

**Remarks as delivered by Admiral Mike Mullen  
USS GEORGE H.W. BUSH (CVN 77) Christening  
7 October 2006**

Mr. President, thank you for being here. You honor us with your presence, and we greatly appreciate your leadership at this critical time in our nation's history.

And Mr. President, thank you as well, sir, for sharing with us not only this day, but your great name.

It stands for much. It stands for character and for strength.

But as you well know, sir, having flown from the deck of the San Jacinto in combat, such a ship is not just a symbol of our power, it is a powerful symbol of our freedom.

Today, this modern carrier named for you slips the ways and prepares to take up station in the Fleet.

She will find work -- and plenty of it -- as that Fleet battles the enemies of freedom in places and in ways we never could have imagined just a few short years ago.

It was, after all, an aircraft carrier we sent to New York Harbor on the 12th of September, 2001 ... an aircraft carrier that first struck back at the Taliban from the waters of the Indian Ocean, and an aircraft carrier with supporting ships that we dispatched to Indonesia in the wake of one of the most devastating natural disasters that nation, or any nation, has ever seen.

Where will the George H. W. Bush go? What missions will she accomplish?

We cannot know. But we do know that she will be -- as her sister ships are today -- the centerpiece of American sea power.

I want to thank the talented men and women of Northrop Grumman Newport News for building her. This is the only place in the world capable of producing one of these warships, and we are grateful to every one of you.

I want to thank Ms. Doro Bush Koch for assuming a time-honored and deeply meaningful role in the lives of this ship and her crew.

The George H. W. Bush will, with the smash of that bottle, inherit your spirit and take a piece of you with her wherever she sails and into whatever danger she faces. Thank you for standing by her.

Your father knew -- as you will come to know -- that great warships are more than just decks and bulkheads, steel and stanchions.

It is their crews that give them a heart and a soul.

He once wrote about how the crew of San Jack taught him much about duty, true love, heartbreak, fear and courage, and about the diversity of this great country.

You will find that Sailors still do.

To Captain O'Flaherty, the crew of the George H. W. Bush and to your families, thank you for raising your hand and volunteering to serve.

My charge to you is to bring this ship to life. Make her a symbol of freedom.

We are proud of you and expect a lot from you.

I am also proud to introduce our next speaker, a man who like President Bush -- and all of you -- volunteered to serve in our Navy when the world was at war.

And when that war was over, he continued to serve as a Marine Corps officer in Korea, as an Assistant U.S. Attorney, as Secretary of the Navy and finally, as the second-longest serving U.S. Senator from the Commonwealth of Virginia.

He is a man whose love of country is matched only by his love for those who defend it.

As Chairman or ranking member for twelve of his twenty-eight years on the Senate Armed Services Committee, he has, in the words of one of his colleagues, "addressed some of the most fundamental security issues facing this nation."

I think it is fair to say that we would not be here, standing before this great and wonderful new warship, were it not for his leadership.

He calls himself, as he did after casting his ten thousandth vote in the Senate last May, the "luckiest man you ever met."

But I would say we, the men and women of the Armed Forces who benefit from his support, are the lucky ones.

To us, particularly those of us in the Navy, he is more than a great Senator. He is a shipmate.

So, allow me to introduce to you, if I may, Electronic Technician's Mate Third Class John W. Warner.