

Remarks by the Honorable Ray Mabus  
Secretary of the Navy  
United States Naval Academy  
Graduation and Commissioning Ceremonies  
Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium  
Annapolis, MD  
Friday, 22 May 2009

President Obama, on this, your first commencement at a Service Academy, let me say what an honor it is for the Graduating Class of Midshipmen to be welcomed into the ranks of Naval Officers by their new Commander In Chief.

Governor O'Malley; Admiral Fowler, and the entire Academy staff who have contributed so much to the Class of 2009.

Distinguished guests and the most distinguished guests of all, you proud parents.

Ladies and gentlemen – welcome. And to each of you being commissioned today, let me salute you for your achievement and your commitment to serve. You come from every corner of America and many nations, from many different backgrounds and diverse cultures, and yet you carry a common faith in the meaning and mission of freedom. And now, you share a lasting bond.

It's a bond first forged when each of you sent your letters of regret to West Point. Clearly, this Academy harbors exceptional decision-makers.

And today, we salute you most for making the ultimate decision: to voluntarily put yourselves in harm's way so that others may live in peace. Some of you will carry out this commitment in Navy uniforms, others as Marines. But no matter the color, you will all wear the cloth of our Nation.

I know you will wear it well because for the past four years you have been tested time and time again. Each test has made you stronger, better preparing you for the challenges ahead.

Now begins a new adventure in your life, and rest assured, you will continue to face challenges. Leading you through them will be a President who knows a thing or two about challenges. He's been challenged to lead our Nation in a time of worldwide danger and the gravest economic crisis in three quarters of a century.

He comes here today as he came into office: President Obama believes in the character of this Country, and he sees it in the dedication of our service-members. He sees it in you. He believes in every one of you and your high purpose as Sailors and Marines. In his Inaugural Address, when he told the world: “We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense.” To our adversaries, he issued this warning: “you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you.”

These pledges were not made lightly. Rather, they were made knowing that sacrifice would be necessary to bring about a new era of peace.

And let me say it plainly as well: the will of America is strong, and we will prevail. Mr. President, the Class of 2009 is more than equal to whatever task you set before them, and they fully share your commitment to defending this greatest of nations and its ideals. Mr. President, you have often spoken of how the arc of your life would only have been possible in America. Everyone here has lived their own part of the Dream that is quintessentially America. You can be sure that the Country which allows and nurtures such dreams will be well-protected by the young men and women before you, and by our entire Navy and Marine Corps.

Thank you and Godspeed.