

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OCTOBER 11, 1975

Office of the Vice President
(Newport News, Virginia)

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

(AT 10:45 A.M. EDT)

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Mrs. Eisenhower and members of the Eisenhower family, Senator Nunn, we are deeply grateful to you for reading that powerful speech of Congressman Carl Vinson. We all deeply miss him on this occasion. But we know he will be there for the launching of the Vinson.

Governor Godwin, Secretary Clements, Secretary Middendorf, Admiral Holloway, Admiral Rickover, Mr. Diesel, honored guests, and men and women of the United States Navy, the Newport News shipyard builders of our nations nuclear carrier force, it is a privilege, it is a high honor to participate in this unique ceremony as the representative of our great President, Gerald Ford.

We are here on the eve of the Navy's 200th Anniversary to hail a 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 our sister ship most appropriately named 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 resolve of the United States of America, to preserve an endangered freedom of the seas and to meet the growing challenge we face with strength and with confidence.

From the beginning of this nation we have looked to the sea for our safety, our security, and 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 and perilous oceans to tip the scales for victory in two World Wars.

In World War II we rebounded from the crushing attack on Pearl Harbor. In 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 ensured Allied victories. That Navy has underwritten our commitment to freedom ever since, with the aircraft carrier as a key.

MORE

But today, we are increasingly, formidably challenged. This occasion permits an opportunity to examine that challenge realistically, to tell it like it is.

During the last two decades, the Soviet Union has built a totally new Navy, an impressive, missile-oriented force that will include two 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 coordinated maneuvers last April, all controlled through a sophisticated world-wide communications network, including satellites.

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 efficiently 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.

(Applause.)

They have 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.

In the face of all this, while the Red Fleet has been growing, ours has been cut in half, back to the days before Pearl Harbor.

What of detente? Under the skillful leadership of President Ford and Secretary Kissinger, we have made solid progress towards 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; therefore, the strength of the United States Navy is critical to the future of freedom in the world.

(Applause.)

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 relationships 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 percent of our overseas trade, vitally affecting the jobs and the

living standards of all Americans. Our dependency on imported energy and raw materials is still growing dangerously. Our allies are even more dependent upon our open sea lanes for their energy and their resources, which affect not only their standard of living but their freedom itself.

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." Three years ago Admiral Gorshkov observed, I quote, "History shows those states that 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 the Eisenhower and lay the keel of the Vinson with realistic appreciation that the price of liberty is not cheap, that our strength is the only basis of detente, and that the preservation of American ideals, with all that they mean for the dignity of the individual as a spiritual being and the welfare of mankind, demands sustained devotion to freedom and sacrifice on the part of all of us.

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

I thank you.

(Applause.)

END

(AT 11:00 A.M. EDT)