

NACO Remarks NACON 2006

This is my last opportunity as National Commodore to personally report to you, the National Board of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Therefore, I feel it is only fitting to pause a moment and summarize where **WE** collectively started 2 years ago, how far we have come and the direction we must continue to follow.

I feel it is important for us to recognize that as members of the Auxiliary, we were and continue to be, participating in both revolutionary and evolutionary times, with our internal organization being affected by the many external changes in our world.

The changes experienced by the Auxiliary precipitated just 5 years ago by the events of September 11th, and last season's devastating hurricanes, paralleled changes in the Coast Guard.

We have both risen to the challenges and in so doing, raised the bar for both the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

In his touchstone document, Admiral Allen hit the nail on the head when he said, *"The good news for the Coast Guard is that we've never been more relevant. And yet the challenge is that we've never been more relevant. Highly visible, successful performance yields higher expectations and increased responsibilities and public trust."*

The same can be said about the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Over the past 2 years, we have had more opportunities and greater demands for service – largely rising from new or enhanced Coast Guard operations and support missions.

Yet the demands related to our traditional missions, particularly those related to Recreational Boating Safety — missions we share with the Coast Guard — did not decrease.

In fact, the total demand for our services had increased because of steady growth in Recreational Boating Safety needs and opportunities and the potentially explosive growth in Operations and Marine Safety related missions.

We recognized that we had to become an organization focused not only on maritime safety but also maritime security on our waterways.

Two years ago, we were facing new challenges and as the surge operations calmed, it became obvious that we needed to develop a set of realistic strategic plans; *we needed to “take a fix” and lay out a track line.*

It became very clear, that unless the Auxiliary could balance its missions, it wouldn't be in control of its destiny.

We recognized that the Auxiliary needed to be able to toggle back and forth successfully between sometimes competing missions without burning ourselves out.

To be effective in meeting those demands, it became clear that we needed to balance and prioritize our missions and develop a viable blueprint for the future.

That is where we started just a short 2 years ago.

Developing strategic plans was certainly not glamorous work, but was clearly essential to our continued viability. Through research we increased our understanding of our environment, our customers, our opportunities, our resources, and our challenges.

We then translated those insights into concrete actions at various levels in the Auxiliary. We established a vision, mission, and objectives and wrote our strategic plans for their accomplishment.

In addition, the districts and the national departments completed operational plans, aligned with the strategic objectives of the national plan.

I have read them all, over and over, and I am convinced, that our strategic plans, national, districts and departments, are sound and provide a “way forward” for the upcoming years, necessitating only minor course corrections as circumstances require. This has been a monumental accomplishment, for which you are all to be commended.

Completion of the strategic and operational plans positioned us well to embark on the contingency planning.

Last year your districts began to work with your Sectors to establish emergency preparedness procedures. In eight short months, every district has a plan in progress.

Furthermore, to support our readiness planning efforts and our integration with Coast Guard Forces, ADM Allen has signed the U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Policy Statement. This one page statement clearly outlines our goals and

charges the active duty and reserve components to fully engage the Auxiliary, at every command level.

This statement was a long time coming and, finally, firmly places the Auxiliary in Coast Guard mission planning and execution.

Yet to be effective, we further realized that our strategic plans had to be communicated to the membership. We posted the draft form on the NACO website, presented highlights at district meetings, and published articles in the Navigator and other publications – all part of a communications initiative to solicit feedback from our senior leadership and members at large.

Being responsive to that input, we refined and finalized the strategic plan.

We also recognized that we needed to modify our communication with the Coast Guard itself.

Today, we no longer are asking them what they need, but rather we are informing their leadership where we are headed, how we intend to get there, what we're capable of and what resources we have and need in order to carry out our missions.

This is a major change in how we conduct business.

Today, we have a plan and the way to communicate it.

Now, as never before, we need to have capable leaders, to be ready to continue to further refine and to continue ahead with the execution of our strategic plan. In practical terms this means that our leaders need to be competent, well trained, well informed, and willing to put in the necessary effort to do their jobs.

To that end, we have updated all of our leadership courses in an effort to provide our senior leadership with all the tools they need to be outstanding leaders.

Our efforts at increased professionalism are not limited to Auxiliary leaders. We are continuing the development of personal skills and competencies for individual growth and life-long learning.

In addition to our focus on leadership training and professionalism, we have also been and continue to be RESOLUTE in our commitment to be good stewards of our resources.

Among so many initiatives completed and underway, we are in the process of reviewing and recommending changes to the Auxiliary Budget Model in an effort to gain the needed capital to carry out our missions.

Additionally, we have established a partnership with the Coast Guard Foundation with a negotiated line item for Auxiliary needs in the Foundation's list of grant-eligible activities of \$10 Million.

We also continue to be RESOLUTE in our commitment to provide valued added support for Coast Guard programs and missions.

However, we no longer simply stand at the ready. Where we see a good fit for our assets and people, and most importantly, where we can take action in support of our strategic plans, we must be proactive and professional in offering our support.

As I look out into the audience, I see the people whose commitment to this organization has made our successes possible. My thanks go to the members of the National Board and Staff, who have made hard decisions ... good decisions that have helped to chart our course; who have worked diligently on our planning processes and the implementation of our programs.

We are now approaching another event that characterizes our organization. That is the election of our future leaders, from national to our flotillas, who will lead us on the next leg of our journey. These incoming leaders will inherit an organization, from the national to the flotilla level, that has a plan - knows where it is going - and how to get there.

Looking at you, I see our future elected and appointed, national and district leaders.

You will soon take the helm.

In a few months, we, **who come before you**, will be proud to pass to you an organization fully engaged in the support of safety and security on our waterways.

The Auxiliary's transformation is not complete, but we do know our destination and how to get there, and we must continue to move forward.

In the months before you take office, take time to study the strategic and tactical plans already in place and determine how best to apply your leadership talents to enhance the Auxiliary's goals and course ahead.

Much has been accomplished, but it is not time to relax and revel in our successes. Our successes merely illustrate what can be accomplished and what still needs to be done.

The sense of urgency that we began with 2 years ago, must still prevail.

We must continue to build on the passion of our members; who are the foundation of our capability. We must continue to evaluate new opportunities for program development that are consistent with our strategic plan.

Our destination is set, appropriate waypoints mark our course, and timelines dictate our speed.

The near-future challenge is to properly and fully execute the journey.

In closing, let me just say that I firmly believe, that changing the course that we have set over these past 2 years, need only be done, to avoid dangerous shoals or to take advantage of following seas.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for the tremendous opportunity and honor to be able to serve our great organization, and to serve the Coast Guard and the recreational boaters, but most importantly, to serve the membership of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Thank you and ...

... Semper Paratus