

AS DELIVERED

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Marine Corps Cake Cutting Ceremony
Washington, DC
Wednesday, 7 November 2012

Happy Birthday Marines. Thank you all for being here. Secretary Panetta, Chairman Dempsey, Secretary Carter, CNO Greenert, First Lady of the Marine Corps Bonnie Amos and so many other distinguished visitors, Commandants Amos and Kelley, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps.

Today is all about tradition and history. It's the unbroken line that stretches back 237 years that is joined by P.X. Kelly, the Commandant, down to Jim Amos who is the Commandant today. It stretches back through the top enlisted in the Marine Corps to today's Sergeant Major.

One of the things that the Marines should be and are proudest of is that history. It's been my great honor to visit a lot of Marine battlefields from Guadalcanal to Tarawa two weeks ago to Peleliu, Guam, Tinian, Saipan, Okinawa, Iwo Jima, Belleau Wood to walk those battlefields, to see where our Marines waded ashore, our Marines fought and died, our Marines carried every battle. To see the obstacles they faced, to see Bloody Ridge. To see the reef line in Tarawa a mile out that they had to wade through to see Mount Suribachi and the caves of Iwo Jima to see the cliffs on Guam.

And the traditions that are not combat traditions, but are Marine traditions – the Mess Night at Basic School, graduation at Parris Island operations at Lejeune – Marines training with partners and allies around the world in the jungles of Malaysia and the deserts of the Middle East. Marines playing at the White House, Marines marching at 8th & I. Marines representing this country and are the very finest, not only here, but in the words of the Marine Hymn “in ev'ry clime and place.”

We have honored the Marines who went before. Navy ships now, in the last year, bear names like John Glenn, the heroes of Montford Point, and Ralph Johnson from Vietnam. We have remembered what they have done and we have treasured those actions and remembered that the point of all the history is that we not only honor the Marines who have gone before, we honor the Marines who protect us today. Who have not only gone through the battlefields of World War I and World War II in Inchon Korea through the battlefields in Vietnam, but also two weeks ago on my tenth trip to Afghanistan walking where the attack on Camp Bastion occurred. The Marines of Al Anbar in Fallujah, the Marines of Sangin and Marja, Nawah, Leatherneck. The Marines of FOB Geronimo are worthy heirs and successors to Marines who have come before them.

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The Corps we have today stays in the line and can take its place in this line with the great Marine Corps of the past. And so it's not only been my honor to name ships for previous Marines, but for Marines who have served with us – Rafael Peralta, Donald Hogan, Medal of Honor recipient Dakota Meyer and ten Navy Crosses in the last three years.

And the Marines of today are the finest Marines we have ever had. They stand in that line with the great Marines of history the greatest expeditionary fighting force the world has ever known.

Happy Birthday, Marines. Oorah.