

Commandant's Veterans Day Remarks Nov. 11, 2010 CG Memorial Arlington, Va.

Master Chief Leavitt, thank you for that kind introduction,

Secretary Napolitano,

Distinguished Guests,

Shipmates,

We all have a duty today. All of us share in an obligation to observe and practice the manners of our profession. These manners are not recorded in any book, any document, or any publication. These manners are observed, taught and experienced. They are felt in the heart. And, by practicing them, we prepare other generations to carry on our traditions.

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A Nation – or even a Service – can be judged by how well it honors its  
Veterans.

So, as Commandant of the Coast Guard, I want to express my deep and  
sincere appreciation for YOUR presence here today. WE are particularly  
grateful for the attendance of OUR Service Secretary, the Honorable Janet  
Napolitano. I am grateful to all of YOU, who made time to be here today.  
Thank you!

The Coast Guard Band is hosting a concert tomorrow, themed “Heroes in  
Our Midst”... it's a particularly special theme to me because I once prepared  
a speech titled “Heroes in our Midst” for the dedication of the WWII  
Memorial. As part of my preparation, I read obituaries on Veterans whose  
had become well known for their accomplishments beyond their service.  
Their contributions while in uniform, however, were not well known.

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Upon closer study, I found that these members of the “greatest generation” were ordinary people that were truly heroes in our midst.

Early today the Vice President thanked Veterans from all OUR armed services for their many contributions. So, because I am the Commandant of the Coast Guard, on this Veterans Day, upon the sacred ground of Arlington, I'd like to recognize some of our past **Coast Guard** Heroes who gave the last full measure of devotion defending our freedom...

On the Coast Guard Memorial behind me are the names of the crewman aboard SENECA and TAMPA – who were lost during WWI...

On September 16, 1918, in a gallant endeavor to bring the torpedoed merchant vessel SS Wellington into port, 15 Coast Guardsmen from Cutter *Seneca* were lost off Gibraltar.

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Just ten days later, on September 26, 1918, Cutter *Tampa* was sunk while performing ocean escort duty by an enemy submarine off Bristol Channel. She went down with every man onboard – 115 Coast Guardsmen and 16 passengers – 131 souls forever lost...

*Tampa* was the greatest combat-related loss of life suffered by the U.S. Naval forces during WWI.

Admiral William S. Sims, the senior U.S. naval officer on duty in Great Britain, received the following letter from the Lords of the British Admiralty:

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"Their Lordships desire me to express their deep regret at the loss of the USS Tampa. Her record since she has been employed in European waters as an ocean escort to convoys has been remarkable. She has acted in capacity of ocean escort to no less than 18 convoys from Gibraltar, comprising 350 vessels, with a loss of only two ships through enemy action. The commanders of the convoys have recognized the ability with which the TAMPA carried out the duties of ocean escort. Appreciation of the good work done by the USS TAMPA may be some consolation to those bereft and Their Lordships would be glad if this could be conveyed to those concerned."

Several days later, two bodies washed ashore...

The authorities were able to identify one of the bodies as being Seaman James Fleury, USCG – the other was never identified. They were both buried with full military honors at Lamphey Churchyard (a small country churchyard in Wales).

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Fleury's family later brought home his body and buried him in a cemetery in Long Island, New York...the unidentified Coast Guardsman still rests in Lamphrey Churchyard. Local citizens care for his grave to this day.

On May 23, 1928, Commandant Fredrick Billard, dedicated THIS Coast Guard Memorial— and remarked:

“The officers and men of the Coast Guard whose memory we are honoring today...knew the history, the traditions, the standards and the pride of our small Service...and to uphold these traditions and standards, they made the greatest of earthly sacrifices...”

YOU will find the name of James Fleury carved in the stone behind me...WE indeed have heroes in our midst...

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The legacy of these Coast Guardsmen is carried on by all who serve today with the same commitment and sacrifice.

In our Service's 220-year history, we have performed countless challenging maritime missions. Many of these feats are so dramatic that they surpass any fictional sea story –

BUT these feats all have one common theme – the willingness of someone to take great personal risk to protect others...That's after all what Coast Guardsmen do...WE protect people on the sea, WE protect against threats from the sea, and WE even protect the sea itself...

We ensure the Safety, Security and Stewardship of our Nation's waters...

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OUR present-day hard working Coast Guard men and women, who  
comprise the crews and units who perform OUR challenging maritime  
missions are true HEROES in OUR MIDST...

Their Service is characterized by enduring humility – if you asked them  
whether they thought of themselves as heroes, they would invariably say, no,  
I was just doing my job...

Now I've heard it said there are no more heroes...

But they're out there...and they are here...

They're those Ordinary men and women who do Extraordinary things.

Their names aren't famous, but their virtues are.



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Teamwork. Selflessness. Courage.

Honor. Respect. Devotion to Duty.

They aren't larger than life, but they risk their own lives so that others might live.

They step forward to answer the call, when others fall back...

Walk into any Coast Guard station or unit, or any hanger deck,

Or onboard any Cutter, and you will find them –

The courageous men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard...

And, when YOU need them most,

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They will give their UTMOST to PROTECT you from the sea, to PROTECT against threats from the sea, and PROTECT the sea itself.

So on this Veterans Day, we honor our profession by recognizing ALL those in uniform – past and present. This is our chosen profession. This is our way. This is what we do. We are privileged to be members of a very unique Service. Whenever I am asked who we are, or what we do, I always reply with pride, WE ARE Coast Guardsmen! We are the men and women of the United States Coast Guard, past and present!

So to all of YOU, and ALL VETERANS, I salute YOU from the bottom of my heart – for YOUR service, past and present.

**Semper Paratus**