

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
Address to the Harvard Institute of Politics  
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It's great to be back here. And again, I want to thank the people in uniform, the people who have served this country in various roles, whether in uniform or not. And I'm only going to pick out one or two people in the audience. President Faust said 40 years ago I graduated from Harvard Law School. Last week, my daughter Elisabeth was accepted into the class of 2019 at Harvard Law School. And she is here today.

When President Faust and I signed the memorandum of agreement to bring Naval ROTC back to Harvard, after an absence of almost 40 years, one of the quotes that was there that afternoon was by Sir William Francis Butler, who said: "A nation that draws too broad a distinction between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its wars fought by fools." Because of the connection between Harvard and our military, we will never become such a nation.

Forty years – more than 40 years ago now – Vietnam was almost literally tearing this country apart. And I came to Harvard, to Harvard Law School, immediately after getting out of the Navy. And those two institutions were critical in my formation and the formation of so many other people. And they were – there was no connection then. The ROTC connection had been broken. Students were against the war, and understandably so. But one of the things that has happened in the decades that have passed is that institutions and, more importantly, the American people have learned to separate the warrior from the war. And while we may have profound disagreements over when is the proper use of force and military might, of applications, we never lose our respect for and our gratitude for those who are willing to wear the uniform, because as President Faust said, fewer than 1 percent of America wears the uniform at all. And that's active duty, reserves, national guard, everything.

And so it's not like it was when I was growing up or President Faust, who's much younger than I am, but was growing up, when everyone knew people in the military or who had been in the military. It was almost unheard of that one of your parents hadn't been active in World War II. Both of mine were. My dad was in the Navy. My mom was an auditor for the Marine Corps during that time. But as time has passed, and we have gone to an all-volunteer service, and the percentage has shrunk and the draft is gone. And so you have to volunteer. You have to want to serve. You have to raise your hand and say: Send me. The connection between our society – our democratic society and those that protect it has become increasingly tenuous and sometimes increasingly frayed.

And that is dangerous in a democracy. That is not a good trend. And it was for that reason that – it was one of the first things I did after I was sworn into this office, was to call President Faust and say, can we get Naval ROTC back at this iconic institution? And her response was immediate and positive. And she said, all we have to do is repeal "don't ask, don't

tell,” and the way would be opened forward. That happened two years later. And good to her word, shortly after that, we brought Naval ROTC back to Harvard.

And I think that it was a very good prerequisite that “don’t ask, don’t tell” had to fall. You should not be judged on who you love, or the color of your skin, or your gender. You should be judged on whether you can do the job, whether you can perform the mission for the United States military.

And I was, yesterday, almost at exactly this time, I was at Camp Pendleton in California. I was talking to a thousand Marines. Most of them were brand-new Marines. Right out of boot camp. They were going through the school of infantry there. And I was talking to them about gender integration in the military. And how if you set standards, if those standards are job-related, if you do not relax those standards, then gender becomes irrelevant. Why should it matter? The only thing that matter is can you do that Marine job? Can you do that task?

And every time, every time we have broadened our military, we have become stronger. When the military was fully integrated in the late ’40s, we became a stronger military. When we began to recruit women in large numbers in the 1980s, we became a stronger military. When we repealed “don’t ask, don’t tell,” we became a stronger military. And when we opened every billet and every service in the Navy and the Marine Corps, to include ground combat and SEALs and infantry, to women, we became a stronger military.

A more diverse force is a stronger force. You do not want people with the same mindset, you do not want people with the same background, you do not want people that think the same way. You will become too predictable. You will become too homogenous. You will become predictable in your thinking.

And one of the things that came out of the Marine test to see whether women should be in ground combat was there was an obstacle course, and there’s an eight-foot wall. And when the men went through it, they just kept going, one at a time, until they got over the eight-foot wall. The first woman that came had trouble getting over, so all the women came and helped her get over, and then they helped one another get over. That’s the kind of thinking – and somebody’s going to say at some point, why are we going over this wall? Why don’t we go around it?

We’ve got to have that diversity of thought. And that’s why I’m so happy that the ROTC is back at Harvard. Harvard trails only West Point and Annapolis in Medal of Honor recipients. In 1917, the Boston Globe said Harvard is a war college because so many of its students were preparing to go to World War I. Go to Memorial Hall. Look at the names of the fallen. Go to Langdell at the Law School on the second floor. Look at the names of the law students and law graduates who fell in defense of this country, and you will see that close, close tie which was broken for far too long, which is now come back together.

I’m going to talk just for a moment about the Navy and the Marine Corps. And we are living today in a maritime century. It sounds almost quaint. It sounds historic. When you think of maritime centuries, you think of great British fleets of the early 1800s. You think of the explorers of 4(00) or 500 years ago. But this is a maritime century. Ninety percent of trade, \$9 trillion a year goes by sea. Ninety-five percent of all the data that we do over our cellphones,

through the Internet, goes under the sea. Eighty percent of the population of the Earth lives within 60 miles of the sea.

And what the Navy and Marine Corps uniquely give this country is presence, being not in the right place at the right time, but the right place all the time. We get on station faster, we stay longer, we take whatever we need with us. And because we operate off American ships, which are sovereign American territory, we don't have to ask anybody's permission to get the job done. The best example of that is when the President made the decision to strike ISIS in the summer of 2014, we had a carrier on station in less than 24 hours. And for 54 days – 54 days – we were the only strike option. And it wasn't because we didn't have other aircraft in the region. We did. We had a lot. It was because the countries those aircraft were in would not let them take off armed to strike. We didn't have to ask.

The way we get that presence – and you see it every day on your Twitter feed or on television, for those of you who are technologically un-advanced like I am (laughter) – you see what we're doing with that presence, whether it's freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, whether it is fighting Ebola in West Africa, whether it is striking ISIS in the Middle East, whether it's responding to an embassy crisis almost anywhere in the world, or whether it's delivering humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to places as far-flung as Nepal and the Philippines.

So the way we get that presence and the way I've tried to organize my thinking about the Navy is through four other Ps – people, platforms, power, partnerships. And I want to talk about the people and the partnerships the most. I'm going to skip a little lightly over platforms and power. But on platforms, in 2001 the U.S. Navy had 316 ships. Seven years later, after one of the great military buildups in our history, we were down to 278 ships. The Navy put 41 ships under contract during those seven years. It wasn't enough to keep our fleet from getting much smaller, and it wasn't enough to keep our shipyards open and healthy.

I've been Secretary now for seven years – the longest, by the way, since World War I. In those seven years, we have put 84 ships under contract. And we've done so with a 20-percent smaller top line. Quantity has a quality all its own. We will get back to where we need to be, which is 308 ships, by 2021. It takes a long time to build a ship. It takes a long time to turn around a fleet. It takes a long time to regrow and to get the skills back to build these ships. We haven't done it at the expense of aircraft. We've bought 40 percent more aircraft during the same time as well.

On power, energy, power, fuel can be used as a weapon. You only have to look at what Russia did in Crimea or the Ukraine, or what they tried to do to Europe before the price of oil collapsed, to see it. I didn't want that weapon used against us. So in 2009, I set some fairly ambitious energy goals for the Navy, the biggest one of which was that by 2020 at least half of all naval energy, both afloat and ashore, would come from non-fossil fuel sources. Ashore, we're there today. We're getting half our power from alternative sources, 1 gigawatt, which is enough to power a city the size of Orlando.

We're doing it with wind and solar and geothermal and hydrothermal. We're doing it all in partnership with the private sector, and we're saving money overall, even with the price of oil being what it is today. At sea, we've certified every one of our ships and every one of our aircraft on biofuels. It's not the old biofuels. These are second generation, third generation biofuels. We only have three requirements: It's got to be a drop-in fuel, the engine can't notice the difference; you can't take any land out of food production; and it's got to be competitively priced.

Right now, today, the John Stennis Carrier Strike Group is at sea. And it's been dubbed the Great Green Fleet, because the carrier's nuclear, which is alternative, and every ship in that strike group is sailing on a mixture of normal marine diesel and biofuels. And the best example I have of why we need to do something like this is in Singapore there are two refineries. One is an oil refinery and its majority owned by China. Down the road is a biofuel refinery owned by a Finnish company. I don't want to be dependent on that oil refinery to fuel our ships.

Now, people. We've got the greatest force we've ever had, but we've stressed it a lot. Our deployments have gotten longer. They've gotten more unpredictable. And as the dean has said, we've been at war for 15 years now. So we've tried to manage our force differently. We've tried to make it more flexible, tried to make it a lot easier to combine things like family and service. So some of the things we've done: As I said, all billets, every single MOS, every single – MOS, military occupational specialty. I've been at the Pentagon too long. I'm beginning to speak in acronyms. It's time for me to leave.

But every single billet is opened to women now – Navy SEALs, Marine infantry, anything else. We've got a career intermission program. You can take up to three years off to do anything you want to do – have a family, care for a loved one, get a degree that we don't see the direct connection but maybe you do, or maybe you think that there's something else out there that you want to study. When you come back, you'll owe us two years back for every year you took off, but we roll you back so you're competing against people from three years later, not with people who were on active duty the whole time you were gone. The first person that went through it happened to be a woman. She got promoted to captain. And she was given major command the year she came back.

I tripled paid maternity leave from six weeks to 18 weeks. We did small things like open childcare two hours earlier and kept it open two hours later, because I kept hearing: Childcare opens at 7:00 in the morning. I'm supposed to report to my duty station at 7:00 in the morning. Which one am I supposed to do? We keep gyms open 24-hours a day now, so people can work out. And we're trying to get a culture of fitness instead of training for the fitness test twice a year. So now we spot test fitness. You know, you come in one day, it's your lucky day, get your shorts and a t-shirt, time to go do a PFT.

We're doing promotions based more on merit than on time in grade. We've got the fleet scholar education program. Thirty slots for junior officers. And the very first one is here at the Kennedy School. Those 30 are today studying at Harvard, at Dartmouth, and at the lesser institution in New Haven. (Laughter.) We have Secnav industry tours, working with companies like FedEx and Amazon, where we send people sort of mid-career to go learn some best

practices from business, and take some best practices from the military, and then come back so that we can have that sort of interchange.

I established – which is sort of an oxymoron – an innovation taskforce. I mean, if you're having a taskforce to be innovative, that sort of doesn't compute. But we've got this incredible innovation and brain power out in the fleet, and it just wasn't getting anywhere. So we've gone to crowdsourcing. And we're funding these things now. And we're getting incredible ideas that are bubbling up. And this Taskforce Innovation is now a permanent – with one in Silicon Valley, one in the Pentagon – to make sure that these ideas that are coming out of the fleet get to the leadership, and that the good ones we take action on right away.

And finally, there's one thing that's sort of a one-off. And people didn't take it seriously when I started talking about it. I'm trying to get one uniform for men and women, in both the Navy and the Marines. The word uniform – (laughter) – means the same. Women were wearing different uniforms. And it was a historical anomaly. It was because in World War II women were joining the auxiliary and not the active duty forces. And they were given different uniforms on purpose, to show that they were not active duty. Well, they continued. Now, can you imagine if we asked any other group to wear a different uniform the amount of trouble we would get in? But were asking that of women.

And the first time I noticed it was at an Army-Navy football game. Now, it was the only bad thing I've ever noticed in an Army-Navy football game, since we've beaten Army 14 years in a row now. (Laughter.) But when the corps of cadets from West Point marched out, they were all wearing the same uniform. You couldn't tell men and women. You just saw cadets. When the midshipmen from Annapolis marched out, you could pick out the women because they had different covers on – they had different hats.

And so I went back and we started working on this. We segregate women through our uniforms. But now we've got a common cover for the Navy and the Marine Corps. And we're working on common uniforms. Now, they're not all going to be common. There will be a few that won't be. But in the main, when you look out, you're not going to see male Sailors, female Sailors, male Marines, female Marines. You're going to see United States Sailors, United States Marines. And we're doing all these things because, as I said at first, a more diverse force is a stronger force. A more diverse force are better at the jobs that we are given by this country.

And finally, partnerships. I travel a lot. I just went over 1.2 million air miles, 148 different countries in this job. Let me tell you where I've been in the last three weeks. Three weeks ago today I had my last hearing in front of Congress to defend the budget. And as pleasant as that was, I was – (laughter) – ready to get out of town. So I got on a plane and I flew to Alaska, and then out on the ice, where I met a submarine and was underway for five days, and came up at the North Pole.

If you want to know the real effects of climate change, the ice at the North Pole is less than a foot thick. This is the thinnest it's ever been, according to the ice pilots that we had onboard. Now, it was 50 below, but it was still – the ice was like that. I came back from that, went to Central African Republic, Mozambique, South Africa, Gabon, Sierra Leone, Uruguay,

back to D.C. And 36 hours later, on Monday, we went to Northern California, to Silicon Valley, then down to Camp Pendleton, and came in here last night.

I'm going to wear a nametag when I go home so that my family will recognize me. And I have one more job to do here in Boston, and it's a tough one but somebody has to do these things. I'm going to go throw out the first pitch at the Red Sox game tonight. And judging from the last two nights, I may be the best pitcher the Sox have had during that time. (Laughter.) But I do this to go see Sailors and Marines where they are, where they're forward deployed. I do this to go see our foreign friends and our allies, and how we can build a coalition of navies and naval forces around the world.

And as important as those foreign partnerships are, the more important partnerships are here. ROTC at Harvard, the research – 14 research projects here at Harvard right now working on things like synthetic biological prosthesis battlefield triage. And the most important, the most important partnership that we have is with the American people.

I'm going to end as I began. You cannot have a distance between those doing the protecting and those being protected. You've got to have that tie. You've got to have that deep understanding. And the force that's doing the protecting, as President Faust said, has got to reflect the people that are being protected. In a democracy, it cannot be any other way.

So going forward, the United States Navy, the United States Marine Corps, will do what they've always done – innovate, adapt, overcome. And we will be ready for whatever comes over the horizon that we have to deal with.

So, from the Navy, Semper Fortis, Always Courageous. From the Marine Corps, Semper Fidelis, Always Faithful. Thank y'all very much.