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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
DEDICATION OF 16 COAST GUARD CUTTERS
JULY 31, 1985
LOCKPORT, LOUISIANA

What a joy to be here with you in this beautiful part of our country to enjoy the gracious hospitality of the Bollinger family and participate in this very special occasion.

And let me say at the outset to all of you here today that this shipyard has built a brand new class of cutters and you have produced on contract and on budget. You have given this nation a new deterrent for use in the country's drug interdiction efforts which President Reagan escalated in 1983. Your outstanding accomplishment is a tribute not only to the entire U.S. shipbuilding industry and your yard, but to the workers whose superb craftsmanship stands before us today for all to admire. To all who worked on this project: you put in the long hours, you did the hard work, you took pride in your product. And you deserve the credit for a job well done.

As the first woman to head a branch of our armed services, I am very proud indeed of the Coast Guard, not only for its role in drug enforcement and its responsibilities for defending our domestic shores in time of armed conflict but for the many life-saving functions it performs every day of the year. The Coast Guard celebrates its 195th anniversary on August 4, so we might consider this new class of cutters a birthday present for the Coast Guard.

One of the most astute commentators on our political system more than 100 years ago was a Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville. He said "There is amazing strength in the will of a people; and when it declares itself, even the imagination of those who wish to contest it is overawed."

Let no one doubt that this beautiful ship -- the Coast Guard Cutter Farallon --and her 15 sister ships in the Island Class are symbolic of the will and the resolve and the determination of the American people to rid our country of illegal drugs.

In 1983, President Reagan expressed our collective resolve when he appointed the Vice President to coordinate a nationwide effort to interdict drugs crossing our borders. Vice President George Bush very quickly brought together the resources of many federal, state and local government agencies with a variety of drug enforcement responsibilities. At that time, more than a dozen agencies may have been going in just as many directions. Today, however, our efforts are united in the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS). That system is a part of a much larger strategy, the President's National Strategy to prevent drug abuse and to stem the flow of illicit drugs. It is a war and we have a long way to go. It is a war, and while we have made a great deal of progress, we have a long way to go. It is a war this nation cannot afford to lose.

The Coast Guard has dedicated every person and vessel we could spare to South Florida to intercept drug smugglers before they reach our shore and to seize their loot. As I said, the results have been encouraging. From January 1983 to July 25 of this year, the Coast Guard has seized nearly 500 vessels carrying illegal drugs. That amounts to almost six million pounds of marijuana, and more than six thousand pounds of cocaine.

The ships dedicated here today will help us be even more effective in our effort. These ships are faster than the current 82- and 95-foot patrol boats. They will carry larger 16-person crews. And they will be able to stay on patrol for greater lengths of time. The first eight of these vessels will head immediately for the Southeastern United States to be put into service of this country.

This contract for the Island Class cutters is one of several Coast Guard activities generating shipyard work. Last month we awarded two contracts to rehabilitate our 12 high endurance cutters, and a contract for nine medium endurance cutters is well under way. We know the value of the U.S. shipbuilding industry and we want to keep you working and we want to keep you strong!

Just one last thought in closing. Search and rescue is one of the Coast Guard's best known missions and it exemplifies a national characteristic of the American people --our abiding respect for human life. The Island Class Cutters are a new symbol of life-saving in America -- saving many lives from drugs as well as from the sea. Dedications such as these are a beginning. They also express a sense of honor and commitment and renewal of the kind of "amazing strength" expressed by de Tocqueville -- a strength that goes far to support our nation's security.

I know you join me in wishing the Island Class, and the Coast Guard men and women who will crew them ... God speed, and good luck.

And now it is my privilege to publicly thank the next speaker for his outstanding leadership in our nation's drug interdiction efforts. Among his many accomplishments in public service, the successful NNBIS program is a product of the strength, the will, and the brilliant organization of George Bush. I am honored to present to you the Vice President of the United States -- the Honorable George Bush.

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