

Remarks of VADM Eduardo R Alvarez during the Change of Command Ceremony of the Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary on June 20, 2008 at Kachina Room of Century Park Hotel

Our beloved PCG Commandant, VADM Wilfredo Tamayo, past PCG Commandants, other PCG and PCGA flag officers, special mention to those who came from the various provinces to attend this special occasion and our command meeting held earlier this afternoon; my predecessor, VADM Joselito Aseniero; other colleagues in PCGA including the very encouraging attendance from NCR-CL led by my good friend, Commo Danilo Cabalde; other guests including my ever supportive wife, Mariz, and the rest of my family. Good evening.

I now stand before you as the newly installed PCGA National Director, the new official designation of the head of the PCGA on the national level, based on the new PCG Circular released last month. Thus, from hereonwards, let us use the title “Director” rather than “Commander” for consistency. Our eleven District Commanders will now be called District Directors, while our Squadron Commanders will now be known as Squadron Directors. Other than the nomenclature, our function remains the same. The only difference though is that the District Directors will now report directly to the PCG District Commanders on operational matters, while the Squadron Directors will now report directly to the Station Commanders. Please make sure though that my office is furnished copies of your accomplishment reports.

In a meeting with VADM Wilfredo Tamayo and RADM Ramon Liwag earlier this month, we agreed to form a working committee to review and rationalize the existing Organizational Structure, in the light of the the discussions we had in Dakak, particularly on the new role of the National Director especially on the operational activities of the various Districts. I have named RADM Adonis Donato, RADM Nestor Levanza and Commo George Chua to represent the PCGA in the Working Committee, while VADM Tamayo named RADM Ramon Liwag, Commo Luis Tuason and Cdr Rudyard Somera to said working committee.

My thrust during my two year term as National Director is to have a more relevant PCGA, covering the entire country. We have been known as the multiplier of the PCG. With their manpower at 5,000 and ours at 19,000, we really can make a difference. The problem is that we are quite selective on the areas we cover. If you will recall, we were about 4,000 strong in NCR-CL when I assumed the position of District Commander on June 1, 2002. I was then challenged by the former Commandant, Admiral Danilo Abinoja, who was then the PCG District Commander for NCR-CL to cover my entire area of responsibility which is from south of Pangasinan to north of Batangas. He said during my first command meeting that we were quite active but only in Metro Manila. I was happy to report to him that in ten months, we were able to support all the six stations and eighteen detachments throughout NCR-CL with a squadron directly supporting the needs of a particular station or detachment. If I was able to do this, I am sure that such can be replicated by our eleven District Directors within the next twelve months. My request, therefore, to our hardworking District Directors is to identify all the Stations and Detachments in their respective areas and see to it that they are matched with a counterpart squadron in the area within the next twelve months.

As you are aware, our mandate is to support the Philippine Coast Guard in the areas of Maritime Safety, Marine Environmental Protection and Maritime Security. Thus, I am hoping that the needed resources, whether equipment or skilled personnel, are available at the District level for easy deployment to anywhere in their respective areas of responsibilities. I have designated RADM Nestor Levanza as Director for our Rescue and Disaster Response Group. His primary responsibility is to see to it that we have the needed resources at District level to be able to fulfill our mandate stated earlier. For example, in the event of another oil spill, like what we had in Guimaras in 2006, the particular District, say Western Visayas, should be able to supply the needed MAREP equipment and manpower skills, hopefully without the need for assistance from another District. Of course, it depends on the nature and magnitude of the emergency.

Before we can do all of the above, I want an inventory of our personnel nationwide, as well as our land, water and air assets which can be available for such emergencies. I am, therefore, asking all our District Directors to submit such inventory to my office before July 31, 2008, and I am designating Commo George Chua to prepare the necessary forms for dissemination to the Districts before end on this month. At the end of this exercise, we will know whether we are really 19,000 strong as we always claim. While we are discussing our manpower resources, I am also requesting all the District Directors to activate all the Squadrons under their command, even if we have to change the respective Squadron Directors. And in line with my earlier request to cover your entire territorial coverage, please organize new squadrons in areas where we have no presence yet.

This afternoon, we have released copies of the maiden issue of our PCGA newsletter to our flag officers, including our District Directors for circulation to the Squadrons in their respective areas. This newsletter, which was made possible through the hard work and dedication of Capt Alvin Co, will be published bi-monthly or every two months. If you recall, Capt Co was responsible for my "Mainsail" publication when I was still District Commander of NCR-CL. Due to the high cost of printing, we could only print enough for every squadron to have a copy each. You can, however, read said newsletter in toto through our website earlier set up by Commo Harold Wolf, which he incidentally personally funded. Try accessing our website as often as you can. Our address is www.pcgaux.com. District Directors and Squadron Directors are also encouraged to download our newsletter and print copies for your members. District Directors and Squadron Directors are also encouraged to contribute news articles for inclusion in our publication. By doing so, you not only promote your worthwhile activities, but you can also give ideas to other Districts or Squadrons to replicate in their respective areas. Districts are also encouraged to prepare their respective newsletters as the newsletter is a very good form of communication. I had my "Beacon" when I was a Squadron Commander of the 106th and my "Mainsail" when I was District Commander of NCR-CL, and mind you, they were appreciated very much. When I attended the U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary National Convention last year, our counterparts there said

that they miss the “Mainsail”, which they received religiously during my incumbency as District Commander. Talking about the U. S. NACON, it will be held this year on August 21 to 23 at Orlando, Florida, and all those interested to join our delegation may approach Commo Harold Wolf during dinner.

The Districts and Squadrons are also encouraged to conduct regular clean-up activities in your respective areas, possibly every other month and not only during the world clean-up program every September. You are also directed to assist the Philippine Coast Guard in manning the piers in your respective areas on peak seasons like during Holy Week and the week of All Saints’ Day, without any need of specific instructions. As a practice, visit your counterpart PCG District Commanders or Station Commanders or Detachment Commanders a month or so prior to these periods and ask for directives for your involvement. Also, District Directors are now requested to submit accomplishment reports to the PCGA National Headquarters on a monthly basis starting from the month of July which I hope to receive within the first fifteen days of the following month, preferably with pictures. Such will also be the basis of own accomplishment report to the Philippine Coast Guard. It is unfortunate that we have done so much in the past but very few were documented. This we hope to correct.

Finally, I am urging our District Directors to institute discipline among our members particularly on the wearing of the correct uniforms, as well as attendance and punctuality during meetings and activities. I am glad that we started on time this evening, and that almost all are in our prescribed undress white uniform, except that some were still wearing your name plate on your left pocket. Please be advised that we have already moved our name plate to our right pocket since late last year, following that of the PCG as approved during our Boracay convention. During our 24th National Convention in Dakak last month, our Guest of Honor, Undersecretary Ma. Elena Bautista was so observant, and called our attention on different type of shoulder boards worn on our service blue uniform, with some wearing shoulder loops instead of the prescribed shoulder board. She was more observant on the ladies with some shirts tucked in and

others tucked out, and also the different type of shoes worn by the ladies. It was also unfortunate that we started the second day of the proceedings quite late, which made her wait. Too bad that USEC Bautista is not here this evening to witness that we started our meeting on time. She wanted to be with us tonight, but is now on an official travel mission in London with RADM Ramon Liwag.

Now, can I get your assurance that next time we meet, and even in your regular district command meetings or squadron meetings, you will start your meetings on time and you will wear the prescribed uniform up to the smallest detail?

Thank you very much for your cooperation which I will definitely need during the next two years. Together, we can have a very relevant PCGA which we all can be proud of.

Allow me to end this inaugural address with two favorite quotes. The first is from Jin Kwon, who wrote that “One piece of log creates a small fire, adequate to warm you up, add a few more pieces to blast an immense bonfire, large enough to warm up your entire circle of friends; needless to say that individuality counts but team work dynamites”. Let us prove to everyone that we, PCGA members, are one TEAM.

Finally, let me paraphrase for PCGA a quote from a great leader I admire, President John F. Kennedy, which has been my guiding principle whenever I am tasked to lead an organization like now.

He said: “I can imagine no more rewarding a career. And any man who may be asked in this century what he did to make his life worthwhile, I think can respond with a good deal of pride and satisfaction: ‘I served in the Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary’.”

Maraming salamat po.