

## **Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Bob Papp's Address**

**to the**

### **Association of Naval Service Officers Conference**

**San Antonio, TX**

**Friday May 6, 2011**

Good Afternoon Shipmates. Or Buenos Tardes Camaradas de Naval! We are trying to figure this out. Talk about diversity. I started asking people how you say Shipmates in Spanish. Well it depends. It depends if you are talking to a Mexican, or a Puerto Rican, or a Venezuelan, or a Colombian, or a Chilean. I think what I've got here is Mis Companeros de Marina ... or Mis Companeros de Naval ... but as the people in the Coast Guard have heard me speak before, Shipmates is my shorthand term for members of the Coast Guard family – and extended family including the Navy and the Marines. So perhaps it is Mis Familias de Naval.

For people who serve on or over the water, the term “Ca-ma-ra-das” or “Shipmate” represents the unique bond that is formed when the people you serve with, and their families, become part of your extended family.

For me, Shipmates is a term of endearment...in the days of old, and often today, Shipmate is a term that can be dearer than brother or sister! I love the bond that is forged between Shipmates -- and that's why “Shipmates” is the singular word that headlines my Commandant's coin...

As fellow members of our nation's Sea Services, I consider all of you “Shipmates” and I'm honored you invited me to speak this afternoon.

I also want to congratulate you on celebrating your 30<sup>th</sup> year of service...this is a wonderful milestone. I look forward to many more years of supporting ANSO, both as a member – and as Commandant of the Coast Guard.

It's also a treat to be in San Antonio...this is the perfect city to hold your annual gathering. San Antonio has a large Hispanic population...60% of its residents identify as being of Latino descent. And while we were enjoying a great evening event, from what I heard and saw last night there was a great Cinco de Mayo party going on!!!

San Antonio also has a legacy of military service. For over 300 years there has been a military presence in this city. I've heard about the great success you've had with Youth

Day, and I'm sure the presence of this conference did a wonderful job of exposing the youth of San Antonio to all that the sea services have to offer.

Remembering the Past and Forging the Future is a fitting theme for your conference. The military in general, and the sea services in particular have come a long way in diversifying our ranks and offering opportunity to all who wish to serve. So forging that bond between Shipmates is vital to our future success.

Recently, we've had some successes that I would like to share with you. Our new class of cadets at the Coast Guard Academy has more minorities and female applications than ever before. 215 Hispanics completed the admissions application ... an improvement from 180 the previous year. This resulted in 46 Hispanics being offered appointments to the Academy -- which is up from 36 last year. We need to keep these trends moving upward. The key to ensuring that we succeed is continuing our recruitment efforts. We have made good progress, but I know there are so many more candidates out there that we are still not reaching.

This is why one of the first things I did as Commandant was meet with the head of our recruiting command, and the entire Academy admissions staff...I told them we need to do better...that we need to work harder...that there are plenty of qualified candidates out there that we have yet to find!

This is also where you in ANSO can come in... you have a unique ability to raise awareness about the sea services in your home communities ... no matter what we do, we cannot compete with your ability to influence your community ... so I need your help.

One of ANSO's five pillars is community outreach. There is nothing stronger than a positive example. Reaching into your community, one that may not have a recruiter or other Coast Guard presence, ensures that our young people see an example that they can identify with – a role model.

The Coast Guard COMPASS program – which deploys active duty, reserve, civilian and auxiliary volunteers into their communities to increase understanding of the Coast Guard, has enhanced the ability of recruiters to reach into minority communities – particularly in areas unfamiliar with the Coast Guard and its mission.

But, with that said, I also realize we still have a long way to go. Quality recruitment and outreach practices that attract the best and brightest to our services are merely a beginning.

Our next step must be cultivation, appreciation and culture....

What does that mean?

As a service, the Coast Guard must cultivate our younger members, in particular our Junior Officers and enlisted members, and those considering Officer Candidate School. Most often, we call this "Command Climate." It is about effectively leading and managing people and creating an inclusive environment that makes people want to

remain in the organization. Our Senior Petty Officers are a key part of this effort. The mentorship and guidance they provide to our Junior Officers and Enlisted are invaluable. So it is great to see so many of our senior enlisted personnel are in attendance today ...

Creating a diverse workforce is a team effort and ANSO has been an amazing member of our team!

Yet Gaps still remain. And it's our continuing duty to identify them, and fill them.

In fact, this week we held our senior executive leadership conference in Washington, D.C. This is where we bring in all our flag officers, senior executive service members, and our most senior command master chiefs. And I want you to know, that the last thing I told my senior leaders as I concluded the conference is that one of the most important issues on my radar – and on my watch as Commandant is diversity. VADM Brown and RDML Castillo and RADM Rabago can confirm this.

I told my senior leaders that they need to personally get out there and offer their personal mentorship. And that we can do better – both in terms of recruiting – and in terms of retention.

Indeed, as some of you may know from the recently released Military Leadership Diversity Commission Report, while we have done a good job of diversifying our force in the junior enlisted ranks, the overall demographic composition of the officer corps is far from representative of the American population ... officers are much less demographically diverse than the enlisted troops they lead. When it comes to Hispanic Americans, which make up 15 percent of the U.S. population, they number only 5 percent of the officer corps. African Americans account for 12 percent of the U.S. population, but represent just 9 percent of active duty officers.

And, at the general and flag officer level rank diversity takes a significant dive...the minority general or flag officer population was 9 percent in the Marine Corps, 6 percent in the Navy, and 5 percent in the Air Force...the Army has the most diverse service, with minorities making up 10% of its general officers.

In the Coast Guard, we're so small – we don't need statistics – we're clearly visible – we have about 40 flag officers – and seated right here with us are two of our three Hispanic flag officers – RADM Castillo and RADM Rabago – and our only African American flag officer – VADM Brown. Of our 5 women who are flag officers, we only have 2 returning.

This causes me great concern. But what really has my attention is not our current representation of minorities in our flag corps, but who is in the pipeline to replace them.

You cannot lateral in at the O-6 level – you need to grow flag and general officers up over many years through your officer corps...In 2050, the majority becomes the minority

in our country. Our leadership will need to reflect our general population – both those whom we lead in our respective services as well as our general population. We are clearly not on track to do that – and given that we must grow these leaders up through our hierarchical organizations, we need to turn our efforts towards working this challenge.

So, to build upon that – I want to now focus on the second part of your conference theme, Forging the Future. I am going to do that by focusing on you. All of you, sitting in this room right now are the future. You collectively represent the future of our sea services.

Now, one of my most important duties as Commandant is to provide our Officer Corps with my expectations for their performance, continuing service and promotion.

I am sure all of you receive a lot of advice from your mentors, and from conferences like this, and organizations like ANSO. Receiving good advice is one thing; following through is another. It is tough out there – no one is going to cut you any slack. Rather, the opposite is true – you are going to have to work harder than ever to compete for promotion and jobs of increasing responsibility.

But that's OK – I am confident – especially after having interacted with some of you last night and this morning and getting to know you better – that everyone here has what it takes to work hard – otherwise you would not be commissioned officers. But I just don't want you to work hard, I also want you to self-reflect on your career.

The unavoidable reality of any officer promotion system is that there will be very good and honorable officers who will not be offered the opportunity for promotion. So, how do you avoid being one of them?

One of the best ways you can do this is by bringing the same strategic focus that you bring to your every day duties to bear on your careers. Honestly, how many of you have taken a day to reflect upon your career progression? How many of you have read your services' promotion guidance? How many of you have made course corrections in your careers to align with this guidance?

And, in particular, how many of you have chosen a specialty -- like afloat operations, aviation, intelligence or one of the many others our sea services have to offer – and, for those of you more senior, how many of you have chosen a sub-specialty?

I advise all officers that they should select a specialty, and a sub-specialty, and continually work to gain experience knowledge, and proficiency in these areas. Most importantly, I tell our officers that it is not just the acquisition of specialty knowledge and experience that counts – the key is for you to demonstrate to your seniors that you can turn your specialized experience into effective leadership – those who can do this will be the ones who get promoted.

Second, you cannot just cross the threshold into a specialty community and rest on your laurels. You need to be working hard on becoming more proficient and more skilled every day – in short, you need to seek to become a master of your craft. This is especially true as you ascend in rank. Your superiors will be looking to promote those officers who demonstrate progressive development in both their specialty and leadership ability as they ascend in rank.

Those of you who have not chosen a specialty are putting yourselves at risk. And, those of you who have entered a specialty need to ask yourselves, how you are progressing – what have you done to self-improve?

Command. To me, military leaders should be aspiring to command. Now, I realize that all communities do not offer command opportunities – so if your community is one of those, you need to be stepping forward to take on the most difficult and challenging high-responsibility high-visibility assignments and leadership positions.

We in this room all know that in our respective services there are those certain key jobs that open the door to the next level of rank and opportunity. But my question to you today, is what are you doing to open these doors? Have you sat down and sketched out a plan? Have you validated this plan with your mentors? And most importantly, have you ... yes at the end of the day it comes back to you – have you taken that first and substantial step towards executing your career plan?

The message I want to leave you with ... If you leave here with nothing else today ... is that you bring rich diversity to your respective officer corps, but it is your motivation, leadership, and performance that will lead to your professional success ... you must always keep in mind the necessity of expanding your expertise, and your leadership by continually seeking opportunities to learn and lead.

So, as we collectively venture along our respective track lines, we need to keep focus on both the horizon – and our careers – I want to see all of you out there leading your fleets, squadrons, crews and warriors – in command. I hope that when you look back and “remember the past” you will recall the great works of ANSO – and the sailors who support it, as an important part of what has “forged your future.”

Thank you.  
Semper Paratus.