

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
Navy Yard Memorial Ceremony  
Washington, D.C.  
20 September 2013

As a military organization, we have experienced all too often the searing pain of combat losses and honored the many who, in Lincoln's words, have sacrificed their lives on the altar of freedom. Today we honor 12 patriots who have made the same sacrifice in the service of their nation, this time here at home.

We rightly set aside special days and solemn rituals to recognize, remember and revere the men and women in uniform who have paid the final price in the defense of our freedoms. These nine men and three women deserve no less. Their work and that of thousands of their civilian colleagues across this city and this country is critical to our nation's security. Without the civilians at Naval Sea Systems Command, we literally would not have a fleet to put to sea. And we could not operate ashore without the Naval Facilities Engineering Command. NAVSEA and NAVFAC are critical parts of the Navy-Marine Corps team, the Navy-Marine Corps family

And we are a family. Uniform and civilian, we work together, serve together, overcome together. As a family, we grieve together. Together, we will assure that they, like those who have gone before them, will be remembered and honored as heroes.

Because that is what they are: heroes. Ordinary people facing extraordinary circumstances. An ordinary Monday became a day of extraordinary horror, but also extraordinary heroism, as law

enforcement officers and other first responders ran into danger to aid and protect others, as colleagues, friends and strangers assisted each other away from danger, even at the risk of their own lives. We memorialize as heroes those we lost, and honor the heroes we have here today..

The courage we witnessed on Monday did not end with the closing of that awful day. On Tuesday, our people returned to their work. And Thursday, when much of the Navy Yard reopened, thousands whose lives had been in real peril three days before, would not let fear keep them away.

Still, we know it will take time for those with wounds, physical or invisible, to heal. The shock and anger over what occurred on Monday will take time for us to deal with. This act of evil defies comprehension, defies understanding.

Twelve wives, husbands, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, workmates, colleagues taken from us suddenly, violently, cruelly. But what can never be taken is the love and our memories. And as we remember these individuals we cherished, it should not be as victims. Their lives should not be defined by the terrible, inexplicable way they were ended, but rather how they lived and the rich legacies each of them left. And these are each unique individuals, but as I have spoken to their families and friends common threads emerge: love of family and country; the value and pride placed on working for America and the value others placed on the work they did, their lives.

Today, one by one, we will hear their names and remember them and mourn. Then they join so

many other Navy and Marine Corps heroes whose lives and deeds shine forever bright.

We remain Semper Fortis/Semper Fidelis: Forever Courageous/Forever Faithful.