

Mike Petters
Hawaii Commissioning Remarks
May 5, 2007

Thank you and good morning everyone!

I am truly honored to share the platform with so many distinguished guests.

And it's also my great pleasure to represent the thousands of men and women at Newport News who helped build the submarine *Hawaii*.

Today marks an important milestone in the history of shipbuilding -- and another great chapter in the story of the teaming between the United States Navy, General Dynamics Electric Boat, and Northrop Grumman Newport News.

We've been celebrating a lot of submarine milestones lately.

Just three weeks ago, we christened the fourth ship of the Virginia-class – North Carolina—in Newport News.

Last week (as John Casey mentioned) in Rhode Island we laid the keel for New Hampshire.

And as we speak, the shipbuilders at Newport News are launching North Carolina into her rightful environment – where we continue to work on her until we take her to sea for the first time in November --with delivery by the end of the year.

While they couldn't all be here today, please know that everyone at Newport News shares in today's excitement.

It's very fitting that a United States submarine be named after the 50th state.

Although the Aloha State did not gain statehood until 1959, the relationship between the sea and Hawaii began many centuries ago.

More than 1500 years ago, Polynesians first set foot on Hawaii's Big Island.

With only the stars to guide them, they valiantly sailed over two-thousand miles in canoes to migrate to the islands.

They were sailing into the unknown — but very sure of their mission.

I daresay you will find this very same spirit of adventure — this same confidence -- in the men who proudly serve in the Silent Service.

And in the shipbuilders who build these submarines.

We craft these ships out of raw steel into vessels that we know will serve as home for our fellow Americans.

We build these ships with skill and precision because we realize that when duty calls -- they will sail into harm's way -- and our mission is to ensure that these submarines are the safest and most capable they can be -- while cost-effectively built.

It's a job we take very seriously.

And one we are privileged to perform.

So Captain Solms, the shipbuilders wish you and the entire crew of Hawaii the very best as you take your place in the world's greatest fleet.

And finally, please know that the ship you will soon sail -- USS Hawaii -- is the best there is -- crafted with care -- by the best shipbuilders in the world.

Thank you.