

AS DELIVERED

Remarks by the Secretary of the Navy  
Ray Mabus  
USNA Forrestal Lecture  
Annapolis, MD  
Monday, 1 October 2012

Thank you very much. I am honored to be here tonight to deliver the Forrestal Lecture. I want to get a couple things out of the way first so we can get right on with the lecture. First, “Beat Army.” And second, in my capacity as Secretary of the Navy, I hereby grant you an alpha weekend. If I was really smart, I would quit right now. This event is a whole lot more than just a tribute to a predecessor of mine as Secretary of the Navy and our first Secretary of Defense. It is an important opportunity for the future leaders of our Navy and Marine Corps sitting here tonight to hear from those who currently are charged with our national security.

Each of you has already demonstrated your good judgment in choosing Annapolis over some more remote campus, say in Colorado or New York. Each of you, by being here as a Midshipman, has demonstrated your commitment to doing something bigger than yourself, to contributing, in a very direct way, to the security and the future of our country. I know that each of you understands the critical role the Navy and Marine Corps have played and will continue to play in defending our nation and in advancing freedom around the world.

So, I think it’s fitting for me, as the civilian leader of the Navy and Marine Corps, to discuss where we are headed and what we have tried to do in the past three and a half years on my watch to ensure you have the tools you will need to face the challenges ahead and to extend and enhance the traditions and the missions of the Naval Services.

So, through all that, I really hope to avoid offering any more support for the alternative name for this lecture and you know what that is. Come on...you do...”Bore-us-all”.

Alright, here is the lecture.

Effective leadership requires a vision for the world and the way ahead, but that vision should be informed by history. And where the Navy is concerned, I think an important lesson can be drawn from the very distant past, in this case from the Athenian Navy history in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. This history is detailed in a book that I would highly recommend, *Lords of the Sea*. Author John Hale argues in it that Athens had her Golden Age because of two major and intertwined developments: the rise of the world’s first experiment in democracy and the development of a navy. In fact, that Golden Age is bounded by two naval events: the Athenian fleet’s victory at Salamis over the Persians in 480 BC and the Macedonian takeover of their great naval base at Piraeus nearly six generations later.

The beginnings of the Athenian Navy contained the seeds that grew into the Athenian democracy. The citizens of Athens voted to create the Fleet, then those same citizens built and manned it.

Hale quotes Aristotle on the simple logic of how this happened: Having powered the victory at Salamis, the citizens of Athens expected to exert power over the governance of their own lives.

That naval victory over an enemy with significantly superior numbers marked the opening of a period of democracy and enlightenment that saw the rise of statesmen like Pericles, historians like Thucydides, and some of the first plays in western literature by authors like Sophocles and Aeschylus. But in fact each of those people, who are still well known two and half millennia later, first gained renown in the Athenian Navy. Pericles, Thucydides and Sophocles were all naval commanders. Aeschylus was not a commander, but he rode on an Athenian ship in the battle of Salamis, an experience he recounted in *Persians*, the world's oldest surviving play.

There were second and third order positive effects of Athens' turn toward the sea, even as her prime competitor, Sparta, remained largely rooted to the soil. Its navy protected and promoted commerce, making Athens the richest city in the Mediterranean at the time and also the most diverse. In turn, diversity and prosperity promoted open-mindedness, tolerance, and a willingness to experiment as a result of exposure to new ideas, new products, new cultures.

The end of this Golden Age of Athens is a long and complex tale, but I think it is not unfair to suggest as Hale does, that it was hastened by a failure of vision. Instead of looking outward, toward the sea and the future, Athens began to turn inward toward more transitory and selfish concerns of that day. And in no small measure, Athens failed when it failed to support its Navy.

Those who join the Naval Services are by their very nature innovators and risk takers who look toward the horizon and the possibilities that lie beyond. This was true in Athens, and it has been true throughout history. It has been true in our own Navy and our Nation and we cannot afford to lose those qualities.

The link between our Nation and our Navy can be seen clearly in our own history.

We declared independence at Philadelphia in 1776. We won independence at Yorktown in 1781. But we guaranteed our independence and ensured our future in the War of 1812 when we repeatedly defeated the British Navy, then the most powerful on the high seas. It can be fairly said that one of the main reasons we have our Constitution is because, under the Articles of Confederation, we could not raise a national Navy to confront the Barbary pirates.

We have remained a nation committed to the seas and to a strong Navy: from our original six frigates of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century; to the then-revolutionary coal-fired ironclads of the second half of that century; to the Great White Fleet that ushered America in as a world power on the world stage at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; to the fleet that rebounded from Pearl Harbor to defeat aggression in World War II; and through the fleet which I served and gave us deterrence and protection during the Cold War.

In the last seven decades, the U.S. Navy has been a global force, protecting sea lanes around the world for free and lawful commerce and passage. And, maybe for the first time in history, we are securing the seas for not just our own ships, but for all ships.

What the Navy and Marine Corps uniquely do is provide our national leadership with the options to meet any situation. President Kennedy, almost 50 years ago exactly, relied on the Navy to create “quarantine” during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, achieving the outcome that was desired while avoiding possible escalation into nuclear war. Since then, the Navy and Marine Corps have continued to provide that flexibility to our Commander in Chief, whether it is meeting high-end conventional threats or asymmetrical ones, or providing humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters.

But in the final analysis, what makes the Navy and Marine Corps the finest expeditionary fighting force the world has ever known is our Sailors and our Marines.

When I visited *USS Ronald Reagan* off the coast of Japan in the Spring of 2011, just a couple of weeks after the devastating tsunami and earthquake, I got a briefing on the operations that had been planned and carried out—operations which were unforeseen when the strike group left homeport – operations which had to be executed incredibly fast. In a room full of Admirals and Captains, I was briefed by a lieutenant junior grade and a second class petty officer—the second class was 20 years old—on what was planned and what they had done. Nowhere else in the world is that kind of responsibility pushed down to that level or to those ages. Nowhere else in the world hopes for the superior execution from those young, junior officers and enlisted that we expect as a matter of course in the Navy and Marine Corps.

In the last decade, because of very high operational tempos, we placed a great deal of stress on our force, and on our families. So, our people have been a primary focus of my tenure as Secretary.

We’ve launched the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Sailor and Marine - an initiative to assure that we will have the most resilient, the most fit, the most healthy, and the most prepared force we can possibly have.

And we want to look at issues across the board, not just stovepipe them, and we want to help our Sailors and Marines avoid career altering or ending or life altering or ending incidents.

A factor which is very often present during these incidents that can end a career or a life is alcohol. We know alcohol is a significant contributing factor in DUIs, in domestic violence, in sexual assault, in suicide, and even in fitness. If we know that it would be irresponsible not to try to address it. The Academy here has been particularly effective at reducing incidents of alcohol abuse. While leadership, led by our great superintendent Mike Miller, made it a priority, this Brigade of Midshipmen took ownership, and created a culture of awareness and understanding that made your alcohol awareness program a success.

But more has to be done and has to be done fleet-wide. Like everything else, success depends more on than just having a policy; the people in this room and the people around the Fleet have to be the key to changing our culture.

21st Century Sailor and Marine also aims to make our force more resilient, but we also want military service to reflect America's core values of equal opportunity and equal justice. We are moving toward ending the final barriers to where women may serve, including, opening up submarines on my watch. And I am happy that today it doesn't matter who you love as long as you love your country enough to wear its uniform.

The best Sailors and Marines in the world is what we have. And the best Sailors and Marines in the world deserve the best equipment in the world and the best platforms in the world and that's been another priority. On September 11th, 2001, our Navy Fleet stood at 316 ships and we had 377,000 Sailors. When I took office less than eight years later in 2009, despite one of the great military build-ups in our history, our Navy had 33 fewer ships and we had almost 49,000 fewer sailors. We simply weren't building enough ships to replace those being retired. For example, in 2008, the Navy built only three ships, and that impacts not just the fleet size, but our shipyards in the industrial base.

Since December 2010, despite a much tougher fiscal environment, the Navy has put 42 ships under contract, most of them fixed-price, multi-year deals that assure value for taxpayers, certainty for industry and strength for our Nation. As a result, our fleet, our Navy will reach 300 ships before the end of this decade.

But it's not enough to have great platforms if we cannot operate them. I am sure you have heard that energy has been a particular focus of mine and we are moving to change the kinds of energy we use and how much we use. We are doing this for one reason: to make us better warfighters.

In the last four years, America has reduced our dependence on foreign oil but we still buy too much from countries that may not have our best interests at heart. We would never allow these countries to build our ships or our aircraft or our ground vehicles, but we give them a say on whether our ships sail, our aircraft fly or our ground vehicles operate because we buy fuel from them.

And even if we could produce all the oil we needed from domestic sources, oil is the global commodity, with its price often based on rumor and speculation.

The Department of the Navy this year, 2012, got an unexpected \$500 million bill because of price spikes in oil. There are not that many places to get that sort of money. You have to go to places like operations and maintenance or, if the bill gets big enough, you have to start cutting platforms, and I don't think I or any Secretary should have to make those kinds of decisions. So, we are taking some steps to avoid those choices. Some of those steps may, in the short run, require additional investments, but they will pay off in the long run in far larger savings and in far greater energy security. And, we are already seeing some return on our investments.

Sailors and Marines, from the Blue Angels to SWOs to Marines fighting in Afghanistan have embraced renewable energy, energy efficiency and alternative fuels because they know first hand these measures make them safer, more effective, better warfighters.

There are a whole lot of examples: Marines in some of the heaviest fighting in Afghanistan cutting their fossil fuel use by up to 90 percent. SEAL teams in the field testing equipment to get to net zero in terms of fuel and water. A hybrid drive on USS MAKIN ISLAND saved almost half its budgeted fuel amount on its last deployment. This past summer, we demonstrated the “Great Green Fleet” as part of RIMPAC. Every type of aircraft that flew off the carrier and every surface ship in the strike group did so on 50-50 blend of biofuels.

There is clear and compelling evidence that these efforts are important for national security, they will save money and they will save lives. But there are still some who question why the Navy is doing this. And, so once again I would say, just take a look at our history. The Navy has always been a leader in energy innovation. We moved from sail to coal in the 1850’s. We moved from coal to oil in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. And we pioneered the safe use of nuclear in the 1950’s. And every single time, every single time we did that, there were naysayers. “You are trading one very proven form of energy for something you don’t know is going to work. You are trading something cheaper, in the case of air is free, for something that is going to cost more money.” And frankly if price alone were the only issue we worried about, we still wouldn’t be buying nuclear subs and carriers because it is still more expensive than conventional ones. But they are more capable. They give us an edge. And as Secretary, I am committed to ensuring that the Navy and Marine Corps always has that edge.

I want to say that none of this, none of what we’ve accomplished in the last three and a half years would have been possible without the full support and the hard work the very top leadership in the Navy and Marine Corps, beginning with the Commandant of the Marine Corps, James Amos and the Chief of Naval Operations, Jon Greenert. They and all the leadership, all the leadership around the world, have been true and full partners just the way our system is supposed to work, working with civilian leaders and military leaders to protect our country and her interests around the world.

We have a glorious Naval heritage; one which has no equal. You are a part of that now and soon you will become part of the leadership of our Naval Services and it is at a critical time for our Navy and our Nation. The new defense strategy announced by the President in January is a maritime-centric strategy. Whether it is the focus on the Western Pacific and the Arabian Gulf or the need to continue to build partnerships around the world, this new strategy requires...demands a strong, flexible, great Navy, great Marine Corps. Much has been asked and much responsibility has been placed on our Naval Services particularly in the last decade. More responsibility is being required under this new strategy. This is a time and this is a future when so much depends on our Naval Services. This is the Navy and Marine Corps you will lead. This is the place you learn the qualities that it will take to lead.

Every one of you are taught from the moment you arrive here about the core values of the Navy and Marine Corps: honor, courage, commitment.

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I think honor is about being the same person in private that you are in public. When I told my father, who had a dim view of politics, that I was thinking of running for office, his only advice to me was: "Always be true to yourself and what you believe in." Honor is also being willing to be held accountable. It was honor after all - along with their lives and fortunes - that the signers pledged to each other at the end of the Declaration of Independence, risking all to create this nation.

Courage is not just the acts of heroism we are fortunate to have from those who serve, although those are absolutely and certainly courageous and deserve our commendation and our respect. But courage is also the willingness to keep going in the face of adversity. The willingness to try again after you fail.

And commitment to me is all about faith. The Athenian citizens who joined their navy and rowed their triremes against far more powerful forces had faith. Our founding fathers had faith. You and everyone before you who came at Annapolis have demonstrated faith, faith in yourself, faith in this country, faith in the country that you seek to serve and faith in the ideals for which it stands.

My dad, who I mentioned, was a child of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Born in 1901, he died at the age of 85 in 1986. He owned the hardware store in Ackerman, Mississippi, a town of 1,000 people in North-central Mississippi and he also grew trees for a living.

The last year of his life he did not cut a single tree, but he planted thousands, and he did that with the absolute certainty that he would never see any benefit from a single one of those trees.

But he did it. He did it as an act of faith and as an act of hope. He did it for his granddaughters, whom he never got to meet. He did it for future generations of my family who I will never meet.

It is the same kind of faith this nation is bestowing on you. It is the faith in our future, in our way of life, in this great, unique country of ours. This faith is to be treasured and nurtured and grown – like those trees – and like those trees to be passed on to those who follow you, bright and unsullied.

That is the tradition and mission of the United States Naval Services. Semper Fortis. Semper Fidelis. Thank you.