

**REMARKS BY
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ADMIRAL MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, good evening, Madame President. It is a real privilege to be here with you and so many other distinguished individuals. And I hope for the period of the next four hours, while I'm up here, I'll try to spend a little – (laughter).

(Audio break.)

Thank you. (Laughter.) And I'll cover a few things. And what I also try to do when I come and do something like this is learn. And I get a great deal out of questions I get asked, and so I look forward to that part of the discussion a little later on.

Actually, it's taken me over 44 years – actually 44-and-a-half years to get to Princeton. (Laughter.) I grew up – and in fact Professor Watson grew up not far from me – in Southern California many years ago. And I grew up as a young basketball player. Way back then, there was a fellow named Johnny Wooden who had a pretty good basketball program that I tried to stay pretty close to, although was not ever good enough to certainly consider playing at UCLA.

But in 1963 and 1964 – actually '64 and '65, the best basketball player in America was a guy named Bill Bradley. And he played right here. And I knew that. And just it was one of those things – I'd never been east, actually never been out of California, save one trip to Iowa and Illinois, where my parents came from. But I was pulled to the East Coast principally through sports because Bradley was so good and so highly regarded.

And so, you know, my dream would have been to come back and come back to school here somehow. Problem was, I didn't study hard enough in high school. I didn't have the grades, didn't have the SATs.

So I couldn't have gotten into Princeton back then. But I've always wanted to come. And that just says particularly, for all you young people, you know, hold those goals out there. They are possible, even over a long period of time.

And in that but in that draw, I did actually get recruited. I was on my way to play basketball at the University of California, Santa Barbara. And I got pulled in to play basketball at Annapolis, which was on the East Coast. It was a good education and met a few of those needs.

So I came east. And it changed my life, in ways that I had not imagined. Some of – most of you would not know, I actually grew up in the movie business. So the military was the farthest thing in the world from what I was thinking about, because I was trying to figure out where to go to college and what I was going to do with the rest of my life.

Last summer, just to kind of talk a little bit about this job, last summer, I had the privilege of taking the commissioner of the National Football League, Roger Goodell, to Iraq and Afghanistan on a USO tour. And he brought a young, reasonably good football player with him called – by the name of Osi Umenyiora who was, at that point in time, a reigning world champion defensive end for the Giants.

And we were on the plane, 15, 20 minutes out of Washington, headed east. And he – Osi walked by my cabin. He said – where I was sitting alone – he said, can I come in? I said, sure. And he sat down across from me. He said, how do you become the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff? (Laughter.)

And I hadn't thought about that much. (Laughter.) And, but my answer – actually I sort of led with, certainly it wasn't in my plans. I didn't have any expectations. And I talked a little bit about what I had done and where I had done it, to kind of fill him in.

Then he said, well, so what do you do? And he goes, how's the president? And he asked a thousand questions about this job and my time. And he's a very engaging young man. And I have every reason to believe he will be successful, far beyond just his football career, for the time that I spent with him.

And I very much appreciate – Drew Brees also went on that trip – and that they would go do that and spend time with the troops who we've asked so much of for a long time, but certainly these last seven-and-a-half years.

When I talked about this job, it is as the principal military adviser to the president of the United States. In this time of transition where we still find ourselves – I got asked questions today about President Obama as if he'd been here for months or years. And I'm reminded this is his third week. And his plate is full, I assure you, as all of you know.

But in that job as principal military adviser, it is my job to give the president; my immediate boss, the secretary of defense, Bob Gates, my best military advice. And it is apolitical. It is objective. It is neutral. And that's where I spend most of my life.

When I took the job, people asked me, well, what surprises you, what surprised you? What surprised me – and I'd been a member – as the head of the Navy, you're member of – you are one of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But I'd been a member of the Joint Chiefs for two years

before I – actually, over two years – before I was selected for this job. And when asked about what surprised me, what has surprised me is the amount of time that I spend with the president, with the vice president, with the senior leaders in the country and literally time in the White House that I, even as a previous members of the Joint Chiefs, didn't really appreciate. And it speaks to the scope and the number of challenges that are involved, certainly, with national security, but even broader than that.

And in that, I seek – and one of the reasons, while it – I just had an hour-and-a-half or so with members of the faculty here. One of the things I try to do in addition to answering questions, which I'm happy to do a little while – but I try to listen, because when I do that, I learn. And as the senior military member in the United States, I am responsible for leading 2.2 million men and women who serve. And they're from all over the country and, indeed, from many countries all over the world.

And I take that responsibility incredibly seriously, so listening and learning and leading. And that's why I hope to be able to get some questions which will stimulate me, even if I don't know the answers, but to go back and find out more in a given area, given all these challenges. Last December, I was standing outside the Pentagon waiting for President Bush to show up. And Secretary Gates and I were standing there. He – I had only been in the job a couple months; he'd been in his job about a year. And we'd just been through a horrendous couple of days.

I can't remember what the issues were, but they were stacking up like cordwood. And I looked at him and I said – because he has over 40 years' experience in Washington – and I said, is it always like this? And he looked at me and he said, not even close. And recently he said issues these days seem to come on the table and you can't get them off the table. And certainly that made a lot of sense to me.

So I'll talk – I'll just talk about a few of those, and how I see where my priorities are, and how I try to focus not just myself but senior leaders in the – in our military, right down through those who we ask to go execute our policies and understand it?

First of all, at the top of my list is a focus on – is a focus on the broader Middle East. I have spent – in the last year, I have traveled to Pakistan seven times, and, actually, one other time where I met the head of their military at sea on an aircraft carrier not too far from Pakistan. So I have been there not quite monthly, but pretty close.

And it speaks to the significance of the relationship, which is what I've been working on with my counterpart, and, I think, the significance of Afghanistan and Pakistan, at center stage for potential and growing instability in a vital part of the world. And I expand that more broadly to the Middle East, from Tehran to Lebanon, and the recurring crises which seem to occur in that part of the world.

Certainly Iraq has been a part of that. And in Iraq – and the elections this last weekend were a remarkable achievement for this country, albeit we have a few weeks to work out the details, and those are important. Those are important. But every indication is: free and fair;

lots of Iraqis voted; and that there's going to be a substantial change in the provincial government in Iraq over the next couple of months, based on these elections.

And I believe that's a very positive step. And as conditions continue to improve in Iraq, I believe we will continue – certainly I hope we will continue – to draw down our forces and turn it more and more over to the Iraqi leadership.

An awful lot of the answers – future answers in Iraq lie in the hands of the Iraqi leaders, particularly the Iraqi politicians – and in great part to the Iraqi people. So we're in a time of – clearly in a time of transition in Iraq. The violence levels are exceptionally low compared to even when this war started. And we're working hard to keep them that way. And the Iraqi security forces are doing the same. There needs to be governance, continued governance developed there. There needs to be economic development, and security needs to obviously, I think, stay contained and the violence levels need to stay down. Al Qaeda is still there, although greatly diminished.

But then we turn to Afghanistan, where violence has gotten worse, an enormously complex country. We need to see governance develop there. We need to improve our security there, security for the people. And I believe the center of gravity in Afghanistan really is the Afghan people and that we need to make sure they think they don't think that we are an occupying force. And it's one thing for us to say it, and we're not – we have no intention – and there are 42 countries in Afghanistan, most just the United States, with military capability, civilian capability, an awful lot of international support, to see if we can get Afghanistan headed fair.

And clearly we also need to be moving economically. And Afghanistan is the fourth- – depending on how you count, but the fourth- or fifth-poorest country in the world. And so economic development there is going to take some time.

But in my travels throughout my life – and I've been in lots of countries, and I've seen lots of peoples – there still is a universal goal out there to be achieved, and that is, parents want to raise their kids to a higher standard of living, and they'd do it in a peaceful environment. And so as we are able to weave the world, we're able to create some level of stability in lots of places but also certainly in Afghanistan. I think that's a very, very strong indicator about where we are headed or where we're not headed.

And so I can – and then I can move to Iran, I can move to Lebanon, I can move to Syria; clearly what just happened in Gaza, the instability there. The strategic relationships between countries in that region, whether it's Persian Gulf countries or countries bordering the Mediterranean, all those relationships are important, far beyond just the military-to-military relationships, where I spend a lot of time.

So there's a tremendous amount of immediate near-term down-side potential in the broader Middle East, and I think it's and that – it is an area that concerns me greatly and is at the top of my list from the military perspective. What is actually – and I'll go through a couple of other priorities – but what is actually overarching there, though, and it affects all of us, is the

global financial crisis. And I worry a great deal as we work our way through this, and I think it's going to take longer than – rather than shorter, to do that. I worry about the effect that has on stability or instability throughout the world. And throughout history we've been – we haven't been very good about predicting where that's going to occur. We might be able to look and say it could occur in a certain place and get that right, but as this crisis really takes hold, there will be places that become much less stable than we hadn't anticipated. And to address that, and also to address this first priority of the broader Middle East, we need – my view – a whole-of-government approach.

The United States military, as good as it is, and it's the best I've ever been associated with, certainly in the 44 years that I've been wearing a uniform, cannot do it alone.

The United States military is necessary. It is not sufficient to meet the need. You've heard us, some of us and certainly me, talk about our foreign policy being too militarized. I believe that. And it's got to change.

I'm stretched with the military. We're doing things that we had not planned on doing, had not trained to do. And it – they're an incredible group of young people. They're very adaptive, very creative, very innovative. And they do it unbelievably well. But we need to back off of that over time.

But it's also my assessment, in addressing these problems, we're a good decade away before we've created the capability in our the departments – State Department, Commerce Department, Treasury Department, Agriculture Department – to create the capacity and the career paths, young people who will come into the Agriculture Department and say, part of my life is, I expect to go to Afghanistan for a year out of every four or five. And that's not what the people, those who serve in the Agriculture Department, that is not what they thought their career path would include at this point.

So I've got soldiers from the guard, who are farmers from Texas and Missouri and Iowa. And they're going to Afghanistan, to work on agriculture, which is what we need, because that's the economic base for future economic health in Afghanistan. But I can only do so much of that.

So we've got – and I think this is broadly recognized – and we need to – we need to change that. And so when I come here and talk to the ROTC unit and to other young people here, who have nothing to do with the military and may never have anything to do with the military, and that's fine, but this world that we're in, which is enormously complex, becoming more challenging.

And I won't tell you how old I am. But it's going to be a world that you inherit and you live in. And I seek your assistance to serve in it, to help us all make it better. And there are a lot of ways to serve. And I could write a list of a hundred different needs that are out there. And that we, and it is also in America, my view, it is at the base of who we are, when we're in trouble, to be able to rise up and serve and make a difference. Here in our own country, you can serve. Or you can serve globally. There are a lot of needs there.

So this issue – the whole issue of the broader Middle East and the potential instability and what could happen is, again, at the top of my list. Secondly, for me, we're in our eighth year of war. And I was delighted – it is – I mean, we have been at war and we are at war. I'm fighting two of them right now. And the face of that that I see frequently are those that we bring home and bury throughout our land, because we've asked them, as a country, to serve as we have from the day we were born as a country. And they don't ask why, they just ask what their mission is. And they, in many, many cases – almost 5,000 now between these two wars – pay the ultimate sacrifice, and their families.

And we have some 30 or 40 or 50,000 who've been wounded, who again have done what they've asked to, done so nobly, asked no questions about that because that's what they did when they raised their right hand.

And, in fact, that group of young people and families is a group of young people we, as a very rich nation in so many ways, need to make sure their needs are met, their American dream – which has not changed – they want to raise their kids. They'd like to send their kids to school. They'd like to get an education. They'd both like jobs. And they'd like to own a home. Their path to that may have been modified, but their dream hasn't changed. And we need, as a country, I believe, to figure out how to make sure those needs are met for those families for the rest of their lives. They are the ones who have sacrificed much and that is the face of these wars that I see all the time. And it is part of who we are as a military and a very proud military that's the best one I've ever been associated with.

So the second priority for me is what I call the health of our force. I was at Fort Stewart in Georgia last summer with a brigade from the 3rd Infantry Division that had just gotten back from Iraq. I'd seen them a couple times in Iraq. And I had about 500 of them in a room and I asked them how many deployments they'd been on, and about 40 – between 40 and 50 percent of the hands were still up when I counted four.

And that's since 2002. And two of those four deployments were either 15 or 12 months. You almost can't do the math and say you were ever home. And these are young people that would like to meet someone and maybe start a family or, if they have a family, spend some time with it. So the pressure we put on them has been extraordinary; and yet their resilience is unmatched. They know they have made a difference. They are very proud of what they've done, as I am, and every senior military member is.

And so what we need to do is get to a point where we give them a little bit more time at home. And that's a real challenge. And it isn't just military members; it's families, because we've got moms and dads staying home, raising kids, while the military member is gone. And we need to have focus not just on the members, but the families, including the kids, because they've been through a lot. And we've asked an extraordinary amount of them.

And clearly, the wounded piece, the families of the fallen, are things that I talk about. How do we make sure we take care of them? And they're the best trained, best equipped, most capable people I have ever been associated with.

That's a little bit about Umenyiora, although earlier, when asked – and I do get asked about why I went to Annapolis. I was a 17-year-old kid. I liked basketball. I told you that. I could go and play there. I was the oldest of five kids, so if I was going to get a scholarship anywhere, I was going to – if I was going to get an education, and I was a – my parents were Depression kids, and my dad was the first who went to college. And he said, if you're going to get an education and get a scholarship to a good place, you know, you're going to have to work to get it.

I knew I needed to go somewhere that had discipline, at that point. When I got to Annapolis, I met the best group of people I'd ever been around in my life, from all over the country, and who are best friends to this day in my life, of both myself and my wife. And it was – no matter how long it's been, if I see them it's as if it were yesterday.

And the people piece of the United States military, for me, is why I'm in. And the military has given me a lot of responsibility, and the ability to lead young, that has been more than I could have ever asked for. I was a young – in my mid-20s, in 1973. I'm the captain – I'm a young lieutenant, but I'm the captain of my own ship, and I'm taking that ship from the East Coast United States, six months in the Mediterranean. I'm in the middle of the '73 war. Communications were not what they are now. We had no e-mail. We hardly had "snail mail" back then that was reliable. But I was on a great adventure with great people, and it has been so ever since.

So there's an awful lot here that I care about to make sure we get it right for all of our young people.

And I'm also fond of reminding people, including those in the military, that when you go to a unit in the military, whether it's a – an aircraft squadron or a battalion or a ship, the average age is about 21. It has always been thus; it will be, as well. And they are – we ask them to do extraordinary things, and they do.

So the health of the force against, obviously, this overriding priority of the mission, in the first part, is a real balance. Balancing that is a real challenge.

And then, thirdly, there's the rest of the world – and it's not just sitting idly by. There are challenges that we have in our own hemisphere. I was speaking earlier to the faculty, and I am – my concern with the security issues south of us grows – and directly south of us.

I grew up in Southern California, not very far from Mexico. But I was trained, and I certainly professionally have been, looking east and west more than I have north and south. And I think those days are gone. And we do need to pay a lot of attention to our neighbor and the security issues and the economic issues that are associated with not just Mexico but with Latin America.

And there are emerging issues there that I think we all have to continue to address. And I don't mean militarily address; I mean broad spectrum. And if I were going to pick one area to

address it – that will affect it positively more than anything else, it is the connection that we have economically with so many parts of the world. And as we see now, as it – as the economies decline, we see what that connection has been, in starker ways – and – certainly than I realized before this crisis.

We recently stood up a four-star command in Africa. And we did so because we have four-star officers in various services around the world that pay full-time attention to our relationship with improving security in various parts of the world. We have one in the Pacific; we have one in Europe; we have one in the Central Command. We didn't have one in Africa. And we needed one, because we need to pay attention to our relationships there, to security there.

And Africa is this wonderfully huge continent with great resources and great challenges, whether they be famine or genocide or remarkably weak leadership. And I believe that internationally we have to figure out how to work together to address those challenges.

I was asked the other day about pirates. I probably get asked more about that because people think I'm in the Navy. (Laughter.) But – and I know a lot about that. And you've seen – in fact, I've had close friends who know precious little about what I do, that I saw recently, and even he asked me what I'm doing about the pirates. And that is actually emerging in terms of, I think, a solution.

But when I think about that and you see the stories about the ransoms and the kind of monies that are there, I haven't checked it recently, but a year or two ago, depending on the estimate, there was somewhere around a 1.8 to \$2.4 trillion illegal economy running at sea. And it wasn't just pirates. It's drugs, it's weapons, it's slavery, it's illegal immigration. And it is, at least at that time it was sort of about the size of some of our – some of the economies in Europe. And again, that isn't going to go away, and the only way we can get at that is internationally. And that's actually, for the small piece of that that piracy is, that there's an international effort which is moving on piracy now, which I think is the right direction.

So – also, I was very struck recently – I talk about Afghanistan and Pakistan, but I also went to Delhi not too long after the Mumbai attacks, and I was struck in those attacks by what 10 terrorists could do to two nuclear-armed countries. And it's a different kind of terrorism. It wasn't blowing up a building. It wasn't Madrid. It wasn't London or New York or the embassies. But that 10 terrorists, supported by a few others, could move two nuclear powers closer to the brink – they weren't and aren't at the brink, but it speaks to the need to, I think, make sure that, again, internationally we focus on that in a way that de-tensions the potential there, not increases it.

So there's – there are – the challenges abound. I spent a lot of time last summer, last August, when Russia went into Georgia. And you've seen the stranglehold that Russia has from a gas standpoint, from an energy standpoint, on Europe. And so where does that go? And I don't know the answer to that, unless it's used positively and well, as opposed to used as a weapon.

So, I mean, I can walk around the world and back to what I said. Maybe I didn't say it earlier. We can't do this alone. The United States cannot do this alone.

Can I tell a story? I was down in Australia a couple years ago. And I was with their joint staff. And they were giving me a briefing of how Australia viewed the world. And I'm not a big PowerPoint fan. But they were using PowerPoint. And the second or third slide came up. And it was a slide that showed Australia in the middle of the slide.

And I'd never seen a slide that didn't have the United States in the middle. And up in the right-hand corner, this little dot was the United States of America. And I was reminded then and have tried not to forget that it's important that we look at problems through other people's eyes, not just our own.

And back to listening, learning and leading and trying to see it from a different perspective, which when you do, and at least this is my experience, gives you different choices for how you might address challenges that we have together mutually. And there may be a view that it would take longer. But those choices, which involve trust and mutually agreed to approaches, they have a way of I think becoming more enduring.

So very concerned obviously about the global financial crisis, as it impacts security around the world over time. And I believe it will. It's going to impact all of us in government, because there's going to be pressure on all our budgets and rightfully so.

And then this focus on obviously the broader Middle East, the health of the forces that I am responsible for, who are the best ever, and the mitigating challenges that we have throughout the rest of the world.

And because I've had so many forces in the – in Iraq and Afghanistan, my ability to deploy forces to other parts of the world to have relationships to mitigate that has been somewhat challenging, although I have a very strong Navy and a very strong Air Force that do that. But I can't do it with my ground forces, because my ground forces are all – basically all focused there.

So with that, thanks for being here. And I'm happy to take a few questions.

(Applause.)

MODERATOR: So let me just – (off mike).

Q: Admiral, I'm an old Navy man, but I was on the other end of the rank. I was a small boat coxswain in the Pacific. I've got five kids, five grandkids. I think that our government should be very, very blunt with us to tell us in the Mideast we are fighting for crude oil and nothing else. Without our crude oil – you take a look at the Garden State Parkway and the New Jersey Turnpike and see nothing but solid bands of automobiles dependent on Middle East crude oil. If we exempt ourself from the Middle East and protect that source of crude oil, we

have big problems. Our government should be more blunt as to why we are really in the Mideast and why Afghanistan is peripheral. Thank you.

ADM. MULLEN: (Off mike.)

(Laughter.)

Q: Well, the question is, can our government deal with it?

Q: Admiral, thank you very much for being here. I enjoyed what you had to say. And I had a specific question. My brother's a captain with one of the battalions that's going to Afghanistan in less than two weeks. And there's all this talk about a change in strategy in Afghanistan on a tactical level, because just sending two or three brigades, adding 9,000 troops to the mix isn't – can't change anything in a country that's bigger than Iraq, has a larger population than Iraq and has more difficult terrain. So I was wondering, how is the military strategy going to change on the tactical level? Like, what are we doing different by – other than sending just three or four more brigades to Afghanistan?

ADM. MULLEN: We – in the – and for your brother and others who will go – and these are decisions that President Obama has to make about how many troops to send and how that impacts on his strategy. And the administration is working hard on the strategic aspect of this and then, where does all of this fit in?

There is a valid – it's a valid requirement for additional troops from the ground commander with the current mission for a significant period of time, upwards of 30,000 additional troops. So your brother is going as some part of that, for example. Those troops principally will be focused on the areas east and south, which are the two big problems. And from a provide-security-for-the-people point of view, that's the requirement right now. And we believe that that's enough to do that.

In addition to that, we have a significant need for trainers, so troops to go over and train the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police. And so troops will be included at some point, assuming the president makes this decision. And it is his to make, not mine. But meeting the training need as well.

And that 30,000 or so will, from my point of view, meet the needs as we understand it. Again, I can't be perfectly predictive about possibilities for additional troops, but I believe, from a security standpoint, that will be enough, that will put us at the 60, assuming – and, again, not done yet – but assuming that we meet the commanders' needs, that that will put us at about the level we need to be at to provide for security. But it's not – this is not going to be won militarily. We're going to have to develop – support the development of governance at the local, district, provincial, national level. And I would argue that may have to lead everything else. And we also have to have the economic piece developed.

And if those don't, then all the troops in the world aren't going to make any difference.

Q: Sir, you mentioned – just if I could –

MODERATOR: One question?

ADM. MULLEN: Yeah, one.

MODERATOR: All right, one question.

Q: You didn't mention the drug trade in Helmand.

MODERATOR: Sir, one question per. I'm sorry. All right.

Q: Admiral, it's an honor to have you here. Have a quick question about military transformation. The idea's been floated in some circles – and please confirm or deny the veracity of this – that we don't have the money any more, given the financial crisis, or that we didn't have it before, to build two entirely different militaries: one to fight conventional war, like what we used to be fighting, what some say we should just keep ourselves fighting; and one to fight counterinsurgencies, asymmetric conflicts like Afghanistan and Iraq; and that whatever we're going to need to fight the wars tomorrow, next 10 years, 20 years down the line, we need to start building that right now.

So the question is, I guess, essentially, what kind of wars do you think we're going to be fighting, and how are we going to get prepared for that?

ADM. MULLEN: I think we need to be broadly prepared. Basically, we've got to have a balance in our force. You will hear the term – so I'm not one that kicks it all the way to irregular or all the way to conventional. I think we've got to have both. And we need to do that based on where – having – back to inability to predict what's going to happen in the future, and that broad capability, the term that's also being used these days is “hybrid capability.”

And I think we need to be pretty careful about precision on what exactly we're talking about. Too many senior leaders who have seen combat remind me – and it is a good reminder – that warfare is warfare. And how we do it and what are the tools that we use, what are the tactics that we use, may vary. But there is – there are constants in warfare we need to pay attention to.

And I believe that, you know, we've had significantly increasing defense budgets for a significant period of time, albeit – at the same time, we're wearing out equipment quickly because we're using it a lot; and that we are, actually, we're making significant investments now for 10 to 20 years – I mean, investments which will produce capability in the next 10 years. And we have to be very careful about which one – which ones of those, particularly as the budget is pressurized, we keep and which ones we don't.

So I think – I mean, that's what I get paid the big bucks for. That's what the secretary of defense get paid the big bucks for. He has testified recently – I am the same way – we are willing to make the hard choices, and we're going to have to do that. And I don't see that – my

responsibility's also to tell the American people as well as the president, this is what I need for national security. And I take that seriously, and certainly will do that. So if I am unable to do what I'm being asked to do, you'll be the first to know.

Q: Hello. Hello. First, I just wanted to say thank you for coming to talk to us and thank you for your service.

ADM. MULLEN: Thanks.

Q: My question is about Afghanistan. Do you think that the Pakistani military leadership perceives a strong Afghanistan as a potential threat?

ADM. MULLEN: I don't think we solve Afghanistan and Pakistan without an acceptable relationship between the people and the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan. And the leaders – and in fact President Zardari in Pakistan has reached out to President Karzai since he became president a few months ago, and that's a leadership issue that I think needs to put the two countries in position where they don't, quote, unquote, "threaten" each other.

And so – and certainly the Pakistani military in what is a – it is a democratic country, and the military is under civilian control, and we could certainly have a healthy debate about, you know, exactly what that means, but that is really what the leadership of both the – on the civilian side and the military side is working very hard on right now.

But also history here is very instructive, and so we have to pay attention to exactly the question that you're asked, so that those two governments can figure out how to work together in a constructive way and decrease attention, not increase it.

Q: Thank you.

ADM. MULLEN: Yeah.

Q: Thank you as well, Admiral, for your time today and for your service. You mentioned a lot of parts of the world in your talk. One that you didn't mention was China. So I'm wondering what you think about the future of Chinese-U.S. military relations, and specifically sort of what signals you draw from their decision to build their first aircraft carrier.

ADM. MULLEN: I didn't – actually, it was an oversight my part because China is very much on my mind. And stability in that part of the world – and I've spent a fair amount of time out there personally – is absolutely vital.

It goes back to what I think the possibilities are with this huge economic engine that is China, and having that engine be a force for good, as opposed to a force for instability. And we have great relationships with obviously our long-time allies out there and also concerns.

My principal concerns with China is what I call strategic intent. They're building high-end military stuff. You mentioned an aircraft carrier. That is a stated goal. I actually hosted

my counterpart from the Chinese navy when I was the head of the U.S. Navy, and I – and he expressed an interest in building this kind of capability. So I sent him to sea on one of ours to see sort of what the gold standard was. It is not an inexpensive investment. It isn't something you can just kind of think through and like to do. We've been doing this for decades to perfect it. And certainly I wanted at least him to understand what this capability looked like. And there are variations on it.

In my engagement in that part of the world – you know, the Chinese government has got 300 million people who have economically been raised up, but there's another billion that are certainly the focus of the Chinese government, and their focus internally – at least they are heavily focused internally.

That doesn't mean they are ignoring the external challenges that they have, nor – and one of the things that I get asked about is, you know, they've got a navy now which goes beyond the first island chain, and – and in fact they've got ships deployed off – to the Gulf of Aden to work on the piracy issue. And I, quite frankly, applaud that. And that they clearly are vulnerable in the Straits of Malacca. That's where they get all their energy. And so would they build a navy or a military that could protect them? Makes a lot of sense to me. I mean, we do the same thing.

So doing that constructively, peacefully, I applaud. But what I can't get is strategic intent here. What is your overall intent? And I think that – that is embodied in what our relationship would be and the relationship in the region.

I also didn't mention North Korea, where – which is a country that has nuclear weapons, that has – has tested them, and is a very – potentially a very destabilizing influence in that part of the world. And I think all the countries – major countries – Russia, China, U.S., Japan, South Korea – have to – we have to figure out how to make sure that that – that goes well and doesn't go south on us.

But I appreciate you pointing that out. I certainly didn't mean to leave China out.

Yes, ma'am.

Q: Admiral Mullen, thank you for coming to speak to us. I am a first-year student at the Woodrow Wilson School for Pakistan, and hence my question is about Pakistan.

Since 2001 and the U.S. engagement militarily and politically with Pakistan, Pakistan really has had to bear the brunt of this engagement, both in terms of damage to our economy, damage to our forces, lives lost, soldiers. And Pakistan has generally become a much more unsafe place to live. And what's more worrying to someone like me is that the United States in Pakistan starts losing the allies that it had and supporters who supported Pakistan's stance on the war on terror. And this obviously isn't helped by the recent policy of drone attacks in Pakistan, which has severely turned public opinion against the U.S. And so I'm wondering, is this a policy that's going to continue in the long term? And what is its future?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, I won't talk about our operations. I certainly have spent a lot of my time, as you know, in your country, specifically with the senior leadership of the Pakistani military, as well as the civilian leadership. But most importantly for me is to develop that military relationship. And I'm very much aware of the popularity levels of the United States right now in Pakistan.

And I'm actually encouraged by an understanding, I think, in Pakistan of the leaders that I engage with that this is really about the people of Pakistan, and their views matter, so that engagements on the part of the Pak military need to be supported by the people. The relationship between the Pakistan – Pakistani people and American people have to be supported by the people in both countries.

And we've got significant challenges to improve that.

I think I've worked hard on the military side to greatly expand the relationship beyond focus in the FATA, where al Qaeda lives and is harbored and threatens us, threatens Americans and other Westerners, in our own country. And the tension between getting at that and obviously having enough time to develop a comprehensive relationship, across a full spectrum of not just weapons or operations but training and education.

We also because of – there was an amendment passed, in the United States, that you may be familiar with, about 1990, where we had the Pressler Amendment that we have no relationship. Basically because of that amendment, we couldn't – we couldn't sustain any kind of relationship, military-to-military relationship.

And when there was a young admiral that went and led the effort, the international effort and the military effort, led the military effort during that tragic earthquake, and his relationship with senior Pak mil officers was great because they had been to the United States; they knew they had cultivated relationships over the years. The junior officers; there was no connection, because they had never – they didn't know us.

So I'm trying to dramatically improve that and make up for that deficit we have between the two militaries. And I think it is also reflective of the deficit we have, between the two countries, that we've got to continue to work on. And if you have any ideas, I'll give you my e-mail address.

(Laughter.)

Q: First off, thanks for coming today. My question was around cyber-terrorism and cyber-warfare.

Recently we saw the first real country to country attack, when Russia attacked Georgia's infrastructure through a denial of service attack, basically. And I think it's pretty clear that we do a really excellent job protecting the physical infrastructure of this country militarily but that a lot of our cyber-infrastructure is open to attack.

Major banks get attacked, thousands a day throughout the world. And the barrier to entry is pretty low for these attacks. You just need a computer and an Internet connection. I was wondering if you could speak, for a minute, about what we've been doing, the past few years, and what we're going to continue to do, to protect our infrastructure and even our military, in this increasingly technological world.

ADM. MULLEN: It's a great question, an area of great concern to me and to many other leaders. Are you a hacker? (Laughter.) You can't answer that question.

And the challenge that we have, and you may understand this a lot better than I, but the challenge that we have: In this world, there are no boundaries. And the domain is unimpeded by barriers, boundaries or even regulations and rules and regulations, to a great extent.

And it is increasingly alarming to me the progress that is being made by those who would attack us. And I'm also pretty familiar with what we can do, and I sort of say, you know, whatever we can do, there are others out there that can do it.

President Bush, to his credit, invested significantly in this area during his administration, because it takes resources to make this happen. And then how do we get at this? Because so many countries can do it and we can help each other or threaten each other.

Now, there are other parts of war-fighting capabilities historically where we've had that, and I don't know that we don't need to think about how to come together to create rules to make sure we're not hurting each other. And you don't have to do – I mean, you can kind of extend this into the financial system or whatever – some very, very critical areas that we need to pay a lot of attention to. And that's to say that we have, but 99 percent of it I can't talk about standing up here.

So it's got my attention, but we're relatively early. And we're looking for good people to come and help us. (Laughter.)

Yeah.

Q: Thank you for coming, Admiral. If, as appears likely now, the clock on diplomacy with Iran runs out, the two scenarios we'll be left with is accepting a nuclear Iran or potentially using force to prevent it. Which is the least worst case scenario? (Laughter.) Thank you.

ADM. MULLEN: As I pointed out earlier, I'm not the policy guy. It is – and actually, I've been out there for some time saying that I think it's very important that we engage Iran. It's instructive to me that even – and again, I'm to some degree captured by my youth and my experience.

But it's instructive to me that even in the darkest days of the Cold War we had channels to the Soviet Union, multiple channels to exchange information. And we have not had that since 1979. There have been – it's – there have been some, but by and large we have no – we have not had any kind of dialogue with Iran. So I think that's important.

I think that that is important to be done, while not taking any options off the table. Clearly, they are on a path to develop nuclear weapons. I think that is a really bad outcome and is potentially very badly destabilizing as much for the unintended consequences as the obvious ones. I'll use India and Pakistan and look at what those two countries did. And because one had it, another one developed it.

And I worry a great deal about the proliferation of that in the region if Iran achieves that, beyond just the military capability, which is – could be catastrophic for certainly those in the region and beyond – very specific objective with respect to this development that Ahmadinejad has talked about vis-à-vis Israel. Israel is an extremely close ally of ours. And I don't ever see us walking from that relationship in any way, shape or form.

So I think it's very important that diplomatically, dialogue-wise, engagement-wise, internationally that we put this on the front burner and never have to get to a point that you asked – you know, to get to the – to answer the question that you asked, although I'm very much aware of what the possibilities are and what the potential is, which has an extreme downside.

Q: Thank you, Admiral Mullen, for coming. Thank you for the work that you do. You talked a little bit earlier, when talking about your personal background, about the role that you see Mexico and Latin America playing 10 to 15 years or even sooner down the line. I was wondering if you could comment on what role you think the U.S. military will be playing in the U.S. further engaging Latin America and Mexico and whether you think that that will be a role of fighting narco-terrorism alongside something like the Colombian military or whether that will be a different role entirely.

ADM. MULLEN: I think the Colombian example is a great example of a very broad program that wasn't just military to support a friend at a time when, effectively, they were very close to a failed state. And our support of them on the military side has been principally in training.

And, literally, the leadership in Colombia and the government of Colombia – certainly to include the military which has played a significant role as well – has taken back what I would call almost a third of their country that they were not in control of, and has put that country in a position from what was clearly close to a failed state to a position where that country can potentially continue to move forward. And I admire what President Uribe has done and what the military has done.

And I think that model is instructive, about how we might assist across the board, let's say, in Mexico, where the drug problem is now generating all these deaths. And we've offered that.

Broader, in Latin America, certainly to include – and including Mexico, the engagement from the military historically around the world is typically one of the first things that happens, particularly between navies. So oftentimes, you will see – if we're reestablishing relationships

with Vietnam, the first thing you see is a U.S. Navy ship going to Vietnam. And it begins from there.

And, in fact, we've actually – we've engaged quite a bit in the last several years with the navy of Mexico, which is a different navy than ours. But Mexico's got some vulnerable structure at sea on the oil side that they're charged with – that their military is charged with protecting. So we've assisted in that regard, for example.

So meeting those kinds of challenges and opportunities with Latin America is a growing concern. I don't – and of growing importance, to me. But it doesn't take high-end military capability to do that. It takes engagement, small groups, training – things that we think we can assist when asked to do.

You've seen us – probably seen us send hospital ships to Latin America which – and that's a story, and my view is that's a story for life, when you help a family. One of the stories last year was a mother that had marched a long way because she knew from her village – and I'm talking about tens of miles, as I recall, so she could see a doctor of the United States Navy hospital ship that was there. Doesn't have to just be that, but that kind of diplomacy and that kind of soft power is much more enduring and much more significant and mitigating any evolving threats than waiting until we have to go kinetic.

MODERATOR: Admiral Mullen, just so that we respect the ending time, we only have time for two more questions.

ADM. MULLEN: Actually, I always abuse this. So if nobody else gets up, I'll take these five. My staff knows this as well.

(Laughter.)

Q: Thank you for coming to speak with us today.

Our defense budget is going to come under increasing pressure to be reduced in the coming years, and I was wondering if you foresee any operational changes that the military would make in terms of how it's managed and how – and how – reliance on contractors, et cetera, that would substantially change the operational costs of the military in the long run.

ADM. MULLEN: I recognize, in fact, long before the current financial crisis, if you do some analysis – I've got a chart that takes me back to 1935 that shows the swings that the United States Defense Department budget goes through in about an 18-and-a-half or 19-year cycle. And it does it on the fives, as it turns out. Well, this isn't 2005. In some ways, based on that cycle, we're overdue.

Now, I don't say that to not recognize the huge challenges that we have to resource the missions and the requirements that we talk about globally throughout this discussion. But I focus – I focus a lot on that, and we are going to have to tighten our belts when this occurs. And I think it'll occur sooner rather than later.

But I also think that, as I look to the future of how to guarantee the future for the United States military, it is these 2.2 million young men and women and their families. And if we – and they are the most combat-hardened force we've ever had. And if we get it right for them, looking to the future, the future will be just fine. And we may not get the stuff, the equipment, as rapidly as we want, but at the center of all that it's the people.

And so investing there and keeping that whole is absolutely critical. I think we have to fund the wars that we're in. We can't send young men and women out to potentially sacrifice their lives without doing that. And then clearly the other pot of money is what I would call the stuff that we buy: airplanes, ships, tanks, vehicles, other equipment, and – that should it come down – should the pressure come, as I think it will, that we're going to have to figure out how to manage with less of that as soon as we had wanted. And yet we've also had these budgets go up for the last many years, and so we have put ourselves in a position in – in not every case, but certainly in many cases, where we can do that for a while and be just fine. Everybody wouldn't agree with me on that, but that's where I am.

Q: Okay. Well, I was actually also going to ask about our airstrikes in Pakistan, but I guess that's off limits for the moment. So, instead, I'll just ask generally, what do you see as the proper balance or trade-off between strict adherence to international law and to the pursuit of vital military objectives, which – (inaudible) – the controversy over airstrikes in Pakistan and the doctrine of preemptive warfare previous administration.

ADM. MULLEN: So you aren't going to ask about strikes.

(Laughter.)

Q: Well, you don't have to specifically divulge any –

ADM. MULLEN: I mean, very specifically, we recognize international law and our own laws and we operate within those routinely. Now, again, I'm not going to get into specific operations. I just wouldn't do that.

And we do that – we do that, you know, within our own legal system and legislative system and laws. So that's – I mean, that guides us in everything that we're doing. And again, we have a brand- new president, brand-new administration, it's week three, and all these challenges. And certainly then-President-elect and candidate Obama said certain things, and we can certainly read certain things into what he said. Now he's the president, and he understands his responsibility and I think I understands what his responsibilities are. And developing these strategies and then how the military fits into that is an important part of how we move forward. And a lot of people – I mean, a lot of people want answers today. I think there will be answers. I just think it's going to take a little while.

Q: Thank you for taking the extra questions. I'm one of those. And my question's different from most of the others. It's –

ADM. MULLEN: Am I going to regret your question?

(Laughter.)

Q: No, you're not going to regret it.

ADM. MULLEN: (Chuckles.)

Q: In your opening remarks, you alluded to the fact that there are men and women in the Army who are stretched beyond stretching, and how many tours that they've had to do. And I think that what all of this comes down to is a shortage of manpower. And what I'm trying to understand is why there isn't a universal draft or talk of a universal draft in America.

I served in the National Guard, as did many of my friends, and it did us good. And so it did the country good as well. And it seems to me that Israel has had a standing one-year draft for some – many years, and they seem to benefit from it. And I was just wondering what your feelings were on the subject.

(Applause.)

ADM. MULLEN: I'm not a supporter of the draft. It's where I started. I've basically grown up through the transition from draft to all-volunteer force. And I talk about the quality of this force that we have right now, and its tremendous value in the fact that it is an all-volunteer force.

I'm – this is me personally, not Mullen the chairman – but public service is a great thing, a lot of ways to do that. That's, to me, a different debate.

We are growing a force right now – the force that has been pushed the hardest, our Marine Corps and our Army. And I think that number's about right – 202,000 active in the Marines Corps and 547,000 on the Army side. I want to be quoted accurately. I said stretched, not stretched beyond stretched. I also said resilient, very proud of what they've done. (Chuckles.)

Q: I apologize.

ADM. MULLEN: They're pushed hard. (Chuckles.) They're pushed very hard, and I'm looking for ways to relieve that. And these next couple years is a very delicate walk, because of the commitments we still have in Iraq and Afghanistan, even as they come down, and I don't have the force grown enough to go get more to relieve some of that pressure people, so people can be home longer.

And basically what we've asked our active-duty Army is to go over to Iraq or Afghanistan for 12 months, come back for 12 and go again. And that's to three and four.

Now, last – several months ago we made the decision to reduce the length of the deployments from 15 months, which they were for a couple of years, to 12. And it shouldn't be list that there are still forces over there that are on 15-month deployments, because that rule didn't go into effect until 1 August. But that was designed to bring off some of the pressure. That's why building the force and also just reducing the overall commitment is the way that I can see us relieving some of that pressure, and we need to do that.

So I don't want to leave the impression we're near breaking. We're not.

I was here in the '70s, and we could argue about whether we broke or not. It was far too close. If you didn't think we broke it, it was far too close. And there are a lot of other reasons associated with that that are different where we are right now.

But I – back to my time serving in Vietnam or off the coast of Vietnam in the Navy, my time of what we went through as a country and what the military went through, and I am hypersensitive to anything that moves us in a direction where we would break this force, which is why I focus on it. And it's a very delicate balance here for the next couple of years.

Q: Thank you very much, and thanks for taking my question and for your very frank views on the subjects. This is also a slightly different question.

I'm just wondering what you think the effect would be of allowing openly gay people in the military and of bringing women into more combat roles.

ADM. MULLEN: Well, there are – there are a lot of women in combat roles, and have been since the law changed in I think it was 1994. And they're not in all combat roles, but they clearly are, first of all.

Secondly, we have – women have lost – lost their lives and been wounded in these wars just like men, and they have been extraordinarily brilliant in their performance.

And the other thing is, we have moved far beyond “there's the enemy, we're on this side, there's the line we cross.” The line of battle these days is 360 degrees. So it can come from many, many different directions. And so – and I am one from a – on the people side that value the service of every capable young person who decides to raise their hand.

On the “don't ask, don't tell,” gay-in-the-military piece, we have a – not just a policy, we have a law, and I – which was passed in about 1993. And I've said many times that should the American people, through their legislators, want to change that law and the law gets changed, as I do with our other laws, I follow those. And I would certainly – should that policy – law and policy change, do that. And if that comes up in terms of – of reviewing, I would review it thoroughly, give my advice to the president, as is my responsibility, and then that decision gets made, and whatever the decision is, again, I march off.

Okay.

Q: Thank you, Admiral, for taking my, quote, unquote, “extra” question.

My question is in regards to a statement that Jaap de Hoop Scheffer recently made. He said that one of the key challenges to success in Afghanistan today is the fragmentation of international military efforts. My question is just what you see as important to finding this better-coordinated military effort in Afghanistan, what the U.S.’s role is towards facilitating this coordination, and probably even more importantly – perhaps most importantly – how this coordination can bring in an increased Afghan ownership.

ADM. MULLEN: Well, my view is – and the United States – Jaap de Hoop Scheffer is the secretary-general of NATO, so he is the principal leader of this military alliance of 28 countries – or soon to be – I think soon to be 28 countries, with Albania and Croatia coming in. And the responsibility to integrate and work together is – is critical for NATO.

I believe that NATO’s response to Afghanistan, to the ISAF mission – the security force mission there – which NATO took on, is a – will be – is and will be a bellwether for NATO’s relevance in the future. So should NATO fail in this, I think there will be a lot of questions about whether NATO’s relevant or not.

The need to have the militaries work together, I mean, as you asked – as you asked that question, I literally earlier this week – a couple days ago – spoke with my French, Dutch, Italian, British, Polish counterpart, all on NATO issues, which I do fairly routinely. And so we try on the military side, which is the – obviously the reason for this alliance, to work together.

But, as I said earlier, it is not all about military in Afghanistan. The military cannot do this alone. And all of our countries, including those in NATO – there are 42 countries in Afghanistan right now in various capacities, many NATO countries out of that 42 – that we’ve got to focus on the governance piece, we’ve got to focus on the development piece, the rule of law and the other things that we know must be put in place to generate any kind of success in Afghanistan. So it’s the totality of it that we’ve got to work together, not just the military side.

Okay? Thank you.