

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
Washington Navy Yard Award Ceremony  
Washington, D.C.  
23 June 2013

Thank you Admiral Greenert. Nine months ago, on a normal Monday morning, a shooter began his horrific attack here at the Navy Yard. Over the past thirteen years of war we have experienced all too often the pain of combat losses and we have honored those we have lost and the many who have served our nation overseas. Today, we honor those who have sacrificed and have done heroic acts here at home.

The memory of those killed that day will always burn brightly. The wounds, seen and unseen, will be carried to our last days. The work of those three women and nine men we lost that day and those who were wounded and those who were there -- the work that you carry on, is critical to our nation and our security. Naval Sea Systems Command and Naval Facilities Engineering Command provide the foundation that our fleet and our operations around the world are built on.

Our men and women in uniform and our civilians work together, serve together, overcome together. As the CNO said, we are a family, the Navy and Marine Corps Family. As a family, we grieved and continue to grieve. We gather here again as a family to recognize the heroism of those lost and the heroism that confronted evil on that day last fall. This ceremony is to recognize women and men who faced extraordinarily awful circumstances in extraordinarily heroic ways.

We honor the men and women we lost, those who gave their lives for their country in the long tradition of great Americans. We also honor the law enforcement officers, the first responders, the NAVSEA and NAVFAC workers who ran into danger to aid and protect others. We honor the colleagues, the friends, the strangers who assisted each other away from peril, who comforted one another, and who have been constant in their work and their devotion. To properly remember those who fell, we have to reflect on what they worked for, on what we fight for, and find ways to recognize them in our daily lives.

President Lincoln said at the great battlefield of Gettysburg 150 years ago, “It is for us the living...to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they... here have thus far so nobly advanced.”

The courage we witnessed on the 16th of September did not end with the closing of that terrible day. Even on Tuesday the 17th, people here today returned to their work. By Thursday, when much of the Navy Yard reopened, thousands represented here today, whose lives had been in real peril three days before, were back doing the vital work of our nation. That courage endures today.

You are the embodiment of Semper Fortis: Always Courageous; and Semper Fidelis: Always Faithful.