Armed Forces Day Military Ball
15 May 2010

Good evening. Mike, thank you for that kind introduction. It is a great honor to join you tonight and, in fact, a privilege to be afforded a few minutes to address this distinguished audience. You see, the Houston Military Affairs Committee had a seemingly impossible task—find a speaker who can tie together the apparently disparate United States Navy, our friends to the North Canada and the great state of Texas. I am pleased to report, however, that the committee has succeeded in finding the one person in the entire armed forces that can do just that.

Though I have proudly served and worn the cloth of our nation for 36 years, my roots are deeply Canadian. I was born on the western shores of Newfoundland in a rural community called Port au Port in which my arrival raised the population level to 214. Newfoundland is where my mother's family, the Gale family, lived for hundreds of years, where my Grandfather fished the Grand Banks and from where two of my relatives began their fateful journey which ended on the Titanic.

So I hail from Canada, wear the uniform of the US Navy, but I'm sure you're asking yourselves, "So what's the Texas connection, Yankee?" Well on February 27th your Governor Perry commissioned me as an Admiral in the Texas Navy. My Naval career became complete that day. It never ceases to amaze me how the whims of destiny direct our journey through life. Who could ever have known that tonight I'd stand before you as we celebrate Armed Forces Day with our honored foreign military Canada in the great state of Texas and I can honestly say I'm addressing you as a Canadian, a US Naval officer and a Texan Navy Admiral.

So I must congratulate the committee, and their President Gene Tulich, on their extraordinary feat in pulling all those ties together---you know, none of those items are in my official bio and yet they found me anyway!

It is most appropriate that we gather tonight on May 15th to not only celebrate Armed Forces Day but also to remember the famous Battle of Cāmpeche where on this day in 1843 the Texas Navy engaged the world's most formidable warship, a heavily armed Iron Class Steamer of war and though the Texas Navy was heavily out-gunned they never gave up, never retreated. It is the only occasion in history that a sailing ship bested a steamer of war.

Today, our Navy has pushed out a little farther than the shores of America. We are sailing on every ocean, Sailors are on every continent building partners, working towards peace, and by being over there we're protecting our loved ones here. Our Navy has 330,000 Sailors and 286 ships and submarines; 111 of those are deployed as I speak supporting operations around the globe. GUNSTON HALL is underway in the Gulf of Guinea working with our African partners in building their maritime security capabilities while, sharing our seamanship expertise. USS FREEDOM, our newest type of ship—the Littoral Combat Ship—is sailing with USS MCINERNEY off the coast of South America conducting counter drug operations—they recovered nearly 4 tons of cocaine in March alone. Meanwhile, USS EISENHOWER is continuing to support Operation Enduring Freedom off the coast of Pakistan executing daily combat air patrol missions. USS NASSAU is working with an international coalition of 20 nations in counter piracy operations in the seas off North East Africa.

But beyond our ships at sea, we have over 13,000 "boots on the ground" Sailors in direct support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of these men and women have been plucked from their Navy "day jobs" to go overseas and work with their Army and Marine Corps counterparts doing everything from convoy escorts and check point security to intelligence analysis, customs clearance, and explosive ordnance demolition.

We're still sailing where no man has gone before—most recently two of our submarines USS ANNAPOLIS and HELENA made their way to the North Pole and

broke through the ice caps simultaneously to plant the American flag. We are a forward deployed navy, we're a global Navy; we're a Navy that exercises sea control and power projection--and we are able to do it anywhere. However, I think it is only when disaster strikes do we really see the ability of our Navy to respond faster, stronger and with longer staying power than any other organization in the world. First in 2004, after the devastating tsunami struck south east Asia, but more recently when we were able to deploy an "Armada of Hope" to Haiti within days of the debilitating earthquake. We deployed 12 ships and nearly 6,000 Sailors to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The USNS COMFORT, on station within days, carried out the largest trauma response effort ever--more than OIF, OEF, and Katrina combined. And this isn't because we have the best technology and equipment that allows us to respond in times of need, but because we have men and women who have the compassion and the desire to respond at anytime and anywhere.

Tonight as we gather to celebrate this year's Armed Forces theme--United in Strength, I was particularly struck by the story of Archie Ludlow: the King's Texan. Archie hailed from Waco, Texas and during the early years of 20th century, before the onset of the First World War, the government was reluctant to put money into building more combat ships. So in 1910 when the newest battleship—the USS TEXAS--was being built they ran out of money and as it was impossible for Texans to accept there not being a USS TEXAS they took matters into their own hands and started a subscription campaign to help build the battleship. In one such subscription school children were asked to contribute one day's lunch money towards building the USS TEXAS. Archie put in his lunch money—a quarter. Fast forward now, and Archie is living in England as his dad was transferred their shortly after World War I. Archie learned to sail from his father-in-law and had a wife and his own sons in England. Then World War II breaks out and Archie wants to serve his home country—America, but his life was in England, so he enlists in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. His first war efforts were to take his yacht to Dunkirk rescuing

British, Canadian and French troops from the beach. Meanwhile, the battleship TEXAS had been brought back into the fleet and sent on convoy duty in the North Atlantic with Canadian destroyer escorts. Later in the war, Archie had command of a minesweeper off the mine infested coast of Normandy. Early one morning, while on patrol, Archie's minesweeper came under attack from artillery shore batteries. She was a sitting duck, unable to maneuver fast enough she took two hits and Archie was sure the third would do them in. When suddenly out of the morning mist a bluff-bowed ship appeared with her huge 12-inch guns drawn point blank and the whole English Channel seemed to shudder as she fired her massive broadside towards the German guns. Archie called out to his signlaman, "What ship is that?" The signmalman replied, "USS Texas, sir." Archie later recalled, "You know, that quarter had to be the best investment I ever made in my life." Archie eventually returned to Texas with his wife living out his remaining days in the land that stands for self-determination, individual spirit, and confidence despite any challenges she faces.

When the USS TEXAS sailed together with her Canadian escorts into danger they were united in strength. Strength of purpose, strength of faith in liberty and freedom, strength of service. We remain united in this same purpose today; a resolution to preserve and protect, no matter what befalls us, this social contract of liberty, of freedom, of tolerance. Thank you for the privilege to speak with you tonight as a Canadian, an American and an honorary Texan. Good night.