

bride; the Secretary of Energy, Secretary Abraham, and his bride.

We've assembled the finest national security team of any administration. We understand our job is to keep the peace. But we also understand in order to do so, our military must be well prepared, well trained, well housed, and well paid.

One of the first policy speeches I gave was to send the message, loud and clear, to the U.S. Congress that we expect there to be a pay raise for those who wear the uniform. But what you can expect from us is a clear mission, a clear, focused mission that says our military will be trained

and ready to fight and win war and, therefore, prevent war from happening in the first place.

We're honored to be here. Thank you for your service to America. Our country and the world is better off for it.

God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1 p.m. at Langley Air Force Base. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary Powell's wife, Alma; Secretary Rumsfeld's wife, Joyce; and Secretary Abraham's wife, Jane. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at the Christening Ceremony for the U.S.S. *Ronald Reagan* in  
Newport News, Virginia  
March 4, 2001

Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. Mr. Secretary, thank you for those kind words. I picked the right man to be the Secretary of Defense at this time in history.

Mrs. Reagan, it is an honor to be with you. Reagan family members, friends of the great President, Laura and I are honored to be here.

We join with the Governor and Senator of this State in asking for God's blessings on those who lost their lives yesterday and for their families.

Bill, thank you very much for your hospitality. Secretary Powell and Secretary Abraham, Leader Lott, Chairman Warner—I can't tell if you're trying to retire me early—[laughter]—or influence my behavior.

Senator Allen, Governor Gilmore, Representative Scott, and Members of Congress, Justice Kennedy, Admiral Clark, welcome. But most of all, I want to welcome the men and women of the United States Navy, including the officers and crew who will soon be on the *Ronald Reagan*.

Looking at the bow of this great ship, we think of those who will sail it and of those who built it. Into this ship, 6 years in the making, we have put the finest of American workmanship. On board this ship, we'll put the finest sailors in the world. And upon this ship, we have put the finest of American names.

Forty-nine years ago, another outstanding American took that name herself. Mrs. Reagan, I know today is your 49th anniversary, wedding anniversary. Since your wedding day, you've seen the name "Reagan" written large in many places, from theater marquees to the archways of great buildings. But there is something especially fitting in the place it holds today, on the newest ship in the greatest navy in the world. When we send her off to sea, it is certain that the *Ronald Reagan* will meet with rough waters as well as smooth, and headwinds as well as fair. But she will sail tall and strong, like the man we have known.

A man cannot be strong forever, but if he is very fortunate, life will send him a

partner to be strong when he is not. In a life of honors, Ronald Reagan has always valued one honor above all, the love of Nancy. It is a love that believes all, hopes all, and endures all. Mrs. Reagan, anyone who has seen you together knows how much you mean to him. I want you to know how much your care and love for him means to America.

It was said of a great architect centuries ago, "If you want to seek his monument, look around you." That is true of Ronald Reagan. We live in a world shaped in so many ways by his will and heart. As President, Ronald Reagan believed without question that tyranny is temporary and the hope of freedom is universal and permanent; that our Nation has a unique goodness and must remain uniquely strong; that God takes the side of justice, because all our rights are His own gifts. The strength of these beliefs gave strength to our allies and hope to political prisoners and courage to average citizens in oppressed nations and leadership to our military and to our country.

Some achievements fade with the years. Ronald Reagan's achievements grow larger with the passing of time. He had a profound vision of America's role in the world as one of peace through strength. And because of Ronald Reagan, the world saw America as a strong and peaceful nation.

Today's world is different from the one he faced and changed. We are no longer divided into armed camps, locked in a careful balance of terror. Yet, freedom still has enemies. Our present dangers are less concentrated and more varied. They come from rogue nations, from terrorism, from missiles that threaten our forces, our friends, our allies, and our homeland. Our times call for new thinking. But the values Ronald Reagan brought to America's conduct in the world will not change.

So as we dedicate this ship, I want to rededicate American policy to Ronald Reagan's vision of optimism, modesty, and resolve. Ronald Reagan's optimism defined

his character, and it defined his Presidency. More than a habit of mind, this optimism sprang from deep confidence in the power and future of American ideals. Great democracies, he believed, are built on the strong foundation of consent and human dignity; any government built on oppression is built on sand. The future, he proclaimed, belongs to the free.

That belief has lost none of its power to inspire hope and change. Around the world today, the expectation of freedom is fed by free markets and expanded by free trade and carried across borders by the Internet. And nations that try to restrict these freedoms are in a losing battle with liberty.

America, by nature, stands for freedom. And we must always remember, we benefit when it expands. So we will stand by those nations moving towards freedom. We'll stand up to those nations who deny freedom and threaten our neighbors or our vital interests, and we will assert emphatically that the future will belong to the free.

At the same time, President Reagan understood that this confidence should never be arrogance. No one was better at using the bully pulpit of the Presidency, but under his leadership America was never a bully.

One of the ways we show the world we take our values seriously is to live by them ourselves. Our Nation cherishes freedom, but we do not own it. While it is the birthright of every American, it is also the equal promise of the religious believer in southern Sudan or an Iraqi farmer in the Tigris Valley or of a child born in China today. We help fulfill that promise not by lecturing the world but by leading it.

Precisely because America is powerful, we must be sensitive about expressing our power and influence. Our goal is to patiently build the momentum of freedom, not create resentment for America itself. We pursue our goals; we will listen to others. We want strong friends to join us, not weak neighbors to dominate. In all our

dealings with other nations, we will display the modesty of true confidence and strength.

Finally, Ronald Reagan understood that the advance of freedom depends on American strength. We must have a military that is second to none and that includes a Navy that is second to none.

As has been mentioned, for the last 60 years, every President has had to ask, "Where are the carriers?" None has ever been disappointed by the Navy's response. Just a few weeks ago, I asked the same question and called upon the *Harry S. Truman* in the Persian Gulf. Ronald Reagan built the military of today, the military that keeps our peace, but we cannot live forever on that legacy. Our challenge is to build a military that will deter and win the wars of the future.

Almost 20 years ago, President Reagan made his first visit to an aircraft carrier, the U.S.S. *Constellation*. He told the sailors how grateful America was that they were there as a powerful force in an uncertain world. One hundred thousand tons of American power, you see over here, will carry forward this proud tradition. In fact, in 2 years, the *Reagan* will actually replace U.S.S. *Constellation*.

What you don't see is what's different between those two magnificent vessels. The island on the *Reagan*'s main deck is almost the same height as that of its predecessors, but it has one less level. The empty space will be filled with cables that will tie the ship into a vast network that connects information and weapons in new ways. This will revolutionize the Navy's ability to project American power over land and sea, assuring access for all our forces wherever our vital interests are threatened.

These new capabilities are the future of our military, not just the Navy but of all

our services. It is a future where a revolution in technology will change the face of war itself. We'll keep the peace by redefining the terms of war. We'll change our military, yet we will never forget that America's strength ultimately depends on the courage and spirit of the men and women who wear the uniform.

Nearly half our ships are at sea right now. One-third are forward-deployed overseas, taking their crew away from family and the comforts of home. In our sleep, we don't think about the enemies that the men and women who wear the uniform deter, the friends they reassure, the freedom in trade they guarantee. Yet, we rest at night protected by the security they provide.

As President, Ronald Reagan understood our duty to these brave Americans, and so do I. Our men and women in uniform give America their best, and we owe them our support in return. These are the defining qualities of Ronald Reagan: optimism, modesty, and strength. They're also the qualities that will guide America in a new century.

So, today the *Ronald Reagan* begins its journey into the bright and peaceful dawn that President Reagan helped to bring. All of us here wish the ship *Ronald Reagan* Godspeed, and we wish Ronald Reagan God's blessings.

God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. at Newport News Shipbuilding. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. James S. Gilmore III of Virginia; William P. Fricks, chairman and chief executive officer, Newport News Shipbuilding; and Admiral Vernon E. Clark, USN, Chief of Naval Operations.