

Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus
USS DETROIT Christening
Marinette, Wisconsin
18 October 2014

(Greeting to Guests... Inaudible)

Having been a governor and watching them work while in office and after they left office in support of this program has been truly inspiring. So thank you so much.

And thank you to our senators and our congressmen here today. We would not be here without the support that you have given to the Navy and to the Marines. America is safer and better because of what you have done.

And to our sponsor Barbara Levin. You know, we stood on the banks of the Riverwalk in Detroit not long ago naming the Detroit, naming her a sponsor. She's already become a member of that first crew, one of the "plankowners," and she'll have a special relationship with this crew. And you've already heard her husband tell about how engaged she has become now with the crew and with this ship.

And I want to take a moment to say something about Senator Carl Levin. He is probably what every public servant aspires to be. He is aggressive and successful in representing America and its constituents. But he always does it with grace and good humor and civility. His moral and ethical compass is always true. We in the Navy, you in Michigan and we in America are incredibly fortunate to have his service.

I told the Senator earlier that my wife Lynne is the sponsor of the USS TRIPOLI and that one of the things I'm trying to get today is tips from him on how to be a supportive spouse in these ceremonies.

America and the Navy and the Marine Corps are so closely joined with this great nation that our founders enshrined that relationship in the Constitution. Our Constitution requires Congress to provide and to 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 all the time, in peacetime no less than in times of war.

Maritime forces, those that operate from the sea, are incredibly flexible and responsive. They provide our country's leaders with options in times of crisis. Today our Marines fighting in the villages of Afghanistan, to Navy pilots over Iraq and Syria, to the Sailors building hospitals to fight Ebola in West Africa, we are operating around the world. That is presence. And because we come from the sea, we do not take up an inch of anybody else's sovereign territory, we bring what we need and we can stay for a very long time.

But to do this, we have to have the right platforms. These ships, aircraft, submarines and vehicles are critical to allow our Sailors and Marines to do their jobs. Shipbuilding is central to our ability to protect America. The shipbuilders are the backbone of that protection.

You've heard about this great warship. Less than a year ago we were here for the keel-laying, and it's pretty amazing to see what's happened in 11 months. One day soon this ship's crew will take her out across the great lakes, through the waters sailed by the heroes of the War of 1812 and head toward the open sea.

The ship you see behind us is a modern marvel. As is this incredible shipyard that built it. We have serial production now underway here in and in Alabama, for the other variant of LCS [Littoral Combat Ships]. They are launching on time, and these ships that are coming out are costing less than half of what the first ship of its class cost. It makes it a good deal for Marinette, a good deal for Mobile, a good deal for the American people and the taxpayers.

Nearly 3000 craftsmen have worked on this ship. Both here in Marinette and all around the country. That partnership between uniformed members of our Navy, our Navy civilians, industry, shipyard workers and the American people, is one of the greatest strengths of our system.

As you've heard, we've arrested the decline in our fleet, we've turned it around. Some of the numbers that I'm most proud of are that in the five years before I became Secretary, we put 27 ships under contract. Not enough to arrest the decline in our fleet. Not enough to keep our industrial base solid. I have been Secretary now for five years and we have put 70 ships under contract. We will get to a fleet to 310 ships before the end of this decade.

We have heard so much about Detroit and what it represents. I get to do a lot of cool things, this is a cold thing, but I get to do a lot of cool things and naming our ships and their sponsors is one of them. Detroit represents American workers, it represents the motor city, but it represents as you heard, what President Roosevelt called the Arsenal of Democracy - the American spirit of hard work and patriotism and perseverance.

USS DETROIT will carry these values around the world. It is tailor-made for our 21st century operations and maritime security missions, from the wide expanses of the Pacific to the littorals of Africa. She is very fast, she is very agile, she is modular, has a shallow draft, and will allow us to work in many, many different ways. In fact as you've heard, her sister ship the FREEDOM ended nearly a yearlong deployment to Singapore and in the way this new ship works, the crews flew in to man the ship, the ship stayed where it is.

This ship will serve for decades, and her crew will carry the name DETROIT, to far flung places. And many times that crew will be the only Americans that people in those countries will ever meet.

American technology has always led the world, from our first six frigates, through the days of the Ironclads, to today's nuclear powered subs and carriers, to innovative ships like DETROIT, they give us a combat advantage.

But the thing that gives us our real combat advantage, the thing that sets us apart from the rest of the world are the skilled, the dedicated, the courageous, the faithful, United States Sailors and United States Marines.

You see a few of these Sailors with us today, and you see some of the veterans of our wars of the past, but mostly you do not see them. We are America's Away Team and when our Navy and Marine Corps are doing their jobs they are usually a long, long way from home. So today, when you see someone in uniform, take this opportunity to thank them. And if you ever become concerned about America, go talk to a Sailor or a Marine and you will not be concerned any more.

So now, I realize everybody's cold, it's time to christen this incredible new ship, and have her sponsor provide this tradition in the life of the ship so the crew can take it to sea and defend our nation, just as their predecessors have done for 239 years.

Semper Fortis. **ALWAYS** Courageous.