With the retired battleship USS Wisconsin as the backdrop, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney introduces Representative Paul Ryan as his vice presidential candidate.
Transcript
Romney Picks Ryan as Running Mate

BRIAN WILLIAMS. anchor:
And good evening from London, where tonight it’s presidential politics back home making news. Mitt Romney wanted to shake up his candidacy and he has. Today he selected Wisconsin Republican Congressman Paul Ryan as his running mate. Ryan is chairman of the House Budget Committee. At 42 he’s the same age as one of Mitt Romney’s sons. With sixteen days to go till the GOP convention, with 87 days to go until the election, the GOP ticket is set and a new phase of this race begins now. Our political team is standing by tonight, starting with NBC’s Peter Alexander, who covers the Romney campaign, and has followed them to their next event in Northern Virginia. Peter, good evening.

PETER ALEXANDER, reporting:
Brian, good evening to you. By picking Paul Ryan, Mitt Romney bypassed more moderate Republican candidates. In the end deciding to go with a man who will help him fire up the Republican base and also will help him draw a clear contrast with the President over key issues in this election, like taxes and spending. With the retired battleship USS Wisconsin as the backdrop, Mitt Romney introduced his running mate, one of the biggest guns in the conservative movement, Paul Ryan.

MITT ROMNEY: He understands the fiscal challenges facing America, our exploding deficits and crushing debt and the fiscal catastrophe that awaits us if we don’t change course.

ALEXANDER: Analysts say Romney’s selection of the Wisconsin congressman is both bold and potentially risky.

Representative PAUL RYAN (R-Wisconsin): The commitment Mitt Romney and I make to you is this. We won’t duck the tough issues. We will lead.

ALEXANDER: As chairman of the House Budget Committee, Ryan designed a politically polarizing
budget plan, slashing trillions in federal spending, including cuts to programs like Medicare.

Rep. PAUL RYAN: We can turn this thing around. Real solutions can be delivered, but it will take leadership.

ALEXANDER: In making his announcement, Romney stumbled out of the gates.

ROMNEY: Join me in welcoming the next President of the United States, Paul Ryan.

ALEXANDER: Before quickly correcting himself, after Ryan’s dramatic arrival from the ship named after his home state to the soundtrack of the movie Air Force One.

ROMNEY: Every now and then I’m known to make a mistake. I did not make a mistake with this guy. But I can tell you this he’s going to be the next vice president of the United States.

ALEXANDER: Outside the White House today President Obama ignored reporters' questions about Ryan but the Obama campaign quickly tried to capitalize, releasing a detailed chart attacking what they called more budget-busting tax cuts for the wealthy no matter the expense for the middle class, then following up with this new ad. Here in Virginia, kicking off the first day of a multi-state tour, Romney and Ryan, who at forty-two is the same age as Romney’s oldest son, bonded with their families on the bus, even making peanut butter and honey sandwiches. Two candidates who had been on Romney’s VP short-list, Ohio Senator Rob Portman and former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty graciously accepted Romney’s decision.

Governor TIM PAWLENTY (R-Minnesota): I’m not disappointed and I’m excited about his candidacy and I’m excited about having him be the next President.

ALEXANDER: Also today one of Romney’s harshest critics during the Republican primary Newt Gingrich who previously called Ryan’s budget plan: “right-wing social engineering” today embraced the pick writing "Mitt Romney made a courageous choice for a BIG solutions election." And earlier today vice president Joe Biden called Paul Ryan to congratulate him on his selection and to welcome him to this race. Brian, it is officially on in earnest.

WILLIAMS: Peter Alexander travelling with the Romney campaign, Manassas, Virginia, starting us off tonight. Peter, thanks.