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"WE AMERICANS HAVE CLEARED OUR DECKS AND TAKEN OUR BATTLE STATIONS"

Meanwhile, on October 17, 1941 the United States destroyer Kearny had been attacked and hit by a torpedo from a Nazi submarine and eleven men of the Navy were killed. President Roosevelt said in an address on October 27 that we had wished to avoid shooting but the shooting had begun and "history has recorded who fired the first shot". The purpose of Hitler's attack was, he said, to frighten the American people off the high seas; if our national policy were to be dominated by the fear of shooting, then all of our ships and those of the other American republics would have to be tied up in home harbors. Naturally we rejected that "absurd and insulting suggestion". Each day we were producing and providing more and more arms for the men who were fighting on actual battlefronts; it was this nation's will that these vital arms and supplies of all kinds should neither be locked up in American harbors nor sent to the bottom of the sea; it was the nation's will that "America shall deliver the goods". He emphasized that the orders to the United States Navy "to shoot on sight" were still in effect.

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The President concluded his address with a statement that in the face of this newest and greatest challenge "we Americans have cleared our decks and taken our battle stations"; we stood ready "in the defense of our nation and the faith of our fathers to do what God has given us the power to see as our full duty".

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