

**REMARKS FOR
THE HONORABLE NORMAN Y. MINETA
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION**

**FAREWELL TO THE U.S. COAST GUARD
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

FEBRUARY 25, 2003

10 AM

Thank you. Thank you everybody. At a Coast Guard event I always thank the Chaplain for his prayer and the band for its performance. So, Chaplain Douglass, thank you. Commander Buckley, and members of the band, thank you.

This morning, I get to add something to my thanks to our bandleader. Commander Buckley, you have done a superb job with the Coast Guard band over all of these years, and it is my pleasure to inform you that yesterday on behalf of President Bush, I approved your promotion to Captain of the United States Coast Guard. Congratulations, Captain-select Buckley.

Secretary Ridge, Admiral Collins, Members of Congress, my colleagues at the Department of Transportation, and other distinguished guests. Welcome to the change of watch ceremony that signifies the transfer of the United States Coast Guard to the Department of Homeland Security.

Thank you for being here this morning. As many of you may have heard, the doctors have repaired this bent chassis of mine. And although I am up walking around, my voice is still a little raspy because of a tube they stuck down my throat, so please excuse the hoarseness.

This morning is an historic occasion for both the Coast Guard and the Department of Transportation.

During its 36-year history at the Department of Transportation, the Coast Guard encountered many new challenges.

The explosion of maritime drug traffic, mass movement of illegal migrants, a new sensibility and responsibility for the environment, the threat to our ports. All of these missions came to maturity during the Coast Guard's tenure at the DOT.

And in each of those missions, as in other long-standing challenges like search and rescue and marine safety, the Coast Guard always measured up.

Admiral Collins, would you join me at the podium for a moment?

I am very proud to present the Coast Guard with a plaque to commemorate my appreciation of our time together.

Semper Paratus — Always ready.

From the first days of the Revenue Cutter Service, the precursor to the modern day Coast Guard, you have lived up to this motto.

Now you must be ready for your new challenge – working within the new Department of Homeland Security. It

won't be easy. It will take some getting used to. There will be some initial confusion. But remember, in 1967 the Coast Guard came to another newly created agency called the Department of Transportation. You seem to have done pretty well.

Yet, as you move today, you do so in response to a perilous time in our Nation's history and at a pivotal moment in the Coast Guard's history.

I believe the Nation will turn to the United States Coast Guard in a way unmatched since the Revenue Cutter Service of colonial times.

Our Nation faces a maritime threat unmatched in its capability of mass destruction. Where once the threat was illegal whiskey or rum, now it is the shipping container with a nuclear device or a biological pathogen.

Where it was once the pirate ship or U-boat that threatened our seas, our ports, and our commerce, now it is the suicide team seeking to destroy our coastal refineries, ports, and nuclear power plants.

The Nation is turning to the United States Coast Guard for protection from this maritime threat. You will be called on to protect this homeland in ways in which the blueprints are only now being developed.

Your answer must be the one you have given throughout your history:

Semper Paratus — Always ready.

Your new Secretary is ready to receive you. Men and women of the Coast Guard, serve him as well as you have served me.

As your Secretary, but perhaps more importantly as an honorary Master Chief Petty Officer, I want to talk to the Chiefs who are here today.

You and I had a special relationship, because I know the relationship you have with the officers, and enlisted men and enlisted women of the Coast Guard.

I am looking to you to be the rudder as you head into the unknown waters of the new Department of Homeland Security.

While you are working for Secretary Ridge, take note of those around you who might need a steady hand. Of all of the members of the Coast Guard, you know what change really means.

It means helping the enlisted crew with less experience to get through the trying times with positive lessons learned. And it means helping your senior leadership attain the goals that they have set.

Now let me give you chiefs some good news: Your new boss served in the United States Army as an infantry staff sergeant in Vietnam. He is a decorated combat veteran and hero. He will understand your challenges and knows your role.

And to all the men and women in the United States Coast Guard: Remember, not everyone is as fortunate to be going to the Department of Homeland Security together as a complete unit.

Some of your new co-workers have been pulled from their departments, and many will be melded with entirely new divisions. The change will be stressful and you will witness the growing pains up-close.

I challenge you to look beyond the Coast Guard and lend a helping hand wherever you see it. Show Secretary Ridge the tradition of selfless service that you have shown me.

Secretary Ridge, you have demonstrated great leadership in these months since President Bush tapped you to head the Office of Homeland Security. Today, I am delivering to you another awesome responsibility – the care of one of our Nation’s finest treasures...the United States Coast Guard.

Tom, please take good care of them. I know that they will take care of you – and all of us.

My wife, Deni, and I have appreciated each step of our journey with you – from Key West, Florida, to Portland, Maine; from Kodiak, Alaska, to San Diego, California; from our visit with the vigilant crews in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, to the deck of the Barque Eagle in Cork, Ireland.

So – men and women of the United States Coast Guard, my last act as your Secretary of the United States Coast Guard will be to make you a promise.

It is the same promise that you and I made two years ago to the people of Ireland in Cork Harbor aboard the Eagle on a bright May morning.

“As long as you are at sea, you will never be alone. And you will always have a friend to call on if you find yourselves in need.”

As I bring my watch to an end, let me thank you. We will treasure our memories with our Coast Guard family and will always carry a part of the Service in our hearts.

Thank you very much. God bless you, God bless the United States Coast Guard and God bless the Nation it serves.

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