

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
USS Tulsa (LCS 16) Naming Ceremony
Tulsa, Oklahoma
Tuesday, September 15, 2015

Thank y'all so much. To the VFW, thank you so much for allowing us to use this wonderful hall for this ceremony. To Mayor Kathy Taylor, thank you for that introduction and for your family history in connection with our Navy. To Mayor Bartlett, and I know he will mention his father who was a Marine dive-bomber pilot during World War II, thank you for the hospitality of Tulsa. And thank all the mayors that we have here today. (Laughter.) I'm not sure I've ever been around this many mayors. (Laughter.) To both Mayor LaFortune, to Mayor Savage, and General, thank you for being here, representing the governor.

To those of you here and those that you represent, most importantly, thank you for continuing to support our Sailors and Marines and the veterans who call Tulsa and the Sooner State home. You know, it's probably not often the Secretary of the Navy comes to Oklahoma. (Laughter.) I don't know if y'all have noticed, but you're not real close to an ocean. (Laughter.) But Oklahoma has provided such support, such great connections to our Navy and to our Marine Corps that this gathering and my coming here to Oklahoma is very fitting and very proper. And it ties Oklahoma with the Sailors and the Marines who have been, are today, and will be forward deployed around the world protecting all of us, so that we can have ceremonies like this today.

What the Navy and Marine Corps uniquely provide this country is presence, around the globe, around the clock. We get on station faster, we stay longer, we bring everything we need with us, and we don't have to ask anybody's permission to get the job done. And as Mayor Taylor said, that ability to provide that presence is predicated on four things: people, platforms, power and partnerships. It's been the Secretary of the Navy's great honor, since this office was created in 1798, to honor those partnerships with states and cities, naval heroes, by naming ships as an expression of our heritage, as an expression of the thanks that we give to cities, to states, to counties, for the great support they give to our Navy and Marine Corps.

And that special relationship began with Tulsa almost 100 years ago, when gunboat PG-22 was named the USS Tulsa. She was the flagship of the South China Patrol during the Sino-Japanese War in the 1930s, and earned two battle stars during World War II. Now, one of my predecessors tried to name another USS Tulsa. This happened in 1944. But before its keel was laid, before construction really got started, it was cancelled and money was moved to other parts and other ships for the Navy. Now, I – this was a cruiser. And I am very familiar with the cruisers built in 1944 and 1955, because I served on one in the late '60s, early '70s, the USS Little Rock. One of our sister ships was the Oklahoma City.

And I think it's OK that Tulsa didn't get one of those cruisers because their technology is pretty outmoded now. (Laughter.) But today one of our most innovative and the world's most

innovative ships is our littoral combat ship, the LCS. They're very big, they're very fast, they're shallow draft, and they're modular, so you can move one weapons system off, put another one on. In 2009, the first four were being built. The average cost was \$548 million. We now have 19 more authorized and appropriated. And under a block buy, those ships – and they're more capable ships, are coming in at \$337 million per ship, thanks to competition because there's two yards building these ships, and thanks to improvements at both yards.

And the production of these littoral combat ships, and they – the later versions are being renamed the fast frigates – is an example of how we've halted and reversed, as Mayor Taylor said, the decline in shipbuilding. On 9/11/2001, we had 316 ships in the U.S. Navy. By 2008, after one of the great military build-ups in our history, we were down to 278 ships. In the five years before I took this job, the Navy put 27 ships under contract – not enough to keep our fleet from getting smaller and not enough to keep our shipyards going. In my first five years, we have put 70 ships under contract, with a smaller top line. And we've done so in ways to maximize our return on investment. We continue to grow our fleet under budget and ahead of schedule.

And because of these Navy efforts, and because of help from Congress, who have been very supportive of this, and the American people, again, as Mayor Taylor said, we're going to get to 306 ships by the end of this decade, which will fully meet all the requirements of our national security strategy. And we haven't done this at the expense of aircraft. We've also bought 45 percent more aircraft than we did in the five previous years. And all these platforms carry the most advanced technology possible.

And you may be a long way from the ocean, but you're an integral part of this. Four hundred and ninety people in Tulsa work in shipbuilding-related jobs, and the maritime industry contributes almost \$49 million a year to this – to this congressional district. And, as I mentioned, despite a well-intentioned attempt to honor this city many years ago, my predecessor was unable to follow through. And so I'm happy, maybe a little late, since '44, but I am very happy to be here to announce that the name of our newest littoral combat ship, LCS 16, will be USS Tulsa.

So in keeping with Navy tradition, may God bless all those who sail in USS Tulsa. And from the Navy, Semper Fortis, Always Courageous. From the Marines, Semper Fidelis, Always Faithful. Thank you, Tulsa.