

The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
LSU Commissioning
Baton Rouge, LA
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President Alexander, thank you so much for that introduction. To our distinguished guests, to family, friends, and most of all, the Cadets and Midshipmen who are about to become commissioned officers in the United States military, thank you.

To those Cadets and Midshipmen, great congratulations! You have earned it. You have earned it by putting in the time. You have earned it by a lot of hard work. But none of you would be sitting there today without the help of a lot of other people. A lot of them are sitting in this audience today and, as I'm going to remind people tonight at commencement and I know you're going to anyway, take the time to give them an extra hug and thank them for what they did to get you here, for their support in good times and in bad.

Forty-five years ago I stood where you are, an ROTC graduate from Ole Miss, getting ready to raise my right hand and be sworn in as an officer in the United States military. Something that I quickly learned on the decks of the cruiser that I served on, USS LITTLE ROCK, was that none of us, whether in school or in the military, can succeed alone. The people around us matter and are crucial.

These past four years have challenged you in a lot of ways, and prepared you for the challenges ahead. You are graduating from college today, like thousands of others in college from across

this country. And you are going to get a piece of paper representing that – your diploma. It is an acknowledgment of your demanding education and you’ve mastered it.

But you, unlike so many of those other graduates, are going to get second document today. It is a document unique to those who have completed a training program alongside getting that great education. It is the same document that started the careers of officers who went to school here in Baton Rouge like General Claire Chennault and General John Lejeune. It’s your Commission as an officer in the United States Navy or Marine Corps, in the Army or Air Force.

That commission conveys a very special kind of trust – trust and confidence that comes directly from the President of the United States. With it comes the responsibility of leading our nation’s young men and women. Your diploma is about what you’ve already done. Your Commission, what you will accomplish. It is about your future contributions.

I want to thank every one of you for making the conscious decision to commit the next part of your life, whether it is four years or forty, to our country. For being willing to raise your hand and say, “send me.”

During the time you have pursued your education and your training here, those who you are about to join have been globally deployed and globally engaged. And I have to say that I bear a certain bias for the Navy and the Marine Corps. But as the Major General said, it is “One Team, One Fight.” We are truly a joint force. Sailors and Marines, Soldiers and Airmen, while you’ve been here, have continued operations in Afghanistan. When many of you were Freshmen, we

conducted a massive sea-based mission to provide disaster relief in Haiti in the wake of the earthquake there in 2010. Later while you were in school, the Navy and Marine Corps launched Tomahawk strikes into Libya, and flew Harrier missions in support of that operation.

While you were here the RONALD REAGAN Strike Group and ESSEX Amphibious Ready Group responded within a few hours to the Sendai earthquake and tsunami in Japan and, later this year, to the islands of the Philippines after Super Typhoon Haiyan. Those who preceded you came to Louisiana and Mississippi after Katrina and to New Jersey and New York after Sandy. We are everywhere that we are needed to be. Our ships, our Sailors, our Marines, our Soldiers and Airman have deployed to the Horn of Africa to fight the pirates, to the Arctic and the waters of the Caribbean and the reaches of the Pacific nations.

We work closely together, all four services for one cause. There's a good chance that in the coming years you may see each other again thousands of miles from Baton Rouge.

So you have an illustrious legacy to follow. And now it is your turn. It is your turn to join that great legacy, and to build a greater legacy of your very own. You'll need absolutely everything you learned here. And you'll need everything that brought you here, that sense of spirit and adventure that brought you to the ROTC program in the first place.

Speaking to the brand new Ensigns and Second Lieutenants of the Navy and Marines, you, like all Sailors and Marines, look to the sea. You look to the far horizon, wanting to know what is beyond. But all of you, regardless of what is over that horizon, will be able deal with whatever is

there. Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors, Marines, stand the watch, protect our country, and protect all of us, every day.

Today only one percent of America wears the cloth of this country. One percent protects the other 99 percent of us.

I have absolute faith and confidence that you can, and will, deal with whatever is over that horizon. You will do so in an ethical, professional, and compassionate way; that you will well represent the nation regardless of where you are and what role you play. I have confidence in that because the future of our country depends on it.

So from the Navy: Semper Fortis - Always Courageous.

From the Marine Corps: Semper Fidelis - Always Faithful.

Geaux Tigers.