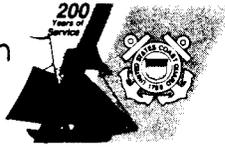


U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**United States  
Coast Guard**



Commandant  
United States Coast Guard

Washington, D.C. **20593-0001**  
Staff Symbol:  
Phone:

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**U. S. COAST GUARD**

**STATEMENT OF MASTER CHIEF OF THE COAST GUARD ALLEN W. THIELE**

**ON COAST GUARD FY 1991 BUDGET**

**BEFORE THE**

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND NAVIGATION**

**COMMITTEE ON MERCHANT MARINE AND FISHERIES**

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**24 APRIL 1990**

**BIOGRAPHIC STATEMENT  
MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER  
OF THE COAST GUARD  
ALLEN W. THIELE**

Master Chief Petty Officer Thiele enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard 25 November 1958 at Green Bay, Wisconsin and attended basic training at Cape May, NJ. Upon completion of basic training, he was transferred to New Orleans, LA and served at the Captain of the Port and Moorings Pilottown. In December 1959, he was transferred to isolated duty in the Philippines on Catanduanes LORAN. From 1961 to 1969, he served on a number of units in the Great Lakes including Coast Guard Light Station Algoma, Wisconsin; Coast Guard Cutter RARITAN, Coast Guard Station Plum Island; Coast Guard Cutter MESQUITE, and as Officer-In-Charge of Boating Safety Detachment in Two Rivers, Wisconsin. He was advanced to Chief Petty Officer in October 1968.

In mid 1969, he spent 2 years at Kauai LORAN Station in Hawaii as the Executive Petty Officer before being assigned to the High Endurance Cutter OWASCO in New London, CT. After decommissioning of the Cutter OWASCO in mid 1973, he was transferred to Governors Island, NY where he served as Officer-In-Charge of the Coast Guard Cutter TERN. In 1979 he was assigned as Officer-In-Charge of Recruiting Office Milwaukee.

In July of 1979, he was selected to serve as Command Enlisted Advisor of the Fourteenth Coast Guard District in Honolulu, HI. From 1982 to 1986 he again served as Officer-In-Charge, this time on the Coast Guard Cutter WYACONDA in Dubuque, IA.

On 1 May 1986, Master Chief Thiele was appointed as the Fifth Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard by the newly selected Commandant, Admiral Paul A. Yost, USCG.

Master Chief Thiele's decorations include the Coast Guard Commendation Medal with "Operational" device and one gold star. Coast Guard Unit Commendation with "Operational" device, Coast Guard Meritorious Unit Commendation, Eight Coast Guard Good Conduct Awards, the National Defense Service Medal, Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon with two stars, Coast Guard Restricted Duty Ribbon, Authorized to permanently wear the Officer-In-Charge Afloat and Ashore Device as well as the Coast Guard Cutterman's device.

Master Chief Thiele is a native of Manitowoc, Wisconsin. He is married to the former Nancy Llewellyn of Washington Island, Wisconsin and they have two children, Delia and Patrick.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I AGAIN WANT TO THANK YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES FOR PROVIDING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THIS SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF OUR COAST GUARD ENLISTED MEN AND WOMEN.

WHEN I LAST APPEARED BEFORE YOU, IN 1988, WE WERE FACED WITH A BUDGET THAT FELL SHORT OF OUR NEEDS BY OVER 100 MILLION DOLLARS. THE EFFECTS IT HAD ON OUR PEOPLE WITH A REDUCTION IN FORCE BY OVER 500 PERSONNEL WAS DRAMATIC.

LIKEWISE, THIS PAST YEAR HAS ALSO HAD SOME DRAMATIC EFFECTS ON OUR PERSONNEL -- THIS TIME NOT SO MUCH IN REDUCING OUR FORCE SIZE, BUT MORE NOTABLY WITH REGARD TO THEIR CONCERTED EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS ON TOP OF THEIR ALREADY HEAVY DEMANDS.

THE GROUNDING OF THE EXXON VALDEZ IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND, WAS AN ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER OF UNPRECEDENTED MAGNITUDE. THE COAST GUARD'S PRIMARY ROLE WAS COORDINATION, BUT WE ASSISTED WITH THE ACTUAL CLEANUP AS WELL. FROM ALL INDICATIONS, WE WILL BE CALLED UPON AGAIN THIS SUMMER, AS EXXON CONTINUES ITS CLEAN UP EFFORTS.

FOR OUR COAST GUARD, NEARLY ALL OF OUR SHORE STATIONS SAW SOME OF THEIR CREWS BEING SENT "TEMADD" (TEMPORARY ADDITIONAL DUTY), FOR A MINIMUM OF 30 DAYS TO AID IN THE CLEANUP. WE MAINTAINED A FORCE OF NEARLY 400 PEOPLE IN THIS 30 DAY "TEMADD" CHAIN FROM APRIL THROUGH OCTOBER. ALSO, THROUGHOUT THE WINTER MONTHS WE'VE CONTINUED TO MAINTAIN A SMALL CADRE OF PERSONNEL UP THERE TO MONITOR THE EFFECTS OF THAT SPILL.

ADDITIONALLY, SEVERAL OF OUR SHIPS SENT TO HELP WITH THAT OPERATION ENDED UP SPENDING IN EXCESS OF 270 DAYS AWAY FROM HOME DURING THIS PAST YEAR. THE EXXON VALDEZ OIL SPILL TAXED THE COAST GUARD TO A LEVEL NOT SEEN SINCE THE CUBAN BOAT LIFT OPERATION OF 1980.

BEFORE THE SUMMER WAS OVER, HURRICANE HUGO HIT THE CARIBBEAN AND THEN WENT ON TO WREAK MORE HAVOC AS IT SLAMMED INTO CHARLESTON. IT HAD BARELY PASSED THROUGH THE VIRGIN ISLANDS, WHEN ONE OF OUR SHIPS, UPON ENTERING ST. CROIX HARBOR, INDICATED TO OUR HEADQUARTERS HERE IN WASHINGTON THAT THERE WERE BANDS OF RUFFIANS PILLAGING THE ISLAND, BREAKING INTO HOMES AND BUSINESSES, AND FIGHTING WITH EACH OTHER. UPON RECEIVING AUTHORIZATION, AND UNDER DIRECTION OF THE CUTTER'S COMMANDING OFFICER, TWO ARMED BOARDING PARTIES WERE SENT ASHORE TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE OF ST. CROIX. OVER THE FOLLOWING 48 HOURS, OUR PERSONNEL EVACUATED OVER 600 CIVILIANS WHO WERE FEARFUL FOR THEIR LIVES. THIS IS NOT A NORMAL FUNCTION FOR OUR PERSONNEL. IN FACT, IT'S A JOB NO ONE COULD RECALL US EVER HAVING DONE BEFORE, THAT OF PLACING AN ARMED BOARDING PARTY ASHORE IN AN AMERICAN TERRITORY, AS THE LEAD AGENCY FOR RESTORING PEACE.

MEANWHILE, IT BECAME APPARENT THAT CHARLESTON WAS GOING TO RECEIVE THE STORM "HEAD-ON", I HEARD OF UNITS LIKE OUR SUPPORT CENTER IN NEW ORLEANS, ALONG WITH SEVERAL OTHERS, SENDING PERSONNEL AND SUPPLIES TO ARRIVE IN THE CHARLESTON AREA WITHIN HOURS AFTER THE STORM HIT. THEIR TASK WAS TO HELP CUT-AWAY

FALLEN TREES, RESECURE BUILDINGS, RESTORE ELECTRICITY, AND ASSIST WITH WHATEVER ELSE NEEDED ATTENTION. THIS THEN FREED THE LOCAL CHARLESTON UNITS SO THEY COULD CONCENTRATE ON OPERATIONS AND ATTEND TO THEIR OWN HOMES AND FAMILIES.

IF THESE TWO MAJOR INCIDENTS WEREN'T ENOUGH TO TEST OUR METTLE, ALONG CAME THE EARTHQUAKE IN SAN FRANCISCO. OUR AIRCRAFT FLEW IN ENGINEERS TO LOOK AT THE BRIDGES AND HIGHWAYS, ALONG WITH DOG TEAMS TO SEARCH FOR PEOPLE IN THE RUBBLE, AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO AREAS CUT-OFF FROM ACCESS BY ROAD. A NUMBER OF OUR FAMILIES LIVING ON TREASURE ISLAND NOT ONLY EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURAL DAMAGE TO THE HOUSING THEY WERE LIVING IN, BUT ADDITIONALLY WERE CUT-OFF FROM EXITING THE ISLAND, EXCEPT BY BOATS WE PROVIDED, DUE TO THE BRIDGE THAT COLLAPSED.

ON A SADDER NOTE, WE LOST A SHIPMATE IN THAT EARTHQUAKE, A CHIEF ON HIS WAY HOME, WHEN HIGHWAY 580 COLLAPSED, CRUSHING HIS VEHICLE.

ON ANOTHER FRONT, DISCUSSIONS ON ONE OF OUR CURRENT HIGHER VISIBILITY MISSIONS -- DRUG LAW ENFORCEMENT -- BRINGS TO MIND A YOUNG MAN I RECENTLY TALKED WITH. HE WAS PART OF A BOARDING TEAM THAT SAID THEY THOUGHT EVERYONE WAS ACCOUNTED FOR AFTER AN INITIAL SEARCH ON A SUSPECTED DRUG CARRYING VESSEL. SUDDENLY HE SAW ANOTHER PERSON STEP THROUGH A HATCH WITH HIS HANDS INSIDE HIS RAIN SLICKER PANTS. AS THIS YOUNG MAN PUT IT, "MASTER CHIEF, I WASN'T SURE IF HE HAD A GUN UNDER THERE TO BLOW ME AWAY, OR HE

WAS JUST SCRATCHING HIMSELF." TALK ABOUT YOUR SIGNIFICANT EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES.

MR. CHAIRMAN, MY INTENT IN RELATING THESE EXAMPLES WAS TO AMPLIFY THE FACT THAT THESE MISSIONS WERE ACCOMPLISHED, NOT JUST ATTEMPTED, IN ADDITION TO MAINTAINING OPERATING LEVELS IN SEARCH AND RESCUE, DRUG INTERDICTION, AIDS TO NAVIGATION, MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, AND NUMEROUS OTHER OPERATIONS WHICH I'M CERTAIN THIS COMMITTEE IS WELL AWARE OF. PROBABLY THE BEST ANALOGY I CAN GIVE IS PLUGGING A 120 VOLT APPLIANCE INTO A 240 VOLT RECEPTACLE. THE RESULT IS "OVERLOAD." THE QUESTION I HEAR ASKED MOST FREQUENTLY IS, "HOW MUCH MORE ARE WE EXPECTED TO DO WITHOUT ANY MORE PEOPLE AND THE FUNDING TO ACCOMPLISH IT?"

NEARLY EVERYTHING WE OPERATE TODAY HAS INCREASED TEN-FOLD IN TECHNICAL COMPLEXITY AND RESULTANT MAINTENANCE, WHEN COMPARED TO THE SHIPS, PLANES, AND SYSTEMS WE OPERATED 20 YEARS AGO. THIS COMPLEXITY DOES NOT AFFORD US THE LUXURY OF DOING MORE WITH LESS.

IN PART DUE TO OUR CONSTANT INCREASE IN ROLES AND MISSIONS WITH ONLY LITTLE GROWTH IN PERSONNEL AND FUNDING TO ACCOMPLISH THEM, WE HAVE IN THE PAST 4 YEARS MADE NUMEROUS CHANGES TO MEET THIS END. IN FACT, WE HAVE NEARLY RUN THROUGH THE WORDS BEGINNING WITH "RE" IN DOING THAT. WE HAVE "REALIGNED," REORGANIZED," "RESHAPED," AND "RESTRUCTURED," BUT WE HAVE NOT "RELINQUISHED" OUR "RESPONSIBILITIES." WHAT I HEAR IN THE FIELD IS REQUESTS FOR "REASSURANCE" THAT "RELIEF" IN THIS AREA IS FORTHCOMING.

AS RELAYED TO ME BY THOSE IN THE FIELD, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT WE RECEIVE THE PERSONNEL INCREASES AND FULL FUNDING IN THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET TO CONTINUE OUR EVER INCREASING TEMPO OF OPERATIONS. MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, THEY'RE COMMITTED TO THEIR MISSIONS, AND ONLY ASK FOR THE NECESSARY MEANS TO MEET THAT END.

WITH REGARD TO THEIR "QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES," AT THE TOP OF THEIR LIST IS THE AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY OF HOUSING. THERE ARE STILL NUMEROUS AREAS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WHERE THE HOUSING COSTS EXCEED THE MEMBERS' HOUSING ALLOWANCE BY MORE THAN 25%. THIS IS NOT WHAT THEY THINK WAS INTENDED AS LEGISLATIVELY MANDATED. THEY FEEL THAT THE INTENT WAS FOR THE HOUSING ALLOWANCES TO LIMIT THE AMOUNT THE MEMBER MUST PAY FOR HOUSING FROM HIS BASIC PAY, TO 15%. WE HAVEN'T SEEN THIS IN THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS, AND OUR MEMBERS ARE HOPEFUL THAT CORRECTIONS WILL BE MADE.

MEANWHILE, IN THEIR ATTEMPT TO LOCATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING, I CAN THINK OF SEVERAL LOCATIONS WHERE COAST GUARD MEN AND WOMEN COMMUTE IN EXCESS OF 100 MILES ONE WAY. ONE SUCH AREA IS BOSTON, WHERE WE HAVE MEMBERS WHOSE FAMILIES LIVE IN MAINE.

ADDITIONALLY, SINCE MANY OF OUR UNITS ARE LOCATED IN THE HIGH PRICED TOURIST AREAS, THE HOUSING AVAILABLE FOR EITHER RENTING OR FOR THE COAST GUARD TO LEASE HAS BECOME EXTREMELY LIMITED AND IN SOME LOCALITIES COST PROHIBITIVE.

ADDED TO THIS, WE ARE EXPERIENCING AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF GEOGRAPHIC BACHELORS AND BACHELORETTES WHO CHOOSE TO LEAVE THEIR FAMILIES IN AN AREA THAT MEETS THEIR BUDGET. THIS IN TURN SEPARATES FAMILIES AND ADDS TO THEIR STRESS LEVELS, CREATING MORE UNHAPPY "CAMPERS." I ALSO FEEL IT'S REFLECTED IN SOME OF OUR INABILITY TO RETAIN PEOPLE IN SOME SPECIFIC SPECIALITIES.

THE EXTENT OF THE SITUATION CAN BEST BE DEPICTED WITH THE FOLLOWING STATISTICS. AT PRESENT, WE ESTIMATE THAT 62% TO 65% OF OUR FORCE IS MARRIED. BETWEEN 1978 TO 1988 WE SAW AN INCREASE FROM 3% TO 23% OF THOSE IN PAYGRADE OF E-3 AND BELOW WHO ARE MARRIED. SINCE THEY ARE AT THE EXTREME LOW END OF THE PAY SCALE, IT ONLY ADDS TO THE PROBLEMS THEY HAVE FINDING ADEQUATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING.

AS THIS COMMITTEE IS AWARE, THERE HAS BEEN MUCH CONSTERNATION WITH REGARD TO THE VARIABLE HOUSING ALLOWANCE PAID TO THOSE LIVING IN HIGH COST AREAS. ONE OF THE FACTORS OUR MEMBERS ENCOUNTER IS IF THEY ARE ASSIGNED TO A HIGH COST AREA, THEY BEGIN DRAWING THE VHA FOR THAT AREA, ONLY TO HAVE A REVIEW DONE THE FOLLOWING YEAR WHICH IN TURN DECREASES THIS ALLOWANCE. THEIR CONCERN IS THAT THEY END UP WITH THE SAME HOUSING COSTS WHILE RECEIVING LESS MONEY WITH WHICH TO PROVIDE HOUSING FOR THEIR FAMILIES.

ANOTHER AREA OF CONCERN THEY HAVE IS THE CONTINUAL SPECULATION THAT THEIR MEDICAL COSTS UNDER CHAMPUS WILL AGAIN BE READJUSTED.

SOME OF THE LATEST PROPOSALS CALL FOR 100 PERCENT INCREASE IN THE FAMILY DEDUCTIBLE FROM THE PRESENT \$50.00 FOR ONE DEPENDENT OR \$100.00 PER FAMILY, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY INCREASING THEIR SHARED AMOUNT FROM 20% TO 25%.

IN MY OPINION, THE PRESENT CHAMPUS PRIME PROGRAM WHICH HAS BEEN AVAILABLE IN BOTH CALIFORNIA AND HAWAII, IF MADE AVAILABLE NATIONWIDE, WOULD PROVIDE THEM THE GREATEST MEDICAL BENEFITS FOR A COST THAT WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN THEY NOW PAY UNDER THE STANDARD CHAMPUS PROGRAM. OUR MEMBERS FEEL THAT ANY ASSISTANCE YOU MIGHT RENDER IN MAKING THIS POSSIBLE WOULD SEND A STRONG MESSAGE THAT "SOMEONE DOES CARE."

ON A FINAL NOTE, OUR RETIREES AND THOSE WHO ARE NEARING RETIREMENT, ARE GREATLY CONCERNED BY THE PRESENT PROPOSAL WHICH PROPOSES "FREEZING" THE COST OF LIVING FOR OUR RETIREES THIS YEAR AND THEN COLA MINUS ONE FOR THE OUT YEARS. OUR RETIREES FEEL THAT A FREEZE WOULD BREAK A TRUST THEY HAD UNDER RECENT LEGISLATION STATING THAT RETIREES WOULD RECEIVE FULL COLAS. ADDITIONALLY, I HAVE HEARD RESERVATIONS THAT IF THIS PROPOSAL PASSES IN ITS PRESENT STATE, WE MIGHT SEE SOME LESSENING OF DESIRE BY OUR YOUNGER SAILORS TO REMAIN IN THE SERVICE AS A CAREER. MANY MEMBERS POINT OUT THAT IT WAS IN 1986 THAT THE FORMULA IN DETERMINING RETIREMENT FIGURES WAS CHANGED FOR THE SECOND TIME SINCE 1980, IN EFFECT CREATING THREE DIFFERENT RETIREMENT FORMULAS WITH EACH ONE PRODUCING LESS TO THE MEMBERS.

IN SUMMARY, WE HAVE HAD A BANNER YEAR AND ALL INDICATIONS POINT TO CONTINUED TOP-NOTCH PERFORMANCE THROUGHOUT THIS DECADE, BUT THERE IS A REAL CONCERN AMONG THOSE IN THE FIELD. THEY FEEL THE PERCEPTION HERE IN WASHINGTON IS THAT "THEY HAVE DONE SO MUCH FOR SO LONG WITH SO LITTLE," THAT THEY ARE NOW "QUALIFIED TO DO EVERYTHING WITH LITTLE OR NOTHING."

RECENTLY ONE OF YOUR COLLEAGUES NOTED THAT THE COAST GUARD GIVES THE TAXPAYER THEIR "BIGGEST BANG FOR THE BUCK."

I AGREE WITH THAT, BUT I'M CONCERNED THAT THERE'S A LIMIT TO THEIR RESILIENCE TO KEEP BOUNCING BACK AND DOING JUST THAT...

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SET FORTH MY PERCEPTIONS OF THE "VIEW FROM THE FIELD." I'D BE PLEASED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE.