

SPEECH  
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It certainly is a pleasure to be back with my friends  
the Navy League once again. Each invitation you extend to  
me is a special honor, and I want you to know I appreciate your  
thinking of me.

I've been doing some thinking about the problems the  
Navy is facing now, and it seems to me to be a good thing the  
Navy and the nation will be celebrating their 200th anniversary  
together next year. It would do us good to consider, during  
the bicentennial celebration, what the Navy has meant to us  
over those 200 years.

If you do that, you realize one thing: there has  
always been a tendency to let the level of readiness slip for

the Navy and the rest of the military during extended times of peace. And then it is always a shock to find out that when we need the services of the military, we need them right then, without delay. There is not time for a build-up when the danger is at hand.

Take the Mayaguez incident, for example. Our ship was siezed, and we needed our Navy and Marine Corps immediately. We needed them not only to be ready to fight, but to be near the fight. Our naval forces were on their way out of Southeast Asian waters when the ship was taken. Now, it happened the President chose to pursue a diplomatic solution for a time, and that gave the ships which carried out the rescue time to get into position.

But what would have happened to the crew of the Mayaguez if the ships had been as much as a week away? What would have happened to our already-battered opinion of ourselves if the whole operation had gone sour because our naval forces were stretched too thin?

Now, I think there is a lesson for us in all this.

In the first place, the basic need for naval force has not changed in quality in the 200 years of history we will celebrate next year. It has been the job of the Navy to move into position in crises involving the confrontation of mostly conventional weapons. In other words, time and time again, the "Nuclear Navy" still faces the kind of mission it has had since it fought under canvas and with cannon.

Because of this, it is important that we not get distracted from insuring we can provide this basic naval power when and where we need it. We could get distracted because we tend to focus instead on theoretical war with the Soviet Union. The big, exotic weapons systems proposed to fight this war get the most attention and the most opposition as we argue over military spending. Because of this, the absolutely fundamental question of basic preparedness for conventional missions does not get anywhere near the public attention it deserves.

The Mayaguez incident, and all the other crises like it, ought to prove to us that we cannot let the public start thinking strategic nuclear weapons on a submarine are all the Navy we

need. The fact is that what we have needed, historically, are the ships and planes and Marines to do the age-old tasks of arms.

The Navy's traditional ability to field heavy firepower and numbers of men in a mobile force depends on its readiness and the size of its force. This has gotten to be more critical since the development of communications has made new of a crisis move faster than any ship afloat, and since, in turn, terrorists can provoke an international incident with great speed. The readiness and size of our Navy will also become more critical as we develop a greater naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

As a senator, I want to be a friend of the Navy and

the other military services. I hope to be that friend by  
advocating an adequate fleet in top readiness with top  
morale and discipline.

America's position as a force to be dealt with depends  
upon our being equipped and ready for the short-run objective  
as well as an all-out war. This was true in the early days  
of our history as a nation, when the nation was desperately  
unprepared as a sea power; it was true when Teddy Roosevelt  
sent the "Great White Fleet" around the world; it was true  
when our forces and friends in Vietnam had to be evacuated;  
and it is true right now.

Let's make sure we understand it will be true in the  
future. Thank you for your attention.