRIDAY, MAY 19, 1972

It's good to be here with you. I think I have ridden every kind of transportation vehicle this week -- planes, trains, buses. And now here I am hundreds of miles from any ocean just finishing a trip in a Coast Guard vessel under the command of a flying Admiral.

I admit I have a Coast Guard slant. Maybe it's because I come from Boston and the Coast Guard started in Massachusetts. When I was growing up, it was the most familiar and best known military service in the State.

I never heard anything in the least bit bad about the service.

I suspect too, a lot of my partiality comes from knowing Chet Bender. He's first rate and he runs a first class organization.

The longer I am in this job the more I continue to be amazed at the variety of duties of the Coast Guard and the versatility of you men who serve in it.

Look at the international ice patrol -- guarding shipping against the peril of icebergs in the North Atlantic! This week the Cutter VIGOROUS will be relieved by the DECISIVE. I believe this is the first time 210-foot cutters have been used on this duty. They were pressed into service because this year's crop of icebergs is larger and further south than it has been in many years. I am told that there are more than 600 bergs and growlers south of latitude 48 degrees north.

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And last Monday there was a keel laying ceremony on the huge new icebreaker POLAR STAR which is under construction at Lockheed Shipbuilding Company at Seattle. This 400 foot cutter will be the most powerful ever to fly the U.S. Flag.

The incident involving the grounded chlorine barge at Louisville shows another side of the Coast Guard. There, Admiral Siler took charge of a very delicate situation and, I want to note, did a tremendous job. That barge -- buffeted by a 35 knot current -- could have come apart any time thereby releasing that lethal gas. Yet, Admiral Siler, working with experts from private industry and the Corps of Engineers and his own Coast Guard personnel was able to get it free. This was teamwork at its best. Well done, Admiral!

I, also, want to tell you the Coast Guard will be well represented at TRANSPO which opens next week. You'll have a very impressive exhibit plus static displays of aircraft and the experimental air cushion vehicle. And for the first two days of this Exposition, the Coast Guard band will be featured on the Program.

Soon you will all probably be wearing the distinctive new uniform that is presently being tested in the field. But whatever uniform you wear -- be it a flight suit like that worn by the aviators -- an Arctic parka -- a khaki work uniform here on the River -- I know that you will continue to serve our nation with the valor and distinction for which the Coast Guard is known.

Your service is an important part of our Department. Here in the Second District we see good examples of the intermodal concept that is so vital to efficient transportation.

Your work on aids to navigation and safety on the waterways -- your concern with bridges over navigable waters -- all these contribute to the nation's welfare.

Looking ahead, I see an even bigger role for the Coast Guard. Not too long ago, the sea was regarded as man's enemy and her dominions were to be traversed only at risk and peril.

Today, the oceans of the world are new frontiers to be explored, developed, and utilized. We now regard the sea as another stronghold of natural riches which are to be put to work for the betterment of mankind. The continuing growth of the science and discoveries of oceanography can only mean new growth and new departures for the Coast Guard service.

Another change of attitude already in progress and already well known -- will also involve new Coast Guard endeavors. We are enthusiastically launched on a very worthwhile campaign of protecting our environment.

We are determined to put an end to pollution. We are equally determined to preserve marine ecology. I am fully appreciative of our commitment. Yet I am equally sure we have not yet even approached a true appreciation of the size of these tasks. As we proceed with our work, we shall be discovering these assignments will involve the development of new knowledge and new techniques far beyond what we have now. Again, I foresee, more new and different roles for the Coast Guard.

At the same time, I see no lessening in the scope of traditional Coast Guard pursuits.

We are anticipating steady growth in all elements of water borne commerce. Recreational boating is expanding at a great rate. Weather forecasting and climatology are assuming even more importance than at present. The future of the sea is most promising. There is work to be done!

And in closing, I remind you that tonight our President leaves for Moscow on his historic mission of peace. Seldom in our history has so much rested on a President's visit. All of us are joined together in wishing him success. I certainly hope the best for him. Few men have ever known the burden he has been carrying -- moving forward in the quest of peace against hostile objection and obstruction. Yet President Nixon never faltered. He knows in his heart that what he is doing is correct and morally right. I salute his courage.

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