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Office of the Vice President  
Newport News, Virginia

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REMARKS OF THE VICE PRESIDENT  
AT THE  
CEREMONY LAUNCHING OF THE  
DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER NUCLEAR-POWERED AIRCRAFT CARRIER  
NEWPORT NEWS SHIPBUILDING  
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA

October 11, 1975

Mrs. Eisenhower, and members of the Eisenhower family, Mr. Vinson, Distinguished representatives of the Congress, Governor Godwin, Secretary Clements, Secretary Middendorf, Admiral Holloway, Admiral Rickover, Mr. Diesel, Honored guests, and men and women of Newport News shipyard -- builders of our Nation's entire nuclear carrier force: It is a privilege -- it is a high honor -- to participate in this unique ceremony as a representative of our great President, Gerald Ford.

We are here on the eve of the Navy's 200th anniversary to hail a most significant and timely investment in the future of America: To launch this awe-inspiring nuclear powered aircraft carrier, proudly bearing the illustrious name of our great military leader and President, Dwight D. Eisenhower; and to lay the keel of a sister-ship most appropriately named and with warm affection for that far-sighted advocate of a strong Navy in war and peace, Representative Carl Vinson.

Together, these mighty vessels evidence the will and the resolve of the United States of America: To preserve an endangered freedom of the seas, and to meet the growing challenges we face with strength and with confidence.

From the beginning of this Nation, we have looked to the sea for our safety, our security, our well-being. Our competence to defend the sea lanes, protect our commerce, shield our coasts, has been crucial to our survival and our success: We won our freedom with French naval support at Yorktown, and spanned vast oceans to tip the scales for the victories of two World Wars.

In World War II, we rebounded from the crushing attack on Pearl Harbor, and the terrible days when American shipping was burning and sinking off our Atlantic Coast, to build the greatest Navy the world has ever known, a Navy that insured Allied victory. That Navy has underwritten our commitment to freedom ever since -- with the aircraft carrier as a key. But today we confront an increasingly formidable challenge -- and this occasion presents an opportunity to examine that challenge realistically -- "to tell it like it is".

During the last two decades, the Soviet Union has been building a totally new Navy: An impressive missile-oriented force, that will include new aircraft carriers, a Soviet Navy that was capable of mobilizing its nuclear submarines, some 200 surface ships and 400 aircraft in three oceans and four seas for maneuvers last April, controlled through a sophisticated, world-wide communications network including satellites. n

One must respect Fleet Admiral Gorshkov, the architect of this unique achievement, for what he has accomplished for his country in the short space of two decades. He has transformed the Soviet Navy and effectively integrated it with a total Soviet effort that challenges us in every important element of military strength.

The Soviets have developed the most comprehensive intelligence complex the world has ever known -- while we run the risk of destroying our own intelligence system with headlines. They have made a massive investment of scientists and resources in military research and development that pares away our qualitative lead in: strategic missiles; sophisticated aircraft; and, modernized armies. And in the face of all this, while the Red Fleets have been growing, ours have been cut in half -- back to the days before Pearl Harbor.

And what of detente? Under the skillful leadership of President Ford and Secretary Kissinger, we have made solid progress toward reducing the risks of global destruction and building a more peaceful world. They are keenly aware that, in a complex, competitive, ideologically-divided world, we can achieve the benefits of detente only if we maintain our will as a free people -- only if we are strong militarily, economically, and politically. Freedom of the seas is crucial to that strength in all these categories -- and therefore the strength of the United States Navy is critical to the future of freedom in the world.

Militarily, we have security pacts with some 40 Nations. Our NATO lifeline across the Atlantic is essential to the defense of Western Europe. Our close security relationship with our Western Hemisphere neighbors has just been reaffirmed. Our presence in the Mediterranean and other seas is a strong influence for stability and peace in areas of turmoil and danger.

Economically, we rely on the sea lanes for 99 per cent of our overseas trade -- vitally affecting the jobs and living standards of all Americans. Our dependence on imported energy and raw materials is still growing -- dangerously. And our allies are even more dependent on open sea lanes for their energy and resources -- which affect not only their standard of living but also their freedom.

Politically, we are witnessing the use of naval forces to support political goals, by those who still firmly believe that "ideological struggle" is "objectively inevitable." Admiral Gorshkov has observed in his writings how political goals can be achieved by merely threatening to initiate military operations. Soviet warships are now a constant presence in strategic ocean areas and off the shores of world trouble spots.

Seven years ago, Admiral Gorshkov announced -- and I quote his words -- that "Sooner or later, the United States will have to understand that it no longer has mastery of the seas..." And three years ago, Admiral Gorshkov observed: "...history shows that those States which do not have naval forces at their disposal have not been able to hold the status of a great power for very long."

Thus today we launch EISENHOWER and lay the keel of VINSON with realistic appreciation: That the price of liberty is not cheap, that our strength is the only basis of detente, and that preservation of American ideals -- with all they mean for the dignity of the individual as a spiritual being, and for the welfare of mankind -- demands sacrifice and sustained devotion to freedom on the part of all of us.

Let these great ships stand to sea in the name of human freedom: Glorious symbols of a renewed Declaration of Independence from tyranny, triumphant proof that an awakened America sails forth into its Third Century dedicated anew to the preservation of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

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