

Remarks by Donald C. Winter  
Secretary of the Navy  
USS GEORGE H. W. BUSH (CVN 77)  
Commissioning Ceremony  
Norfolk Naval Station  
Norfolk, Virginia  
Saturday, January 10, 2009

Mr. President, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen; it is a great honor to be here.

Since ancient times, there have been sacred traditions associated with the christening, launching, and commissioning of ships.

Wherever we look into the pages of our distant past, the process of bringing a ship to life was accorded special meaning by the mariners whose lives and fortunes would henceforth be intimately connected to the vessel that would take them far from shore.

Given the vast size, awesome power, and unpredictable nature of the sea, mariners instinctively turned to divine protection in welcoming the birth of a new ship.

Thus, the rituals that accompanied this process acquired a formal, solemn status, and traditions that have carried through to our own times.

The relationship between Sailors and a warship is even more significant, as all Sailors know that their safety and their lives depend on the quality, readiness, and performance of their ship.

The lengthy period of time and many long days that follow a ship's christening and launch impress into the minds of every Sailor that the goal that all are working towards—the ship's commissioning—is not easily achieved.

Today that goal has come to fruition.

Today, the hard work and ingenious efforts of many to bring about this moment have finally paid off.

This is a ship that will make history, and today marks the first day of an illustrious journey.

Of all the commissioning ceremonies I have had an honor to participate in, today's ceremony stands out above them all.

Nothing else compares to the arrival of a new nuclear-powered carrier in our

Fleet.

The impact of a new carrier is global, for no other ship represents to the world the power of the United States.

Remember it always, and strive to forever make your Nation proud of this magnificent warship.

Thank you.

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It is now my great honor to invite the President to place the ship in commission.

Mr. President.