

We saw their valor in the days after that attack, when Americans crowded into recruiting centers across our country, raised their hands to serve, and pledged to defend our people and our freedom.

We saw their valor in the forces who deployed to Afghanistan within weeks of 9/11, closed down the terrorist training camps, and drove the Taliban from power.

We saw their valor in the fearless troops who stormed across the Iraqi desert and destroyed a regime that threatened America.

We saw their valor in battle-tested warriors who signed up for a second or third or fourth tour and made the troop surge in Iraq that I announced 2 years ago today one of the great successes in American military history.

America's Armed Forces have liberated more than 50 million people around the world and made our Nation safer. They have taken the fight to the terrorists abroad so that we have not had to face them here at home. And the world has seen something that almost no one thought possible: More than 7 years after September the 11th, there has not been another terrorist attack on American soil. This is no coincidence.

In addition to our military, many other Americans have worked tirelessly to ensure our safety in the years since 9/11. Law enforcement officials have worked to secure our country and remained watchful against future attacks. Intelligence analysts have tracked information that allowed us to dis-

rupt terrorist plots before they reached our shores. And homeland security agents have worked to secure our ports, our borders, and our skies.

We owe a debt of gratitude to all of these patriots. Because of their devotion to service, many Americans live their lives without the fear and uncertainty that they felt in the days just after 9/11. This continued safety has been a blessing. But we must never allow it to foster complacency. America still faces sworn enemies intent on striking our Nation and our people. And we must remain vigilant for as long as that threat remains.

I know that our men and women in uniform have remained vigilant. These Americans answer the call to defend freedom when it is under attack. They put their lives on the line to defend democracy and keep our country safe. And they inspire a nation with their selflessness and their courage. I am proud to have served as their Commander in Chief.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:55 a.m. on January 9 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 10. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 9, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Commissioning Ceremony of the USS *George H.W. Bush* in Norfolk, Virginia

January 10, 2009

The President. Thank you very much. Secretary Gates, thank you for your introduction. I know I speak on behalf of President 41 when I say it has been a privilege

for both of us to serve with this fine and distinguished man.

I want to thank you all for coming. Laura and I are thrilled to be here to help commission an awesome ship and to honor an

awesome man: President George H.W. Bush.

To prepare for this day, I went back through some of my father's letters. I thought it was especially interesting to read one that he wrote in the late 1940s. He sent it to a friend, and here's what he said, he said: "You should see Georgie now. Whenever I come home, he greets me and talks a blue streak, sentences disjointed of course." [Laughter] "He tries to say everything, and the results are often hilarious." [Laughter] Some things do not change. [Laughter]

The aircraft carrier, which we commission today, may be the Navy's newest ship, but she has already had an interesting past. Her catapult testing took place during an unseasonable cold snap. Her christening was thrown into chaos by a fierce nor'easter. And during construction, the shipyard was closed down because of Hurricane Isabel. So in keeping with this ship's short history, I brought along an equally strong force of nature: my mother. [Laughter]

Mr. Vice President and Lynne, thank you for joining us. Vice President Cheney has been a fabulous Vice President of the United States. Governor Kaine, thank you for your welcoming remarks. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, I appreciate you joining us. Other members of the administration and their families; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen; CNO Gary Roughead; Captain O'Flaherty; other member of the United States Armed Forces and their families; shipyard workers and managers; members of our family who have joined us; and all the friends of George H.W. Bush: We are glad you are here.

The story of the USS *George H.W. Bush* begins in the early days of World War II, when our dad enlisted in the United States Navy. Like many servicemen deployed overseas, he was sustained by a girl he loved back home. From her dorm room, she knitted socks for him. In remote Pacific

atolls, he collected seashells for her. And when he returned home from war, the first thing he did was to make her his bride. And for 64 years ago this week, the love of my father's life has been Barbara Bush.

Over the years, our parents have built a family bound forever by closeness, warmth, and unconditional love. Jeb, Neil, Marvin, and Doro and I will always feel blessed to have had the best father anyone could ever ask for. We will always be inspired by the faith, humor, patriotism, and compassion he taught us through his own example. And for as long we live, we will carry with us dad's other lessons: that integrity and honor are worth more than any title or treasure, and that the truest strength can come from the gentlest soul.

George H.W. Bush has the deep love of his family, the admiration of his friends, and the thanks of a grateful nation. So today we are faced with the—[applause]. So what do you give a guy who has been blessed and has just about everything he has ever needed? Well, an aircraft carrier. [Laughter] The ship that bears our dad's name is more than 95,000 tons of aluminum and steel. She will carry nearly 6,000 of the finest sailors and marines in the world. She represents the craftsmanship of many skilled builders and thousands of hours of preparation. And so I congratulate all of you on this tremendous achievement.

This ship is a fitting tribute to a generation of men with whom my dad was privileged to serve. She's also a tribute to a new generation of American soldiers and sailors and Coast Guard men and women, airmen and marines who have stepped forward to defend the United States America. Again our troops are facing down a brutal enemy, again they are making America and the world safer, and again they will come home in victory.

People often ask what I treasure most about being the President. Nothing comes close to the honor of being your Commander in Chief. Every day, I'm amazed by the skill and courage of our men and

women in uniform. And as we send the USS *George H.W. Bush* into service, I know you will do credit to the sailors who served before you and the good man for whom this ship is named. I ask that God protect this ship and let her know only victory and peace. And I ask God's continued blessings on our wonderful Nation.

Thank you.

[At this point, Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter made brief remarks.]

The President. I hereby place the United States Ship *George H.W. Bush* in commis-

sion. May God bless and guide this warship and all who shall sail in her.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:43 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia; Adm. Gary Roughead, USN, Chief of Naval Operations; and Capt. Kevin E. O'Flaherty, USN, commanding officer, USS *George H.W. Bush*. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of former President George H.W. Bush. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Interview With Brit Hume of FOX News January 7, 2009

Mr. Hume. Mr. President, thank you for doing this.

President Bush. Yes, sir.

Mr. Hume. Welcome back to FOX News Sunday.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Last Days in Office

Mr. Hume. Less than 2 weeks to go, how do you feel?

President Bush. You know, I've got mixed emotions. I'm going to miss being the Commander in Chief of the military. Earlier the past week, I had the honor of having a military parade that said goodbye to the Commander in Chief, and it was an emotional moment for me and Laura.

Mr. Hume. Why?

President Bush. Just because I've got such great respect for the men and women who wear the uniform, and I've been through a lot with them. I have called upon them to do hard tasks. I have met with the families of the fallen. I have been to Walter Reed to see the wounded. And I have been incredibly inspired by their courage, their bravery, their sacrifice.

And I'm going to miss all the folks who have made our life so comfortable here in the White House.

On the other hand, I am looking forward to going back to Texas. I love Texas. I love my wife. And I'm excited about the next chapter in my life. And so all three of those things, you know, are the sweet part of the—what's going to take place on January the 20th.

Reflections on the President's Time in Office

Mr. Hume. People who come to see you here and meet with you, from the outside, are continually taken by surprise by your evident good humor and good mood and the fact that with low poll ratings and various troubles besetting the country and all you've been through, that you're not down—

President Bush. Yes.

Mr. Hume. —that you're fine. And everybody remarks on it. How do you explain that?

President Bush. Well, I'm better than fine. I am proud of the accomplishments of this administration. I am thankful for the people that have worked so hard to