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Navy Capt. Tom Wedding, senior Sailor in the U.S. Army War College Class of 2009, speaks at the War College's United States Navy birthday celebration Oct. 9. The Navy turned 233 years old on Oct. 13. Photo by Megan Clugh.

Admiral Gary Roughead, Chief of Naval Operations Navy Birthday message

On Oct. 13 the Navy's 233rd birthday will be celebrated throughout the fleet and it is particularly relevant that we consider the influence the Great White Fleet deployment of 100 years ago had on our Navy's development. In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt said "A good Navy is not a provocation to war. It is the surest guaranty of peace." This statement is still valid today as "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower" raises the prevention of war to a level equal to the conduct of war.

Our heritage has shaped today's Navy and the core capabilities of the Maritime Strategy can be seen in the accomplishments of the Great White Fleet. The historic deployment of the Great White Fleet 100 years ago sent a clear message:

America is a respected world power, with a strong Navy leading the way. Today our Navy remains an essential element of U.S. power, deployed around the world 24/7, assuring friends, deterring potential adversaries, forging cooperative partnerships to maintain security at sea, and defending our country.

Although the Navy did not sustain a forward presence in 1907, President Roosevelt envisioned the Navy being utilized for diplomacy and international partnership so he sent a portion of the Atlantic Fleet on a world tour to test naval readiness, establish global presence, generate international goodwill, and garner enthusiasm for the U.S. Navy. Today, the assignment of USS George Washington (CVN 73) to the U.S. Navy's Forward Deployed Naval Forces demonstrates the U.S. commitment to peace and regional security through strengthened capabilities.

After a tidal wave hit Messina, Sicily, killing 200,000 people while the Great White Fleet was in Port Said, Egypt, Admiral Charles Sperry dispatched USS Connecticut (BB 18) and USS Illinois (BB 7) to provide assistance

and food. In September 2008, USS Kearsarge (LHD 3) provided more than 1,475 metric tons of relief supplies and 30,865 gallons of water to Haiti following powerful hurricanes that hit in quick succession.

As we look to the future a great Navy cannot be built overnight and requires sustained support. Our fleet is strong because of the support of our Sailors, their families, the U.S. Congress, and the American public over the past 233 years. As the U.S. Navy reflects on its past, we focus on the future...committed to continuing our tradition formed in 100 years of global partnerships and security executing the Maritime Strategy while promoting global peace and prosperity.

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