**Armed Forces Day**

On behalf of all the men and women serving in the United States Navy, both here and abroad, I thank you for inviting me here today. It is an honor and privilege to be with you on Armed Forces Day, as we join together to recognize the brave men and women who have answered the call to protect and defend this nation.

First, allow me to share some history:

Armed Forces Day was established in 1949 when Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson announced that instead of celebrating separate Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force Days, one unified day would be selected to honor all branches of the military. The change was about more than consolidating federal observances. Two years earlier, following the end of World War II, the separate military branches were reorganized and unified under the newly formed Department of Defense.

The first Armed Forces Day signified the new structure of the U.S. military as one cohesive defense team prepared to achieve a lasting peace. It was the first public demonstration of progress under the new military system and the theme of the day was "Teamed for Defense."

Though the reason for its significance has evolved over time, the importance of Armed Forces Day has certainly not diminished.

Today, Armed Forces Day is an opportunity for us to express the enormous debt of gratitude we owe to those who continue to put themselves in harm’s way to maintain our freedom. There are more than one million Americans serving in active duty military and it is *our duty* to make sure each of them knows how much we appreciate their service.

Supporting our troops requires us to not only give thanks but to take action. It means assisting our Sailors and soldiers in rejoining the community when they return from assignments. It means helping military families cope with long absences, and it means volunteering in various efforts that show our commitment to those who serve. Today is a reminder that we all have a role to play in supporting our armed forces.

I’m proud to say that the United States Navy is providing a model for supporting the courageous men and women who join our ranks. The Navy is best known as the nation’s front line in war and peace, and rightfully so, we have Sailors deployed around the world and uniquely positioned to defend our nation’s interests every day. We are America’s away team.

But it may surprise some that the Navy is also recognized as a top 50 employer. Joining the Navy opens opportunities for Sailors to pursue exciting careers that provide personal satisfaction as well as financial stability.

From the high-tech to the high-growth to the awe-inspiring, America’s Navy offers careers and jobs that fit all backgrounds and interests. There are literally hundreds of distinct professional roles in dozens of exciting fields that create leaders and empower regular people to do spectacular things that will shape their future.

We ask a lot of our Sailors. As a maritime nation, the Navy has a substantial role in preserving the American way of life since:

* About 70 percent of the Earth’s surface is covered with water;
* About 80 percent of the world’s people live near the sea; and
* About 90 percent of all world trade by volume travels by sea.

But in return, we provide our Sailors with unequalled experience and unrivaled training, including educational opportunities before, during or after their Navy career that prepares them for lifelong success. This is one important way that we honor the dignity, honor, and professionalism that America's men and women in uniform exhibit every day.

On Armed Forces Day, we cannot forget that there are many evil forces that still wish to do us harm. We live in volatile times with enemies more determined than ever to destroy the image of hope and freedom we project around the world. It is the United States Armed Forces — the greatest force for freedom and security the world has ever known — that stands in their way.

There is no way we can fully repay the debt we owe to those who make unparalleled contributions to the defense of our Nation. Even today, while we are fortunate to attend parades and receptions in observance of their service, our military continues to stand watch, protecting us our and our way of life.

So let us honor their resolve and their strength. And let us pledge to support our brave men and women and their families, not just today, but every day, because every day they are on watch.

Thank you.

God Bless you, and God Bless the United States of America.