

# **Office of the Commandant of the Marine Corps**

## ***America* Christening**

**General James F. Amos  
Commandant  
United States Marine Corps**

**20 October 2012**

**Commandant's Staff Group, Office of the Commandant: 703-614-2326**

(Applause)

GENERAL JAMES AMOS: Thank you everyone. I appreciate that. Ladies and gentlemen, it is not only because I left Washington today and escaped the centrifugal pull, but more importantly to be down here at this wonderful shipyard and to look at this war fighting vessel behind me. It's great to be here with you today. The last time I was here was about two-and-a-half years ago when we christened USS *San Diego* (LPD-22), and that mighty warship is now serving on the frontlines in today's Navy, taking sailors and Marines around the globe into harm's way. Thus today's christening of another amphibious vessel is an especially glorious day for the United States Marines.

I want to pile on a little bit and recognize personally a few folks. Congressman and a brother Marine, Steve Palazzo, sir, it's good to see you here today and thanks for your strong support. Not only for your support for the Marine-Navy team, but really in your role on the House Armed Services Committee and your support for the defense of our wonderful country. So thank you for your faithfulness, sir. Secretary Stackley, a good friend, a brilliant Director of Research and Development in the Department of the Navy, and my fellow brother and running mate, Mark Ferguson. Thank you both for your terrific remarks and for your faithfulness to our Marine Corps and Navy team. And last but clearly not least, Mr. Mike Petters, President and CEO of Huntington Ingalls. Mr. Irwin F. Edenzon, President of Ingalls Ship and Building and the entire Huntington Ingalls team who put their team intellect, their energy and their sweat equity into building this magnificent warship. Thank you; you've done it again.

Also, with us today, and he's been recognized, he stood up and he waived, but being a Marine, I have to recognize him yet one more time. The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, a longtime friend of the Amos's and a personal mentor of mine and his every lovely bride, Ms. Lynne, and of course their daughter, Tiffany serving as the matron of honor. So it's good to have you here. Ladies and gentlemen, a round of applause for General Pace and Mrs. Lynne and Tiffany, please. (Applause) Vice Admiral Mazach, former CO of V CVA-66, I'm glad you're here. I heard you were going to be here, and I appreciate your attendance. The members of the Carrier Veterans Association are here in strong numbers. They've already stood; they've been recognized, reminding us of that rich legacy of America, and thank you for your faithfulness. And, as a carrier pilot myself, I appreciate your service and supporting our Navy and Marine Corps team.

A welcome addition to the fleet, *America* represents our country's newest generation of capital warships. It will be among the largest ships in our Navy, and thus one of the largest warships in the entire world. Make no mistake this vessel and those like it are capital ships, ships of the line that represent America resolve and commitment throughout the world. Ships such as *America* and the Marines they carry provide an unmistakable arm to American diplomacy. Often, even the knowledge that a forward deployed amphibious warship is offshore loaded with Marines is enough to quell the ill intentions of those fomenting instability amongst our allies.

In recent history, *America's* older siblings have played a major part in combat operations around the world. In the wake of a tragedy of 9/11 and in the early days of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, Marine helicopters carried elements of the 15th and 26th Marine Expeditionary Units into Afghanistan to secure Forward Operating Base Rhino, just south of

Kandahar. Our first lodgment in the war over 400 miles deep from sea into the enemy's backyard, succeeded in removing the Taliban and their al-Qaeda guests from power in the heartland of the Taliban insurgency. What became known later as Task Force 58 was launched from the decks of USS *Peleliu* (LHA-5) and USS *Bataan* (LHD-5), both built here in Pascagoula. The Marines and sailors of Task Force 58 were the force of choice for that mission because they were forward deployed, they were well-trained and they were ready to respond when our Nation sounded the clarion call. Not long after Task Force 58's historic mission into Afghanistan, our Nation's capital warships were called into combat once again. This time in preparation for the opening stages of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

Coalition forces on the ground were supported by six of *America's* predecessors. All large-deck amphibious warships, again, all built right here in Pascagoula. Those ships were *Bonhomme Richard* (LHD-6), *Bataan* (LHD-5), *Tarawa* (LHA-1), *Kearsarge* (LHD-3), *Saipan* (LHA-2) and *Boxer* (LHD-4). Each of these ships played pivotal roles in the early successes of coalition forces on the ground inside Iraq during the springtime and summer of 2003.

As Marines, we pride ourselves on maintaining a high state of readiness and a forward deployed lifestyle. Both allow us to live up to Congress's specific direction to be the most ready when our Nation is the least ready. Forward presence matters. It demonstrates commitment and resolve. Deterrence, engagement and crisis response are not collateral duties to Naval forces. They are the national security imperatives of our United States Navy and Marine Corps team. They are our *raison d'être*. The unmistakable presence of Naval forces positioned forward creates time and decision space for our national leaders. It builds trust among our allies and our partners. You have to be present to make a difference. Virtual presence is actual absence.

And lastly, the sea-based capability delivered by Naval forces allows us to operate with our friends and our partners around the world without creating undue burdens on our host nation friends. Our country is a maritime nation. As such, the United States of America relies heavily on the maritime commons for the exchange of commerce and ideas and many nations depend on us to maintain that freedom of movement on those global commons. By keeping the sea lines of communications open, we prevent regional conflicts, and we deter threats to our national interests. The Navy and Marine Corps are essential elements in the security of our Nation's maritime interests. It's always been that way, and with this mighty warship and our Nation's quiver, it will continue to be that way.

For all here at Huntington Ingalls Industries and Shipbuilding, know that your Navy and Marine Corps team will put America to good use. As we celebrate this moment, rest assured that this ship will play an important role in keeping our nation secure and its liberty and interest secure for decades to come.

Captain Hall, all of us on this dais envy your assignment more than you know and wish you great fortune and happy hunting. We know that you and your crew and our Nation's sons and daughters will proudly serve as constant reminder of the greatness of the United States of America.

Thank you. God bless the Navy and the Marine Corps and Semper Fidelis.

(END)