

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
2010 Safety Awards Excellence Ceremony  
Navy Memorial, Washington, DC  
Thursday, 7 July, 2011

Jackie Pfannenstiel, thank you so much and thank all of you for being here today.

I'm really happy to have gotten here because I knew that on my way to the Safety Awards, we'd either have a wreck or I'd fall down the stairs or something. The day is young, something could still happen, but at least I made it here in one piece.

And thank you all for being here on a typical balmy, July day in Washington. John Kennedy once said that Washington was a town of northern charm and southern efficiency. And I think it's also a town of northern winters and southern summers, so we get the best of all possible worlds here in DC.

And to those of you who are receiving awards today, I want to give you not only my congratulations, but the gratitude of the Navy and Marine Corps. You have shown the vigilance and the dedication necessary not only to provide for the wellbeing of our Sailors and our Marines, but to do so in a really extraordinary way that has made you a model for everybody else in the service. From the beginning of your time in uniform, you are taught, "We are all safety professionals." You have taken that lesson to heart and you have led by example.

The Navy and Marine Corps' mission is to protect this country. Fundamental to that job, is protecting the welfare of the men and women who serve.

So for us, these safety practices provide the foundation for a healthy service. And those of you who are serving here, those of you in uniform today, you know it's not just about the time you wear a uniform and go to your day job, it's the life you lead; during your duty hours and off hours, on ship, on shore, at work and play. We don't honor just the practices that protect our

people while they are doing their jobs; we honor, as Secretary Pfannenstiel said, a culture of safety.

And there are some great examples here today. And I'm not going to get to mention all of them, but there are some just wonderful ones. Fleet Activities, Okinawa, exemplifies the principle of a culture of safety with its "One Hundred and One Critical Days of Summer" and "Seventeen Days of Christmas." I don't know if they wrote a song with that or not, but what they did do is get a 27 percent reduction in private auto mishaps last year. And they sure weren't alone; Naval Station Jacksonville had an impressive 50 percent, cut in half, reduction in both civilian total case and military on-duty incident rates and II MEF had a 41 percent reduction in motor vehicle fatalities.

Particularly significant are the achievements of those who come from the fleet and our aviation communities. With the high operational tempo that you're all experiencing, attention to safety gets even more critical. This is where practice and training comes together with action. When safety becomes second nature, an integral part of how we do business, when that happens not only does every Sailor and Marine come home at the end of the day, but we are way better as a fighting force. When operations are accomplished on time and on schedule, when duty rosters rotate smoothly and injuries don't interrupt the daily routine, that is when we are at our best, and that's one of the things that keeps us the most formidable fighting force the world has ever known.

Here with us today, representatives of the crew of the USS Eisenhower, who scored a 100 percent rating on its Conventional Ordnance Safety Review at the time that they were spending 41,000 pounds of ordnance during work-ups and combat operations over Afghanistan. VFA 32, off the Harry S Truman, accumulated 7,000 mishap-free flight hours. And VRC 12 accrued

more than 29,000 mishap-free flight hours and this was during 11 detachments and 205 days away from home base.

While the safety and well being of our Sailors, Marines and their families is a serious business, but both of our services have found out a little way to make humor help the cause. The Naval Safety Center publishes its widely anticipated *Friday Funnies* and the Marine Corps has its *Injuries Outside the Norm*, which shares a few of the more funny incidents where people didn't get badly hurt. And the purpose, is pretty serious, is to make you aware that any situation can become dangerous and to be guarded at any time and to highlight the importance of what you do to help safety. Our Sailors and Marines are too valuable a resource to our country and to their loved ones not to take care of themselves and just to act with good sense.

So, again, to our 2010 Safety Excellence Awardees, thank you for what you've done, thank you for your contributions to our community. Your nation and the families of your fellow Sailors and Marines thank you for what you do to safeguard these, our most valuable assets. And as my Military Aide, CAPT Dwight Shepherd says at the end of every meeting, "Be careful out there."

One of the really cool things you get to do in this job, is occasionally you get to make cameos on TV and movies. So you all watch out next summer for the blockbuster, *Battleship*. And pay particular attention to the Captain of the *USS REAGAN*.