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## **Rhonda Fleming-Makell**

### **Lieutenant Commander, USCG (Ret.)**



LCDR Fleming-Makell, a regular commissioned officer in the United States Coast Guard, completed 20 years of military service for her country this year. In addition, she is the first African-American woman commissioned officer to earn a retirement in the history of the United States Coast Guard, nearly 30 years after women first started serving their country in this capacity in 1976.

LCDR Fleming-Makell's final assignment as a Law Enforcement Specialist was served within the Office of Law Enforcement at Coast Guard Headquarters in Washington, DC. The U. S. Coast Guard is the nation's premier maritime law enforcement agency and has broad, multi-faceted jurisdictional authority. LCDR Fleming-Makell was responsible for development of Coast Guard-wide law enforcement policy, program management for several Department of Homeland Security initiatives, Maritime Law Enforcement Schools, Law Enforcement Councils and maintenance of a \$1M budget. As Program Manager of several Homeland Security initiatives, she successfully implemented the first official Coast Guard Canine Program since World War II. Most recently, on March 8, 2004, her efforts with the Canine Program recently thwarted a potential terrorist situation when the Coast Guard Canine Team, searching with ATF, found Improvised explosive devices such as pipe bombs, electric, and non-electric blasting caps in a house. Her leadership of the Coast Guard Canine Program certainly prevented life and property casualties usually associated with such explosive devices.

In June of 1984, she enlisted in the United States Coast Guard while still in college. Upon completion of Coast Guard Recruit Training at Cape May, New Jersey, she returned to school in Orangeburg, South Carolina to complete her undergraduate degree. LCDR Fleming-Makell is a 1986 graduate of the Coast Guard Officer Candidate School (OCS) located in Yorktown, Virginia. After graduation from OCS, she was assigned to the Third Coast Guard District as the Human Relations Counselor in

New York City and became a qualified trainer and counselor in the areas of Human Relations and Civil Rights.

Upon completion of her tour as Human Relations Counselor, she was assigned to Coast Guard Support Center New York as the Assistant Special Services Officer. Shortly after, LCDR Fleming-Makell was stationed at Coast Guard Group New York. As a junior officer, she was assigned to the operations division, successfully qualifying as a Duty Officer responding to Search and Rescue (SAR), Law Enforcement, and Marine Safety emergencies. Other duties included, but were not limited to, Assistant Operations Officer, Classified Material Control Officer, and Communications Officer.

In 1991, her next duty assignment was the Coast Guard Command Center in Washington, DC. As Operations Officer, she was responsible for the collection, dissemination, and reporting of all oil spills in the United States. Following this tour in 1994, LCDR Fleming-Makell was assigned as Assistant Operations Officer at one of the busiest units in the Coast Guard, "Group Miami".

As Assistant Operations Officer, she was directly responsible for all delegated tasks related to collection, evaluation, and dissemination of operational tasking/assignments, and information to four multi-mission Stations, two Aids-to-Navigation Teams, nine patrol boats, and one buoy tender. Duties included, Search and Rescue, Law Enforcement, Illegal Migration Operations, and Aids-to-Navigation. During her tenure here at Group Miami she conducted many joint law enforcement operations with the Customs Service, FBI, etc., successfully seizing millions of dollars worth of cocaine, marijuana and other illegal contraband. Three years later, in September of 1997, LCDR Fleming-Makell was transferred to the Seventh Coast Guard District.

As the Chief of District Personnel, she managed personnel support programs for all Seventh District units, in an area covering the entire Caribbean basin and points between the North and South Carolina border and the eastern most portions of the Gulf of Mexico, which included but was not limited to, five Group units, five Marine Safety Office's, four Air Stations, 25 patrol boats, 20 Multi-Mission stations, eight cutters, four buoy tenders, 9 Aids-to-Navigation Teams, and one LORAN Station. Upon completion of this tour, she was assigned to Coast Guard Headquarters, Office of Law Enforcement in Washington D.C., for her final tour in August 2001.

LCDR Fleming-Makell is a 1985 graduate of S.C. State University. She earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology with a minor in Special Education. In addition, LCDR Fleming-Makell successfully completed a Masters of Business Administration with a concentration in Technology Management from the University of Phoenix and is a member of Delta Sigma Theta, Sorority, Inc.

For years, this woman has stood out among many as she has always found the time to help and mentor those coming up behind her. In fact, LCDR Fleming-Makell was honored in an article titled, "Not Just a Blue Suit," featured in the March 1993 edition of *Essence Magazine*. In addition, her retirement ceremony was featured in the May 24th, 2004 issue of *Jet* magazine. Furthermore she was most recently honored with the Portraits in Black Award from the internationally acclaimed Union Temple Baptist Church in Washington, DC. Other prominent figures receiving this award included the likes of Nelson Mandela of South Africa.

A native of the Carolina's, LCDR Fleming-Makell was born in Morganton, North Carolina and raised in Greenville, South Carolina. She is the daughter of William and Earlene Fleming, of Greenville, South Carolina. LCDR Fleming-Makell resides in Port Tobacco, Maryland with her husband LCDR William J. Makell Jr. and their three children; Branden, William, and Selena.

Career accolades and military awards include the following: Coast Guard Commendation Medal, 2 Coast Guard Achievement Medals, 2 National Defense Service Medals, Humanitarian Service Medal, 6 Coast Guard Special Operations Ribbons, 2 Coast Guard Unit Commendations, 3 Coast Guard Meritorious Team Awards, Department of Transportation Secretary's Gold Medal, Bicentennial Unit Commendation, and the Coast Guard Pistol Sharpshooter Ribbon.