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## Launching of the Leahy

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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July 1, 1961

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

LAUNCHING OF THE LEAHY

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is with great pleasure that I have brought a lady here to launch another lady. I can assure you that Mrs. Mansfield is an expert launcher. Many years ago, far from the sea, she launched me on a voyage in politics and government. So potent was Mrs. Mansfield's effort that I think a bit of the momentum remains despite 20 years in Congress. The Congress of the United States is sometimes a stormy sea. And to Mrs. Mansfield and the influence of her launching, I give full credit for managing to stay afloat in it.

I am proud that you have chosen her to perform this task today. I am also delighted that the name which shall be given to the other lady is "Leahy" and that the time for her christening is so auspicious. It was almost 13 years ago that Admiral Leahy laid down the burdens of a unique office, that of Chief of Staff to the President which he had borne so magnificently in World War II and in the difficult years thereafter. This post went unfilled after his withdrawal in 1949. But now, even as we stand here today, another distinguished servant of the nation, General Maxwell Taylor, is assuming similar burdens. May I express the fervent hope that his coming to the White House at this time will signify as much for the preservation of peace as Admiral Leahy's contribution meant to the achievement of victory in war.

Ladies and gentlemen, when we say we are here to launch a ship, we say what has been said countless times before on similar occasions. We say it with scarcely a thought of what lies in back of the sentence.

It is to that--to what lies behind a launching--that I ask you to turn your thoughts for a moment. Think first of the immense and intricate labor here in this ship-yard, of the putting of plank on plank, of plate on plate. Think of the integration of skills, of heart, of brawn and of brain, from the beginning of the architect's drawings to this moment.

And think, if you will, of the combination of these same factors which acted to produce the materials in hundreds of mines and factories, the materials which were brought to this yard in order that the ship could be assembled. How many hands, in how many cities, in how many nations have already touched this ship? How many minds have combined to bring it to this cohesion of birth?

What did it take to make just the compass by which this ship will be steered? Where does a compass begin? In a factory in Boston with a purchase order? Or does it begin--this compass--with the first stirrings of man's awareness of his difference from other life-forms?

And a missile--where does a missile begin? In our decade? In our century? Or does it begin at that dim moment in the past when man first understood that  $2+2=4$ ?

The name that this ship will bear; it is an illustrious name. It is a name and something more for it tells of other factors, factors of our history without which this ship would have no meaning, no bearings.

Leahy is the War with Spain. It is World War I. It is World War II. It is the conflict in Korea. It is, in short, a name and a symbol of a life-dedicated--one life in the millions of lives risked for a nation and countless thousands given for it. These, too, the named and unnamed whose sacrifices have given form, substance and survival to our nation in conflict, lie behind this moment, this event.

What I am trying in a most inadequate way to say to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, is that when we launch this ship, today, we set upon the seas more, far more, than an assemblage of inanimate materials. We put into the wind a repository of human civilization and of our particular part of it. We launch the essence of an endless flow of human dreams and human hopes and human achievements.

This ship is an expression of our national and our total civilized heritage, mankind's heritage. And it is this heritage which is at stake in the world today--this heritage and the opportunity for generations to come in this nation and in all parts of the world to add to it.

It is this heritage which peace--honorable peace--will preserve. It is this heritage which war--unbridled war--can destroy.

May this ship, then, defend that peace and may it go always in peace on the oceans of the earth.