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The Honorable Ray Mabus
Secretary of the Navy
USS ZUMWALT Christening
12 April 2014

I am honored to be here today with some very distinguished guests to participate in one of the most important ceremonies we have in the Navy, christening a new ship for our fleet.

Governor LePage, thank you for hosting us here today.

Senators Susan Collins and Angus King and Representatives Mike Michaud and Chellie Pingree are great supporters of the Navy and Marine Corps, but as you've heard here today, they are equally strong and effective advocates for this exceptional shipyard, Bath Iron Works. Without them and without the efforts of those who work each day at B-I-W, we would not have the fleet we have today, nor would we be building that fleet to 300 ships by the end of the decade. I know Maine is proud of its representatives, and I know Fred Harris is proud of its workforce.

From a little south of Maine we have another staunch Navy supporter, Congressman Jeff Miller of Florida, who chairs Veterans Affairs and serves on the Armed Services Committee in the House. Helping him work on behalf of those who defend our country is his military legislative assistant, James Zumwalt, the grandson of Admiral Elmo Zumwalt.

I too want to thank the Zumwalt family. Navy families never get the credit they deserve. They sacrifice right alongside their spouse or parent, moving from town to town as their Sailor – or their Sailors – move from ship to ship.

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The Navy family is represented by some other special guests. Jennifer Bennet is one of those courageous Naval Sea System Command (NAVSEA) employees who survived the horrific attack on the Washington Navy Yard last September. The family of J.J. Johnson, one of 12 heroes we lost that day, is also here with us, as is NAVSEA Commander, Vice Admiral Willy Hilarides, who also survived that awful day.

It is fitting NAVSEA is so well represented today as well. NAVSEA's civilian and uniform personnel are responsible for developing, delivering and maintaining Navy's ships, submarines and systems. Their designs are then funded by Congress and then turned into reality here at Bath and at our other shipyards around the nation. That partnership between industry, elected leaders and Navy demonstrates our nation's strength and permits us to defend our nation.

But it is most fitting that this ship will bear the name of Admiral Elmo "Bud" Zumwalt. Others have already described the technological advances this ship represents and the cutting edge innovations aboard her. She is in the truest sense, the first of her class.

So too was Elmo Zumwalt.

As a junior officer in WWII he was awarded the Bronze Star with combat distinguishing device for his actions aboard the destroyer USS ROBINSON at the Battle for Leyte Gulf. At the war's end he commanded the Japanese river gunboat ATAKA as a prize ship with 200 Sailors aboard.

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He and his crew were the first U.S. forces in Shanghai, restoring order and helping disarm the surrendering Japanese.

He was awarded a commendation with combat distinguishing device during Korea after navigating the battleship WISCONSIN close to shore to provide gunfire support to Soldiers and Marines against North Korean and Chinese forces. During Vietnam he led our Sailors and Marines as the Commander Naval Forces and Chief of the Naval Advisory Group.

But his heroism went even beyond his exemplary combat record, beyond his Asiatic-Pacific Campaign and Vietnam Service medals, each with seven stars. He was one of the most forward thinking leaders our Navy has ever known. Innovation and critical thinking were his hallmarks. At the heart of it all was his devotion to people and his passion for justice.

I am proud to say he was my CNO. As a junior officer serving aboard the USS LITTLE ROCK in the early 1970s, I saw first hand the impact of his leadership and the affection he earned from those who served under him, including me. He was a no nonsense leader, who insisted on getting rid of what he called the “Mickey Mouse” rules and regulations that got in the way of Sailors doing their jobs. In hindsight, however, if you’ve seen my picture as a JO, you may agree his policy on beards was a stretch.

But his lasting and most important legacy, the one I see everywhere I travel as Secretary of the Navy, was his commitment to the fundamental ideals of the democracy he spent his career

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defending. His efforts embodied the principal that we all are created equal as he led the fight to tear down the barriers of race and gender that held back our Navy.

He was selected at 49 as the youngest Admiral and CNO largely because of his advocacy for rapid and drastic change in how the Navy treated its people. On his watch, the first woman and the first African American officers earned their promotion to Flag Rank, the first women became naval aviators and service as stewards was no longer the only option for Filipino Sailors. His legacy, documented in his famous Z-grams, can be seen in the diversity of our fleet today and, as he recognized, it is that very diversity that has always been the strength of our nation.

The results were immediate. Re-enlistments, which were at an all time low when he became CNO in 1970,

From serving at the Naval War and National War colleges, to his work for my predecessor Secretary Paul Nitze, to his founding of the CNO's Systems Analysis Group, he was a thinking officer and a creative leader. From naval operations, strategy and tactics, to personnel policies that fought discrimination or simply made Sailors' lives better, he wasn't afraid to try something new, to chart a new course away from conventional wisdom, or to take on entrenched institutional interests. He said later in life that he had "a long list of friends and a long list of enemies and I'm equally proud of both."

When he retired from active duty in 1974, he took off his uniform, but he did not shed his commitment to those with whom he had served. His fight on behalf of veterans, especially those

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sickened in war, and on behalf of their families eventually earned him the nation's highest civilian honor: the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Innovation, commitment to forward thinking, an ability to see beyond the horizon; that is what we honor today as a name and what is embodied today in this ship: the DDG-1000, which we are about to christen the USS ELMO ZUMWALT. One of the most innovative ships that our Navy has built in decades is a perfect way to remember his innovative legacy. As you have heard from Secretary Stackley and others, this ship is a modern marvel. It is going to take smart, creative, and hard-working Sailors like Bud Zumwalt to help us put her through her paces and develop how she is going to deploy and how she will help the Navy support our allies, to assist those in need and to deter and, if necessary, defeat any adversary.

The Navy does that by providing presence around the world, by being in the right place, not just at the right time, but all the time. It is unique in that ability because we do not need to take up one inch of foreign soil and because we have the capacity to remain for a very long time.

This ship will contribute to providing that presence, and protecting America. It will participate in missions all over the globe, working with our partners and friends, and testing creative new operational concepts. This new class of ships will create exciting opportunities for the Navy and Marine Corps to help execute our defense strategy. They will serve our nation for years into the future, sailing the seven seas, from our shores to the wide expanses of the Pacific, on patrol and providing presence.

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American technology and innovation have always led the world, from our first six frigates through the days of the Ironclads, to today's nuclear powered attack submarines and aircraft carriers, to innovative and powerful new ships like ZUMWALT. They give us a combat advantage around the world.

Most important, however, is something that Admiral Zumwalt knew and to which he committed his career. It is something that I learned while serving in his Navy and that I am reminded of every single day as Secretary. The heart of our Navy and our most important priority, the thing that gives us the edge no matter what the circumstances, are the skilled, the dedicated, the always courageous United States Sailor.

Today, as you look around, you see the veterans who have served our nation in far flung places. You see the Brown Water Sailors, the veterans who Admiral Zumwalt led in Vietnam, who join us here today to honor him. You also see our Sailors here with us today, in uniform. You see them today, but most of the time, you can't see them because they are far from home and far from their families.

They are America's Away Team. So it is fitting and proper that we never miss an opportunity when they are home, when they are with us and with their families, to remember them, to thank them. Thank them for their service. Thank them for the sacrifice that they and they families make. And thank them for providing the presence that keeps us safe every single day and night.

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Admiral Zumwalt never forgot those Sailors and Marines and Admiral, we have not forgotten you. It is time to christen this incredible new ship, to honor Admiral Zumwalt, so her crew can take her to sea in defense of our nation, as her namesake did and as their predecessors have done for 238 years.

Semper Fortis. ALWAYS Courageous.

Thank you.