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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
CELEBRATION OF THE
200TH BIRTHDAY OF THE U.S. NAVY

LEUTZE PARK
THE WASHINGTON NAVY YARD

12:23 P.M. EDT

Admiral Holloway, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

At the outset, may I express my very deep personal gratitude for your thoughtfulness and the kindness of the Navy in giving to me those two wonderful momentos that reflect, of course, the history and the tradition of the Navy itself.

I am very, very proud and highly honored to salute this special day, marking the 200th anniversary of the United States Navy. Those of us who love the Navy and who have gone to sea in her ships know that the history of the Navy is the history of the United States.

Our Navy remains the symbol of the United States, of our dedicated and skilled sailors, of our technological genius and our massive, but controlled, military strength which patrols the oceans of the world on a mission of peace.

I pledge to you today that I remain fully committed to a Navy second to none in readiness and capability, a Navy devoted to the Nation's highest ideal.

Since our first sailing ship mounted a cannon, our sailors have protected America at home and throughout the world. As we begin the celebration of our national Bicentennial, much has changed, but the Navy remains steadfast as our first line of guardian of liberty and peace.

It took Naval power to win our freedom. It still takes Naval power to preserve freedom. As President, and as Commander-in-Chief, I will do all that I can to keep the United States Navy supplied with the best and the most modern ships, weapons, training and equipment in the world today.

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It is my sworn duty to maintain the power for peace that the Navy symbolizes. The credibility of the United States, in the eyes of both our friends and political adversaries, depends upon the courage, the skill and the discipline of the men and women of the United States Navy.

Any assessment of our military economic and moral strength must take into account the respect the United States commands on the high seas. My budget recommendations for national defense are the minimum essential for our safety, and I might add I am more than disappointed that in too many instances these budget recommendations for weapons, for equipment, for this and for that have been so deeply cut.

Some now advance the misguided notion that Americans are no longer fighting anywhere, because we are seeking to broaden every channel to peace, we can afford the luxury of some new domestic programs out of defense cutbacks.

I am convinced that the adequate spending for national defense is an insurance policy, one for peace that we cannot afford to be without.

Certainly, the most important obligation of Government is to guarantee all citizens protection of their lives and freedom against outside attack.

Today, that protection is our principal hope for peace. What expense item in our Federal budget is more essential? Obviously, from my previous remarks, I will resist to the utmost the scuttling of the United States Navy in every way available to me.

On the 200th anniversary of our heroic Navy, I appeal to the common sense and courage of the American people. At home, we are making real progress on the problems that beset our Nation. It is not the time to dismantle our defenses.

I reject the prophets of doom who see nothing but depression at home and defeat abroad. I reject any advice to pull down the Stars and Stripes and sail home from the seas of the world to safe anchorage at home port.

If we do so, our home ports will no longer be safe. You know it and I know it. Under my Presidency, we will neither furl the flag nor abandon hope. We will maintain constancy and credibility of American strength at home, as on the seas of the world.

Thank you very much, and Godspeed to all hands.

END (AT 12:28 P.M. EDT)