



TCCC Remarks for
National Maritime Day Observance and Wreath-Laying Ceremony
22 May 2014



General Paul J. Selva

WELCOME

Secretary Foxx, thank you for the warm welcome and for the opportunity to participate in today's event, which honors the selflessness, service and sacrifice of those brave men and women called to defend this great Nation on the high seas.

Administrator Jaenichen [JAN-i-kin], Admiral Shannon, distinguished members of the maritime community, ladies and gentlemen, as well as past, present and future mariners, America's dominance on the world's waters has been built by the determination and dedication of our merchant seafarers.

A PROUD PAST AND PRESENT



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During the birth of our Country and prior to the establishment of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard, citizen mariners disrupted British supply shipments along the east coast and across the Atlantic.

Privateer Captain Thomas Boyle's courage in seizing numerous British merchant vessels and evading capture by the enemy during the War of 1812 set the success benchmark for commercial sailors to follow.

Later in that same century, merchant mariners served with valor for both sides in the War Between the States and in the Spanish-American War, when they accompanied Admiral Dewey's fleet to victory at Manila Bay.

When the call came to assist the Allied powers in World War I, American civil mariners joined the fight and played a crucial role in defeating the Central powers, but in the process, lost 629 of their fellow seafarers and 197 ships.



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Two-plus decades later, commercial sailors ferried supplies across the globe to ensure the Allies' triumph over the Axis in World War II. Winston Churchill acknowledged the significance of mariners in securing supply routes in the Atlantic in his book *Closing the Ring*:

“The brotherhood of the sea was never more strikingly shown than in their determination to defeat the U-boat.”

Supply shipments safely succeeding on the seas, however, came at a huge cost: 1 in 26 commercial sailors perished – approximately 9,521 mariners paid the ultimate sacrifice for their Country in securing freedom for western Europe

Five years later, merchant mariners transported Soldiers from Japan to the Korean Peninsula to deter the enemy and served as the heart and soul of the bridge of ships across the



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Pacific. U.S. commercial lines accounted for 85 percent of cargo shipped to the front during the three-year in-length Korean War.

Mariners also served with honor in the Vietnam War, ferrying troops and equipment to Southeast Asia. Over an eight-year period, sixteen seafarers lost their lives and another 45 suffered injuries. In May 1975, days after South Vietnam and neighboring Cambodia fell, Khmer Rouge forces seized the SS Mayaguez transport vessel in the Gulf of Siam. Six seafarers volunteered to serve with Marines, Sailors and Airmen to successfully recapture the commercial ship.



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Supporting Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, chartered commercial and Military Sealift Command ships carried 3.5 million tons of cargo (95 percent of total) and seven million tons of fuel (99 percent of total) to the Persian Gulf from August 1990 to March 1991. Mariners significantly contributed to the freeing of Kuwait. General Colin Powell recognized the critical role commercial sailors played in the outcome of the 100-hour war:

“The American seafarer provides an essential service to the well-being of the Nation as was demonstrated so clearly during Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm...We are a maritime nation. We must be able to project power across the seas. This



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means that not only do we need a strong Navy, but a strong maritime industry as well.”

Finally, from 9/11 through early last year, U.S. Navy Military Sealift Command-administered and commercial-chartered vessels supplied 26 billion gallons of fuel and shipped 126.2 million square feet of equipment and materials to U.S. and Coalition warfighters supporting Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Mariners’ efforts ended tyranny and provided the first taste of democracy for oppressed peoples in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Today, men and women mariners are supporting retrograde and redeployment operations from Afghanistan. Like their heroic predecessors, they too have put their Country before self around the clock and around the globe.



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CRUCIAL COMPONENTS OF TEAM TRANSCOM

Merchant mariners serving on both Military Sealift Command ships and commercial vessels have equipped and supplied hundreds of thousands of U.S. military and civilian personnel placed in harm's way. These warfighters accomplished their job because the Merchant Marines, Sailors, Soldiers and Airmen always delivered.

Merchant mariners have also successfully conducted deployment, sustainment, retrograde and redeployment operations for our Command – they are directly and actively engaged in America's defense 24/7/365.



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TRANSCOM's unrivaled ability to perform its global mobility mission supporting the other eight Combatant Commanders has been achieved due to the efficient and effective operations of the U.S. Navy Military Sealift Command and America's Maritime industry, critical TEAM TRANSCOM partners.

Merchant Mariners' collaborative effort with the Ready Reserve Force has provided the Nation with a responsive sealift capability in times of both war and peace. Currently, the



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RRF consists of 46 Reduced Operational Status-5 vessels located in 15 ports across the Country always prepared to provide reliable sealift anytime, anywhere. The RRF, referred to as America's Sea Power Reliant Partner, activated 118 ships over a six-year period in support of OIF and OEF, and delivered humanitarian relief supplies following the 2010 Haiti earthquake and Hurricane Sandy in 2012. Merchant mariners' efforts directly prevented further human suffering and loss of life, as well as provided hope for the displaced.

America's merchant mariners are the backbone of TRANSCOM's promise to deliver the strategic mobility and enabling capabilities needed to achieve our Nation's objectives. Our Command also serves as the foundation of America's



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defense, and our Country's seafarers keep its base rock solid and level. Together, we deliver.

CLOSING

Today's event commemorates U.S. merchant mariners who selflessly and sacrificially defended America and freedom on the high seas. Like their fellow brothers in arms, when duty for Country called, these courageous men and women always responded and always will.

In closing, I want to share the final six lines of John B. Dykes' 1861 composition *Melita*, which later became the Navy Hymn *Eternal Father, Strong to Save*:

***Trinity of love and Power!
Our brethren shield in danger's hour;
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,
Protect them wheresoe'er they go;***



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*Thus evermore shall rise to Thee
Glad hymns of praise of land and sea*

**To our Merchant Mariners of the past, present and future:
America is forever grateful for your dedicated and diligent
service in defending Her always. Thank you and God bless
America.**