

Remarks by Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus
USS FREEDOM (LCS-1) Arrival
Singapore
11 May 2013

Thank you, Ambassador Adelman for that wonderful introduction. Ambassador Adelman and I share a lot of things, we're both southerners, we both came up through the political system, and to Singapore this shows how incredibly close our relationships are. We have sent you our very best from the United States to represent us here in Singapore. Thank you to Rear Admiral Tom Carney, who was on my staff in the Pentagon. He worked appropriations out of Congress. Tom, everything was okay when you left. Rear Admiral Ng, thank you for being here, CNO of The Republic of Singapore. To our Ambassadors: Ambassador Minda Cruz of the Philippines, Ambassador Sin of Cambodia, Ambassador Suzuki of Japan, Ambassador Tin of Myanmar, and all the representatives that Ambassador Adelman listed, thank you so much for being here, for being at this historic occasion. I particularly want to thank the people and the government of Singapore for your friendship and hospitality. I also want to particularly recognize the Captain and the crew of USS FREEDOM. These young men and women are the best that America has to offer, they're technical experts, they're maritime operators and they are also true Naval ambassadors. I look forward to hearing about their accomplishments throughout this deployment.

Ambassador Adelman very eloquently described the relationship that has existed between the United States and Singapore for so many years. It is a long and important history that the Navy shares not only with the Asia-Pacific region but with this particular place. In January of 1800 USS ESSEX set sail from the east coast of the United States for the waters around what is now

Singapore. It was that frigate's very first voyage, and was the first deployment of the United States Navy beyond the waters of the Atlantic. It was a deployment ordered by one of my predecessors over 200 years ago. The reason for the mission, the protection of trade and the development of maritime partnerships, was important 213 years ago and is even more critical today.

That single mission by one of our early frigates marked the beginning of this enduring presence and partnership. Since then our Navy ships have worked with other navies throughout this region, we've developed relationships with nations, militaries and leaders, and helped safeguard freedom of navigation and access to international waterways. For 213 of the 237 years the United States Navy has existed, we have had a deep relationship with this crucial region.

We have worked, particularly since the end of World War II, to uphold free trade and free movement on the sea for those engaged in peaceful commerce and activities. Five trillion dollars of international trade flows through the waters of the Asia-Pacific every year. This movement, the vast geography of this ocean and the importance of the nations which abut it, all make this region critical to the entire globe. Because 90% of the world's trade is moved at sea, this freedom of movement has become central to the economic success and stability of us all.

It requires the efforts of all nations, particularly in this region. While Freedom is pier side here now, during her deployment she will be at sea often working with the forces of our allies and partners throughout the region. A great example of this cooperation, out of the 150 military exercises which occur in this region each and every year, is the long-standing Cooperation Afloat

Readiness and Training (CARAT) exercise. It has grown from six to nine countries just over the past three years. All told last year, CARAT spanned more than 130 days and included nearly 90 ships, more than 50 aircraft and nearly 18,000 personnel. CARAT is one example of many key engagements between our naval forces and those of our allies, partners and friends in this region.

This ship, LCS, is tailor-made for these engagements and for myriad other tasks it will be called upon to perform. She's fast, agile, modular, and has a shallow draft. These ships allow us to work in many different ways with our partners. The Littoral Combat Ship will be important here in this and future deployments as it will be for our Navy here and around the world. FREEDOM, which you are on today, is the first of a planned class of 52 Littoral Combat Ships. There are two variants of the ship: the FREEDOM variant and the INDEPENDENCE variant. All told, we now have 24 ships of both classes either in the water, under construction or under contract. This is a completely new type, a new concept. The weapons systems on LCS can be traded out to fit whatever missions it is given. Those same systems can be upgraded as technology changes without having to build a new ship or changing anything out but that particular weapon system.

The ship that you are on was built as an experimental ship, the first of her class, and yet she has already deployed to the Caribbean to interdict drug smugglers and was incredibly successful at it. And has now arrived across the Pacific Ocean for this deployment. Those members of navies here know that every first ship in a class experiences growing pains. There have been a few bumps in the road for FREEDOM. The first of every single class in our Navy has faced similar issues and has been strengthened by dealing with them. FREEDOM is a great ship and those of

her variant and of her sister ship INDEPENDENCE's variant will play vital roles in the United States Navy and the world for decades to come.

FREEDOM and the Littoral Combat Ships which will follow her will remain home-ported on our West Coast, but the rotational deployments and maintenance supported out of this harbor will allow them to stay on station longer. The multiple crews that we will rotate onto these ships will develop closer ties with the Navies and Coast Guards of the region, helping to ensure maritime security for us all.

We are grateful, as Ambassador Adelman said, to Singapore for hosting FREEDOM, the ships which come after her and their support capabilities, as well as for construction of a pier capable of supporting our aircraft carriers. This is a strong friendship and partnership with Singapore, and in particular with the Republic of Singapore Navy. As the Ambassador said, I have been here many times as Secretary, and yes the 700,000 miles number is correct and I do feel every one of them. But I always love coming to Singapore, either as Secretary or many times before that as a private citizen, and I am always impressed with your Navy. Your ships, like the Formidable Class frigates and Endurance Class amphibs are some of the finest anywhere. Your sailors are some of the most professional. You have a long maritime tradition, and one of the most professional and capable forces in the world.

In January 2012 President Barak Obama announced a new defense strategy for the United States. A focus on the Pacific and building partnerships were two of the three major tenets of this strategy. FREEDOM and the LCSs are tangible, essential elements of America's commitment to

this strategy and to this region and to the Asia-Pacific. That commitment will not waiver and is not in doubt. While we have been a constant presence in the Pacific for scores of years, our engagement is increasing. We are here and will remain in this vital region to cooperate and to work together. We will look for new and innovative opportunities for engagement. It is said and it is true that while equipment and personnel can be surged, trust cannot. We are here to build on the trust and cooperation already accumulated over many years.

In the end, we come back to this crew and this fantastic ship. The United States Sailors aboard this ship serve as diplomats and warriors, men and women who have the same adventurous spirit as mariners from all over the globe, who want to see what is over the horizon. Their hard work and professionalism demonstrates our enduring commitment to this region. With the shared leadership and cooperation of our partners like Singapore, we will address our common challenges and ensure the protection of freedom of navigation and we will ensure maritime security and we will ensure it all for the common good.

Thank you.