

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
USS AMERICA Commissioning
11 October 2014

Thank you Harry Harris, for one of the most amazing introductions that I've ever had. I only wish two people were here, my mom and my dad. My father would have been very proud, and my mother would have believed every word of it. Mr. Mayor, from this great city, Captain of the USS AMERICA, to our distinguished platform guests, I want to take just a moment of personal privilege, as a couple of speakers have done, to recognize Secretary and Mrs. George Shultz. Former Secretary of State, former head of Protocol for the city of San Francisco, and maybe most importantly, Marine George Shultz.

And I also want to recognize a couple more people. One is our former Deputy Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, thank you for being here today. And my family, my wife Lynne and our daughters Annie and Kate, because today is my birthday. And I want to thank all of you for coming to celebrate with me! My only question is what do we do next year to top this?

I couldn't be more honored, more pleased to be here with the magnificent sponsor of this magnificent ship, Lynne Pace. And with Congressmen Rogers and Amodei, with the people of San Francisco, with the ship builders of USS AMERICA, and the shipbuilders of America, and with all of you. This city, this area, has been great friends and longtime supporters of our Navy and Marine Corps. We have a long and storied history.

And to Lynne Pace, we have so few opportunities to recognize the deep contributions our military families make. So, thank you for all you have done with your husband, General Pete Pace, over a very long career. We look forward to more decades of service as you sponsor AMERICA. Now, Lynne Pace I have to tell you that Lynne Mabus is here today to pick up some tips on being the sponsor of a big deck amphib because she is the sponsor of the next big deck amphib, LHA-7, the TRIPOLI. And Pete Pace, I'm here to pick up some tips on how to be the supportive spouse in these ceremonies.

The United States Navy and United States Marine Corps are so closely joined with this great nation that our Founders enshrined the relationship in the Constitution. Our Constitution requires Congress to provide and maintain a Navy. Then, as now, our Navy and Marine Corps uniquely provide presence around the world. We are where it matters, when it matters. And we provide that presence, in peacetime no less than in wartime. Our sea services give our leaders options in times of crises no matter what those crises may be. Because we come from the sea, we do not take up an inch of anyone's sovereign territory, we carry everything we need and we can stay for a very, very long time.

The commissioning of AMERICA is an extension of our American spirit. This ship, forged in a shipyard in my home state of Mississippi, with components and systems and parts manufactured all across this great country, is a symbol of the long and historic links between the citizens of this country and the Navy and Marine Corps who defend them. Having a ship named AMERICA, sailing the world's oceans, defending freedom and peace, and helping those in need, as we have for more than two centuries, is crucial to America and to our Navy and Marines Corps.

As Secretary Stackley said, this vessel we commission today is the most advanced of its kind anywhere in the world; its technology absolutely unmatched. From the fuel-saving hybrid drive, to the advanced sensors and weapon systems, to the Ospreys and Joint Strike Fighters she will soon be carrying. American technological innovation and American manufacturing skill have always been powerful advantages. They are represented in AMERICA by the more than a thousand shipyard workers who built her. Their dedication, their expertise, their incredibly hard work has fashioned from steel and wire and electronics this premier platform that is AMERICA.

As Admiral Harry Harris said, we have to have these ships. Quantity becomes a quality all its own. And I am proud that we have arrested the slide in the size of our fleet, and that we are growing that fleet to meet our global responsibilities. Giving the namesake of this ship, America, what we need as a country, to do what America does.

The USS AMERICA will participate in missions all around the globe, working with our partners and our friends, and creating new operational concepts. She will serve our nation for decades, across the wide expanses of the Pacific, on patrol, taking the name AMERICA around the world.

I've had the privilege to be on AMERICA several times in the past few months. The first was in Huntington Ingalls Pascagoula when I was there for the keel-laying of the TRIPOLI. The next time was when I joined her in the Straits of Magellan at the very southern tip of Chile. And the fact that USS AMERICA, went around the Americas, going from Pascagoula to San Diego and San Francisco, showed the bond of these two great continents. And the reception that this ship

got, her Captain, her crew, her Marines, was spectacular. Many times the Sailors and Marines aboard ships like AMERICA are the only Americans that people from outside this country will ever meet. And they are amazing representatives of our country.

AMERICA will deploy with a Marine Expeditionary Unit aboard, those Marines who embody the long history of our Marine Corps. That history written in blood and sacrifice and with an ethos of honor, courage, and commitment that is always here, always around us. The epic battles and the roll call of Marine heroes are never far from our memory. The names of those battles, like searing poetry, echo down through the years and generations. Belleau Wood, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Chosin, Hue.

The Marines serving today are rightful heirs to the Marines who preceded them. Their skill, their courage, their sacrifice, their warrior spirit are equal to those of any Marines who ever served. The names of Al Anbar and Helmand will be inscribed in that illustrious Marine history.

Today there are almost 40,000 Marines forward deployed on ships in the Pacific and on the shores of the Black Sea. They are joined by our Sailors in the world's oceans. They are there, far from home, far from family, standing the watch, doing everything from combat operations to special operations to partnership building to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. And they are performing magnificently. If you ever become concerned about America, go talk to a young Sailor or Marine, you will not be concerned any more.

Something that I am reminded of and is reinforced for me every day I serve as Secretary is that although our technology gives us an edge, the heart of our Navy and Marine Corps and the thing that gives us the greatest advantage, are the skilled, the dedicated, the always courageous, always faithful, United States Sailor and United States Marine.

Today, as you look around, in this crowd you see the veterans who have served our nation in far flung places. From the Veterans of World War II's Greatest Generation, to our current Great Generation, they join us here today to honor this ship and all she stands for. You also see our Sailors and Marines in uniform today. You see them today, but most of the time you don't see them. Because when they are doing their job they are usually a long, long way from home.

Today USS AMERICA joins our Away Team. It is fitting and proper, that when these Sailors and Marines are home, when they are with us and they are here, to remember them and to thank them. Thank them for giving us that presence. Thank them for the sacrifice that they and they families make every single day. And thank them for keeping us safe every day of the year.

Now it is time to commission this great new ship, to carry the name of our nation and represent our values, so the crew can take her to sea and can defend this nation, just as their predecessors have done for 239 years.

We remain, as the Marine Corps motto says, Semper Fideles, Always Faithful,

And from the Navy, Semper Fortis. Always Courageous.

Thank you.