

**Remarks for
U.S. Maritime Administrator David Matsuda
Memorial Day Ceremony
National WWII Memorial
May 30, 2011**

Thank you for that kind introduction. I'm honored to join you at this historic and fitting place to commemorate Memorial Day. Americans are forward-looking people. It's in our DNA. It's why we marched fearlessly toward the Western frontier; why we built a transcontinental railroad system amidst a Civil War; why our darkest moments of strife and recession have always given way to progress. 364 days a year, we focus forward.

Today is different: today we pause for somber reflection and offer our gratitude to all of our nation's heroes who have sacrificed so much in the name of freedom.

Well known are our soldiers, sailors, marines, airmen, and coast guardsmen. Lesser known, but no less courageous, are the men and women of the U.S. Merchant Marine. Since the earliest days of this republic, our Merchant Mariners were there to protect American freedom at home and abroad. And now, when disaster strikes, these brave men and women sail into harm's way to defend our country.

They are often the unsung heroes of our military, peacekeeping and disaster relief efforts. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt called them the Nation's "fourth arm of defense." And too many of our Merchant Marine have paid the ultimate sacrifice, with one of the highest casualty rate of any service in World War II.

As service chief for the U.S. Maritime Service, I am pleased that the National WWII Memorial, right here on the National Mall in Washington DC, recognizes this sacrifice. General Dwight D. Eisenhower said "Every man in this Allied command is quick to express his admiration for the loyalty, courage, and fortitude of the officers and men of the Merchant Marine. We count upon their efficiency and their utter devotion to duty as we do our own they have never failed us yet and in all the struggles yet to come we know that they will never be deterred by any danger, hardship, or privation. When final victory is ours there is no organization that will share its credit more deservedly than the Merchant Marine."

By honoring their devotion to the United States, we are helping to ensure that their lives are not forgotten, and their legacy continues. On behalf of a humble, grateful nation, we remember the heroes we've lost – and give thanks to those who serve and sacrifice today.

Thank you very much.

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