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Remarks on Commemorating the USS *Delaware* Commissioning in Wilmington, Delaware

April 2, 2022

The President. My name is Joe Biden. I am Jill's husband. [*Laughter*]

It's always a good day when I get to celebrate Delaware or spend time with servicemembers and their families or introduce Jill. [*Laughter*] That's a trifecta in my family.

Governor Carney, Senator Carper, Senator Coons, Congresswoman Blunt Rochester, Secretary Del Toro, Commander Horton, and all the crew members and families of the USS *Delaware:* I'm genuinely honored to be with you.

This latest ship to carry the USS *Delaware* is part of a long—the name—is part of a long tradition of serving our Nation proudly and strengthening our Nation's security—the security of the United States of America—not just us, but our allies and partners around the world as well. In fact, it's already been doing that for some time.

So I just want to say thank you to everyone—to everyone—involved in bringing this submarine into service: for those who laid the keel, for those sailors who will crew it and all—through all the years to come.

And I want you to know that I've had an incredible partner. Jill has watched over the progress of the USS *Delaware* for years. The daughter of a Navy signalman during World War II, the mother of a member of the Delaware National Guard, the grandmother of children who experienced having their father deployed away from home for a year at a time. She always holds our military and their families in her heart. And that is not hyperbole, that's real.

And I'm deeply proud of the work she is doing as First Lady with Joining Forces initiative she started with Michelle Obama when she [I; White House correction] was Vice President and now carries on. As First Lady, she doesn't—she's been to more military installations around the world. She's hosted more than 20 events for military families.

And she's working—working—to expand economic opportunities for military spouses who—by the way, in the words of Keats, "They also serve who only stand and wait." And a submariner's spouse stands and waits a lot. And to help military kids for the support they need and to make sure survivors and caregivers have the resources they deserve.

It's a true passion for Jill and for our entire family. As your Commander in Chief, I believe it is our sacred obligation as a nation for—to prepare and equip those troops that we send into harm's way and to care for them and their families when they return home.

Now—now—it's my honor to introduce your First Lady, the sponsor of this great vessel, Jill Biden.

The First Lady. Thank you, Mr. President. [*Laughter*] I must admit, I never get tired of saying that. [*Laughter*]

As this ship's sponsor, it's my pleasure to welcome so many distinguished guests and especially the Secretary of the Navy and Admirals Gilday and Caudle.

Commander Horton, Senior Chief Grammer, and the entire crew of the USS *Delaware*, it's an honor to share this special day with you and your families. I especially want to welcome some of my good friends from Delaware Boots on the Ground. You know, working with you connected

me to a community of incredible military families. And all these years later, your work continues to inspire me, and I hope you can see your influence in our Joining Forces initiative.

So where are my Delaware Boots on the Ground members today? Where are they sitting?

Audience member. They're down.

The First Lady. They're down. They're down. Okay. Wow, you're down there? [*Laughter*]

The State of Delaware has loved the Bidens and cheered for us in most of our triumphant moments. It has carried us through the darkest times in our lives with a kindness that asks for nothing in return. Delaware is family.

I'll never forget the pride I felt when I stood at the Pentagon with Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus, as well as you, Tom, to announce that I would be this ship's sponsor. The USS *Delaware* was nothing more than a drawing then.

In 2016, my grandson Hunter joined me for the keel laying. And I think he felt the important connection that our family has to service then, and it was such a special moment for both of us.

Then, in 2018, I traveled to Newport News for the christening, seeing that simple drawing come to life in a shower of champagne. And I saw the truth of what Secretary Mabus said when it all began, that this vessel will always uphold the First State's motto of "liberty and independence."

So it's difficult to put into words how much it means to be a part of the USS *Delaware* family. It's an incredible honor that I take seriously. I have cherished getting to know this community, from bowling with you at Newport News, to spending time with your families at Fort Groton for the holiday last December. I've seen the heart of this crew, and it makes me feel both proud and humbled to be your shipmate for life.

Today's celebration, like so many things in the past few years, is just a bit out of the ordinary. At the beginning of the pandemic, the *Delaware* became the first ship ever commissioned while underwater, underway. It was a challenge to put a ship in service in the middle of a global pandemic, but you rose to the occasion as you always do.

Even if we are a little delayed in our celebration, today marks the beginning of an incredible journey: this ship's long and faithful service to our country. We may not know what's to come, but we do know this: The challenges will be met with honor, distinction, and valor of the 125 sailors who serve on her decks. You will lead with unparalleled character and courage.

Of course, commissionings also mark a beginning for the families of the sailors, as well. Though the spouses and the children, parents and siblings with us today will stay on dry land, a piece of their hearts will sail away again and again. You too have a mission; you too serve our Nation.

And as we look at this warship, we see its steel bulkheads and unbreakable hull. We see that it's strong enough to withstand the most crushing pressure and slip silently through the deadliest waters. And yet so much of its power is unseen: the engines and sonar, the rudders that give it direction and purpose.

You, the families of this crew, may not wear a uniform, but with your love and support and with your sacrifice and devotion, you are as critical to our mission as the rudder is to this submarine. Sailors, as you venture to new waters, know that the families who remain ashore will not be forgotten by your President or by me. We are working every day to honor the sacrifices that all of you make.

When our son Beau deployed to Iraq, another military mom shared with me a prayer, one that I said every night while he was deployed. And it goes like this:

May the deep waters bring you more solace than strife.

May the friendships you find warm the cold walls of this vessel with laughter.

May you feel the glow of each goodbye embrace long after the horizon has lost the shore.

May that light illuminate even the dimmest berthing.

May you always return home safely to the arms of the people who love you most.

And may God bless our troops and your families no matter where your journey takes you.

Amen.

Governor Carney, Senators Carper and Coons, Congresswoman Blunt Rochester, thank you for this celebration today. And to our sailors: Thank you for your service and sacrifice. Thank you for allowing me to be your shipmate for life.

Everybody is here? Okay?

Senior Chief Petty Officer Travis L. Grammer, USN. Yes, ma'am.

The First Lady. Okay.

Okay, shipmates: Officers and crew of the USS *Delaware*, man our ship and bring her to life!

Crewmembers. Aye, aye, ma'am! [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. at the Port of Wilmington. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro; Cmdr. Matthew Horton, USN, commanding officer, USS *Delaware*; and former First Lady Michelle Obama. He also referred to his grandchildren Natalie P. Biden and R. Hunter Biden II. The First Lady referred to Adm. Michael M. Gilday, USN, Chief of Naval Operations; Rear Adm. Daryl L. Caudle, USN, commander, Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet; former Secretary of the Navy Raymond E. Mabus, Jr.; and Jane Vavala, wife of Maj. Gen. Francis D. Vavala, ARNG (Ret.), former adjutant general, Delaware National Guard.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : USS Delaware commissioning, remarks commemorating in Wilmington, DE.

Locations: Wilmington, DE.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Biden, Natalie P.; Biden, R. Hunter, II; Blunt Rochester, Lisa; Carney, John C., Jr.; Carper, Thomas R.; Coons, Christopher A.; Del Toro, Carlos; Grammer, Travis L.; Horton, Matthew; Obama, Michelle.

Subjects: Armed Forces, U.S. : Military families; Armed Forces, U.S. : Servicemembers :: Service and dedication; Delaware : Governor; Delaware : President's visits; Delaware : USS Delaware commissioning, commemoration ceremony in Wilmington; Veterans : Benefits.

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