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**BYRD DELIVERS FLOOR SPEECH ON EVE OF
“MISSION ACCOMPLISHED” ANNIVERSARY**

*Calls for a “New Chapter in our Nation’s History” that Rejects Bush Administration’s
Reckless and Arrogant Foreign Policy*

Washington, DC... U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., today delivered a speech on the floor of the U.S. Senate on the eve of the five-year anniversary of President Bush’s infamous “Mission Accomplished” speech of May 1, 2003.

Senator Byrd’s Remarks are below

Tomorrow, we mark the fifth anniversary of the now infamous “Mission Accomplished” speech, which was delivered by President Bush on the deck of the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln on May 1, 2003. Five years ago, I took issue with the President’s choreographed political theatrics because I believed that our military forces deserved to be treated with respect and dignity, and not used as stage props to embellish a presidential speech.

The President’s declaration of “Mission Accomplished” and the “end of major combat operations” proved wildly premature and dangerously naïve. The complete lack of foresight and planning by the President for what lay ahead became tragically clear in short order. Our nation continues to pay the price every single day. More than 97% of the more than 4000 Americans killed in Iraq lost their lives after the President’s flashy declaration of victory.

Years from now, I expect that history books will feature the sorry “Mission Accomplished” episode as the epitome of this administration’s reckless and arrogant foreign policy, which has reaped disastrous consequences for our nation and the world. We have seen a President who is eager to use American troops for a political backdrop, yet is seemingly indifferent when it comes to providing them with the equipment they need, quality health care, or a real plan for ending the war.

President Bush has said that history will judge him on his decision to go to war in Iraq. I say that history is already delivering its verdict. It is evident in the strains of the long and multiple deployments that are wearing down our mighty military, and in the suffering of the American people as they bury their fallen heroes. It is

evident in the fear and distrust with which the rest of the world views us, and in the instability wracking the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan as a result of the Bush policies.

President Bush has recklessly squandered more than 200 years of American leadership, good will, and prosperity. If that is what he was aiming for when he took office, then he can claim “Mission Accomplished.” That is his legacy. As we write the next chapter in our nation’s history, let us commit to building a new legacy that restores the promise of America, both at home and around the world.

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