

**Chief of Naval Operations
Admiral Mike Mullen
Remarks as Delivered
USS TEXAS (SSN 775) Commissioning
09 September 2006**

Mrs. Bush, Senator Hutchinson, Senator Cornyn, and the entire Texas congressional delegation. Secretaries Aviles and Etter, Admirals Donald, and Munns, Mr. Petters and Casey, Admiral Paul Reason and his lovely wife Dianne.

Citizens of the Great State of Texas and especially citizens of Galveston. And most importantly, those here who serve in uniform and in particular the extraordinary crew of the USS Texas and your family members. Good morning.

It is great to be here. And especially to be here in Senator Hutchison's birthplace of Galveston. Texas is full of wonderful communities like Galveston – led and represented by so many terrific people.

And Senator Hutchinson, we truly appreciate of everything you do to support the men and women who serve in the Armed Forces.

It is also terrific – a real honor – to have Mrs. Eleonore Rickover here, whose husband, the father of our nuclear Navy is a legend and hero to all of us.

His work and his vision can be seen clearly in all aspects of the design and construction of this terrific submarine.

It is a day I am sure Admiral Rickover would have loved to have seen. It is a great Navy day.

And this is certainly a big day for the country and for Texas. The commissioning of a new state of the art submarine named for Texas and a big football game in Austin against Ohio State. How ever will Texans decide what to do this weekend?

Well, it certainly looks as though many of you have chosen to come here, and I'm grateful for that – and for the terrific support we have always enjoyed from the people of this great state.

There are thousands of Texans on active duty right now, deployed all over the world, defending freedom. I am very grateful for their service.

In my travels – I meet Sailor after Sailor from Texas.

Today, USS Texas joins them as part of a Fleet that is globally deployed doing great things – at sea, ashore, and in the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan.

One Sailor from El Paso, who is serving in Afghanistan, recently spoke of how his service there is the “opportunity of a lifetime” and how there is “no doubt that he will help leave it better than he found it.”

His is a fighting spirit and a volunteer heart that is characteristic of all Texans. It is those same qualities that I see in this magnificent warship that is before us – the USS Texas.

The Navy and the nation owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to all those who worked so hard to bring this critical capability to sea.

You are the world's best artisans and experts in your craft of nuclear submarine design and construction.

Every time Texas sails, you can be justifiably proud that she carries a piece of each of you with her.

Yours is a patriotism, dedication, and enthusiasm every bit the equal of those who serve in harm's way.

To the City of Galveston, Mayor Thomas, Marshall Cloyd, and the entire commissioning committee, thank you for working so hard to make this a memorable day.

Captain Litherland, as Texas's first Commanding Officer: in your hands are placed the ultimate responsibility, authority and accountability. There is no position in our Navy more worthy of trust. I expect a great deal. Lead and command well.

One of my favorite naval heroes is a famous Texan, Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz.

He was terrific submarine commander, long before he led the entire Fleet and the nation to victory during World War II.

When he flew home after the war, he liked to tell fellow Texans that during the surrender negotiations, one of his principal worries was that he would not be able to persuade Texans to stop fighting.

However, he noted, "a satisfactory agreement was arrived at between Tokyo and Austin."

It is that valiant fighting spirit of Texans, embodied so well by Nimitz and the service of so many other Texans that we honor by naming this ship Texas.

But today we honor much more than just the fighting heritage of Texans – we also honor their volunteer, Texas-sized hearts.

And there is perhaps no heart bigger than that of our first-lady – Laura Bush.

Her graceful, quiet, and steadfast leadership – her devotion to the development of personal character, courage and generosity - all speak to the best of being not only a citizen of this country but to being a citizen of the world.

A world we must make safe for all people to have the freedom to live better lives, for families to prosper, and for every child to learn.

And she doesn't just talk about it. Her effort to battle illiteracy and to foster education at all levels is well known to us all. It's well known to the crew of this ship.

The scholarship she has endowed for the children of the Sailors who will take Texas to sea is really something special – a tremendous legacy and a constant reminder of how much she cares.

And probably just one more reason Sailors are eager to serve – and are proud to serve – aboard USS Texas.

Mrs. Bush, I can think of no more fitting sponsor for the crews of Texas. Thank you for your leadership and your truly matchless example.

USS Texas is powerful, graceful and quiet. At her top speed she puts out less noise than most subs do at 5 knots. Her firepower, stealth and persistence are tailored perfectly to help win this long war on terror.

Our boats are on the job in this war and being used in ways that we could have never imagined just a few years ago.

They are constantly adapting their stealth capabilities to help find and fix terrorists' locations and intentions. They are using that same stealth advantage to help take down smugglers and pirates.

And Texas, along with the entire Virginia-class of submarines, will provide a huge leap forward in capabilities to accomplish new missions – in this new century.

And now I have the honor of introducing a distinguished leader in the Senate, who has worked tirelessly to ensure we understand and are prepared to accomplish these new missions Senator John Cornyn.

Anyone who knows him, knows John Cornyn is proud of his Texas roots. He cares deeply about the people of this state, this country and all who wear the uniform.

They know too that he is proud to be from a military family. His father flew B-17 bombers in World War Two, was shot down, suffered as a POW in a German prison camp, and went on serve nobly for more than thirty-one years in the Air Force.

That experience and perspective of growing up military has served him well. During his long, distinguished service to the people of Texas – as a Justice on the Texas Supreme Court – as their Attorney General – and now, in the Senate, where he is a key member of the Armed Services Committee, he advocates always for a strong and capable national defense.

He stands by our troops, our families, our proud veterans, and for making sure those who defend freedom have everything they need to defend it well.

Senator, we are thankful that you are with us today, and grateful for what you do to support the United States Navy and all those who serve.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome a great Texan and a great American, Senator John Cornyn.