Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening, it is an honor to be here with you celebrating the birthday (October 13, 1775) of the U.S. Navy. Today, I will share some of our country's naval history, enlighten you about today's Navy, and enlist your help in securing/ her future. This is, after all, your Navy - established, financed, and supported by the citizens of our great country for more than 225 years. Many of our naval traditions were inherited from the British Royal navy, because of the large number of our forefathers who served in the Royal Navy. Still other traditions date back to before the founding of our great nation and the American Navy continues to have a style all its own.

Even though more than 225 years have passed since the founding of the U.S. Navy, there are some similarities between past and present. For example, three sailing ships were commissioned by the Navy in 1775. Today we boast more than 300 mighty warships, yet we could always use more ships to fulfill our forward deployment mission. In fact, I believe we're currently checking on the seaworthiness of the original three! Another similarity...in former times, food was dried to last the duration of a voyage. Today we issue freeze-dried meals, but the sailors swear that the food tastes the same! Seriously, we are very proud of our Naval heritage. I'm quite sure there are veterans in this audience who are forever bound to the Navy because of our long-standing traditions and stories of heroism. At the beginning of the American Revolution, some of the settlers could not imagine attempting to fight the British at sea, since they had the largest and most successful navy in the world at the time. However, Americans in the 18th century were also a maritime people. Settlements were concentrated along the coast and the shores of great bays and navigable rivers. Large numbers of Americans engaged in trans-Atlantic trading, fishing, and shipbuilding. At the same time, at least 10,000 Americans were serving in the merchant service. America's shipbuilding industry was well developed. At least one out of every four ships in the British merchant marine was built in the American colonies at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. About 18,000 Americans are thought to have served on British war ships during the French and Indian War, from 1754 to 1763, giving Americans extensive experience in fighting at sea. In addition, the colonial army had conducted a number of maritime operations and engagements with the British. American naval operations during the first year of the American Revolution were crucial to our success. American ships imported munitions essential for the army. American naval forces interfered with British operations, trade, and diplomacy. After securing our independence from Great Britain, we became ever more influential as a maritime nation. Our country has grown from thirteen colonies supplying a small portion of the world's goods to a major producer of the world economy's raw materials, agricultural products, manufactured goods and high technology products. The growth and importance of the Navy has grown in direct proportion to our role in the world economy. Sometimes we tend to forget that the Navy was "downsized" and almost disbanded following the Revolution because of national debt. Then at the beginning of the 19th century, the Navy came alive to meet the threat of the Barbary pirates who were harassing and disrupting American shipping in the Mediterranean between Spain and Africa. Since its birth, the American Navy has come to the aid of freedom around the world and it has taken a lion's share of the hits as well. Events such as Pearl Harbor, Midway, Leyte Gulf, Normandy, Vietnam, Arabian Gulf, the Balkans, the bombing of the USS Cole and the most recent terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 evoke memories of tragedies and victories that linger long after the years pass by. Continuing in its 18th century charter, to protect the seas and the freedoms of the nation, our Navy now extends its reach far beyond our shores and to the oceans around the world. We have more than 100 ships and submarines deployed at any given time. We conduct or participate in exercises and cooperative partnerships with countless foreign nations, foster peaceful relationships and encourage regional stability.

The quality of life for our Sailors has never been better. There have been increases in pay, allowances, and retirement. Housing has been improved worldwide. Shipboard berthing and food is the best ever. The 18th Century Sailor who was allotted 18 inches in which to hang his hammock would not even recognize berthing in a modern warship. The current Navy is smaller than it was during the Cold War, but the demands for deployment have remained the same. That may surprise some people to hear that our demands are so high. As a result, readiness has to be kept high because rotation of the fleet and units is higher than it was during the Cold War. Theater commanders are sharing assets to meet the demands -- which may be the best use of available equipment, but has a high price in wear and tear on equipment and personnel. The Navy is working to keep combat readiness high with realistic training and testing of critical combat sensors and weapons systems. But there is less opportunity for realistic training of combined fleet and air units with reductions due to urban sprawl, domestic noise abatement and zoning laws, environmental concerns, and loss of combat training areas. Despite our being in the major use of force business, the Navy is an environmentally conscious organization. The Navy has led the way in promoting environmentally sound practices in fuel handling, weapons disposal, personnel safety, and operations and exercises. It has led the way in identifying polluted sites on its bases and devising clean-up strategies. Training is done is very different ways. These changes are reflected not only in the new skills being taught to all personnel, but in the hundreds of new jobs created in occupational and environmental safety. The Navy is in a war for people in which the competition to attract, train, and retain people has never been higher. It uses people in literally hundreds of occupations and specialties. It needs your help in finding the talented people not only to serve in uniform to deter, protect, and defend the United States but also for its civilian workforce. And once employed or serving in the Navy, they need your continued support and prayers today just as much as they did in 1775, as the USS Cole and the terrorist attack on the Pentagon have recently reminded us. The American navy today is not the navy of the 18th century. We have fast, mobile platforms using high technology weapons that are capable to operate over the horizon allowing us to attack targets that cannot be seen with human eyes. We have fast, silent platforms operating under the oceans to gain information and provide unparalleled fleet protection and attack capabilities from below the sea. And through naval aviation, it has unparalleled support and can achieve air superiority for force protection, close air support, and offensive operations. The infrastructure to build, maintain, and supply these platforms is immense and in place. With all the new challenges that have been thrust upon the world, the Navy stands steadfast in its commitment to protect our great nation here and around the world. May the United States of America continue to shine as a beacon of freedom and hope for the world. Thank you and I wish you fair winds and following seas.