

Introduction of President Obama
by the Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
Naval Air Station Jacksonville
Jacksonville, Florida
Monday, October 26, 2009

(Applause) I feel like the guy who played center on the Bulls the night Michael Jordan scored 70 points. He scored 2, and told everyone that he would never forget the night he and Michael Jordan combined for 72 points. I'll never forget the day I came to Jacksonville, and I got this tremendous ovation combined with the President.

Admiral Tim Alexander, members of Congress, distinguished guests, Sailors and Marines, we are honored today to welcome our Commander-in-Chief to Jacksonville.

Mr. President, I want to brag on N.A.S. Jacksonville and, in particular, brag on its people. Navy Region Southeast is at the forefront of naval innovation and this base is at the leading edge of naval aviation. It is here that we are consolidating our East Coast P-3 squadrons, adding about 1500 Sailors and over 35 planes to this base. It is here that we're introducing the MH-60R, our new anti-submarine helicopter. And it is here that within a few years we'll have our first operational squadron of the new P-8. It is here where we rebuild the F-18s and the P-3s and send them back to the fleet. And it is here that energy efficiency and alternative energy measures are being implemented which lead the Navy. Evidence of that is literally all around us – in this hangar, built to LEED Silver standards, and is beautiful in so many ways.

As you know Mr. President, your Sailors and your Marines are serving all around the world. This group here today is representative of all of them. Their operational deployment experience is illustrated the range of missions that our Navy and Marine Corps perform –

from conventional combat to irregular warfare to partnership building to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Sailors and Marines here today, you are our Navy and Marine Corps. You are the best of America.

You know about the President's commitment to our military and his dedication to ensuring we're prepared to meet whatever comes in the future. And, President Obama is the first President... the first President ever... to chest bump a new graduate of the Naval Academy.

He cares about you, he understands what you face, and no one-- no one-- honors your service more than he does. Like every occupant of our highest office, President Obama carries the incredible responsibility of deciding when to send America's military to do difficult and dangerous missions. The extent to which he takes this responsibility seriously and exceptionally personally is that he signs himself every letter to the families of our fallen heroes. That's the kind of person he is, that's the kind of Commander-in-Chief he is.

Mr. President, thank you for your wonderful support of our Sailors and our Marines. I'd also like to extend a warm thank you to our First Lady, Michelle Obama, on behalf of military families everywhere. Her numerous visits to military posts and her discussions with our families clearly show the support of our nation for the daily sacrifices our service members and their families make. We wish she could have joined us here today; but, if she had, we would have needed a lot bigger hangar.

Whenever America needs something done, whether fighting our wars overseas, providing a ballistic missile defense shield, taking down a terrorist cell, deterring pirates, training partners, reassuring allies, or providing supplies to victims of a natural disaster... whatever America needs done --call on the Navy and Marine Corps. The Navy and Marine

Corps are your flexible response force for doing whatever mission is given to them and doing that mission incredibly well. It is these fine Sailors and Marines standing in front of you and their shipmates all over the world who will get the job done, whatever the job is - for America.

Sailors, Marines, Jacksonville: welcome our Commander-in Chief—the President of the United States.