

ADMIRAL MICHAEL MULLEN:

The New Faces of Seapower

**The Chief of Naval Operations address
To The Navy League of the United States
New York Council's 104th Anniversary Dinner.**

**Edited and photographed by Richard H. Wagner
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This really is a great privilege and honor for Deborah and I to be here this evening celebrating 104 years of the Navy League's strong support for the sea services, all of whom are well-represented here tonight: the Coast Guard, Marine Corps, our merchant marine, as well as our Sailors. On behalf of all the Sailors, the civilians who work in our services and their families, please accept my thanks for all you do as individuals and as an organization to make our service to the nation possible.

I would also add, certainly tonight, that this council, in this city, is the best council, in the best city in our country. There are places that I will travel where I am sure that I will hear about that comment. But, you have been in our corner now for more than a century, guiding, cheering, laughing, and yes, crying right along with us during some of the toughest times we have ever faced. It is all about teamwork.

Actually, I am reminded of a story that my lawyer told me. She was giving a tour of the courtroom to some school children while the court was in recess. Only the clerk and a young man wearing hand cuffs were there. "This is where the judge sits" she said, pointing

to the bench. "The lawyers sit at these tables. The clerk sits over there. The court reporter who writes everything down sits right here," she continued. She even pointed out where the witnesses stand and where the jury box were. "As you can see," she told the kids, "there are lots of people involved in making this system and this team work." At that point, the prisoner raised his handcuffs and said, "Yeah, but I'm the one who really makes it all happen."



In the Navy, however, it takes everyone to make it all happen. As you see and know, it's a total team effort. You and your shipmates in the Navy League councils all around the world are a big part of that - - true friends, family and we appreciate more than you know your generosity and kindness.

Deborah and I congratulate all the awardees tonight. You represent a strong devotion to sea power and we are all grateful for your service.

It is also great to be back in New York - - a great Navy town if there ever was one. Sailors have loved coming here for just about as long as we have had a navy and that is certainly true today. Fleet Week is coming in May. If you have not participated before, you should. We are once again sending our ships and Sailors here for a wonderful week of festivities. We truly do feel welcome and I know that is in large part due to your efforts.

Before I go any further though, I also want to publicly express my deepest gratitude to the parents of the late Corporal Jason Dunham. We all know they are here tonight. Jason, a son of New York State, born on the Marine Corps' birthday, paid the ultimate price, made the ultimate sacrifice for his country and ours and received the Medal of Honor. Dan and Deborah, we join you in this city of heroes in honoring Jason's selfless act of courage. For saving the lives of his fellow Marines, Jason proved beyond any doubt that this too is a great generation - - a generation of heroes. Thank you.

Corporal Dunham, of course, represents the highest form of selflessness of those we send off to war. His act of bravery, hard for some of us to reconcile, is easy enough for all of us to admire, clear and bold as it was in its

execution. But, I would expect that even he would say that he was not alone, that his buddies were and are just as heroic, fighting and driving everyday to make life just a little better for people to live on the other side of the ocean.

I think it is important for us to remember that and to remember that strong armed services - - a strong Navy, a strong Marine Corps - - are only strong because of the people who raise their right hands and volunteer to serve. We hear a lot in the media about what is wrong in Iraq and Afghanistan. We hear about the car bombs and the violence and indeed, there is violence and there is death and there is sacrifice. Prime Minister Maliki's government is working hard to try to get that right and we applaud those efforts. We encourage them. We know the military cannot be the only solution but the Iraqi people need security and stability, politically and economically, to survive. The ongoing reforms appear to be bearing some fruit, though slowly. The United States forces are adapting their procedures and tactics to help harvest this new-found freedom.

Tonight, especially in the presence of the Dunham family, I think we owe it to ourselves and to all those serving and sacrificing overseas to recognize the stories that you don't see and the stories you don't hear. Stories of extraordinary people in extraordinary circumstances making a difference in extraordinary ways. Corporal Dunham is, of course, one such individual. But, so is a Navy doctor by the name of Salin Kahn. You've probably not heard of Dr. Kahn but he is a naval reservist, a Pakistani-American, who I met on a trip to Iraq over the holidays. Dr. Kahn who runs a very successful medical practice in Texas was then on his seventh tour in

Iraq. He volunteered for all seven. The day I caught up with him in a hospital in Fallujah, he was half-covered in blood and it was the blood of an Iraqi insurgent. The man had been wounded by some Marine and Kahn was saving his life. How would he characterize this experience? "Wonderful," he says. "Sometimes you see a whole lot, sometimes nothing. It is unpredictable." He joined the Navy in his early forties, wanting more than anything else just to serve. He said, "I never wanted anybody to look at me and say 'Hey, you came over here, made a lot of money, and didn't pay your dues.' My kids were born in the United States. I want them to know that their father paid his dues."

Dr. Kahn stopped a little while to talk to a reporter that we had traveling with us. As the reporter began to leave, the doctor gripped his hand and said: "I'm a Muslim, I want you to know that." The reporter asked him why he felt that it was necessary to make that known. "If I don't," he says, "I will be letting down my comrades. I don't want anybody to ever say that there was any discrimination in the service. Maybe there is but I haven't seen it. It's a great outfit." Kahn said that he would probably put in for yet another tour when this one was done.

On any given day, one third of our fleet and over 60,000 Sailors are deployed away from home - - away from families, protecting the sea lanes, ensuring our friends and ensuring our enemies. They too are heroes. Anywhere you go in the Middle East, in addition to Marines and Soldiers and those from the Coast Guard and the Air Force, you will find Sailors like Dr. Kahn. Almost as many are on the ground these days as at sea. They are not just the active duty Sailors, their

reserve counterparts are making a huge impact right along with us. Their employers back home are supporting them.

In Afghanistan, reservist Lieutenant Andrew Dussell, who believes that his personal mission in Afghanistan goes well beyond supporting the Global War on Terror, is also making a difference. "Immediately after arriving in theater," remembers Lieutenant Dussell, "I was taken aback by the deplorable conditions Afghani children endure. I am a very spiritual man and faith without action is meaningless so I had to do something to make their lives better." He immediately got to work, Andrew, his family, his friends, his civilian co-workers, his church, and a civilian shipping company, all rallied together, to show that, as Americans, our purpose is to bring hope and help and help create a better future for all Afghans. With the help of his compassionate network back at home, Lt. Dussell bought thousands of dollars worth of school supplies, toys, and clothes to give the children of several problem schools, of an orphanage and of several outlying villages. He continues this work tonight as we are here. He's touching the lives and bringing home the communities that for 30 years barely subsisted under the oppressive yoke of the Taliban. He's giving these children a glimpse of a brighter future and he is sowing seeds that will bloom one day into a carefree Afghanistan.

These are but a few of the new faces of American seapower. A new generation of heroes - - agents of change bridging the gap between war and peace. And as we bridge this gap, we are doing so in an era of uncertainty, rapid globalization, new threats and many new challenges. This era calls for a new

maritime strategy more routed for the change we are facing. As a matter of fact, much to my delight, next week I will be right back here in New York to take part in one of the many conferences we are holding in cities across America to seek ideas of people just like you in developing this new strategy. And [we are doing this] with Admiral [Thad] Allen [Commandant of the Coast Guard] and General [James] Conway [Commandant of the Marine Corps] who are very supportive of this effort. I hope actually to see some of you there. We want your ideas, we need your ideas and I'm sure that in New York, we will get plenty of them. (See story on p. 11 infra).

Our ultimate goal is to ensure the maritime commons remains safe and free for all. The maritime environment is dynamic and the burden of security is much too heavy for any one nation or any one navy to carry alone. We need all nations with a stake in maritime security to come together to bear the load. To get there we need to get Americans and the international community engaged. We need to communicate openly and we need to engender trust. Just last April, in the waters off Goa, India, the Indian Navy hosted us during an exercise called Malabar, an operation promoting shared maritime warfare functionality and enhanced command and control procedures and integration. U.S. Sailors cross-decked over to Indian ships to improve communication and to install compatible equipment. Indian and American sailors learned from each other. Sailors enjoy the experience. "The Indian sailors have been more than helpful," noted Information Technician 2d Class Nick Trelaney from USS KITTY HAWK [(CV 63)]. "The main

difference for me," he went on to say, "has been the food. It is good but it is very spicy, even breakfast."

Even while building bridges across oceans, Sailors still have a way of getting right to the heart of what is really important. But aside from acquiring a taste for Indian food, Nick also gained valuable insight into how one of our closest maritime partners operates. By openly sharing information at sea and cooperating at the individual level, Americans and Indians are forging a stronger foundation of trust. It is this trust that will lead to the building and strengthening of partnerships, global maritime partnerships, which leads us to the concept of the 1,000 ship navy. It is these voluntary partnerships between nations with a common interest in commerce, security, and freedom of the seas that will lead to a more secure maritime environment. It is a secure maritime environment that will advance global economic prosperity and peace, raise standards for the living so that parents around the world can raise their children to a higher level than that which they saw.

But, we'd never forget who made it all happen. I visit the Fleet, I see the sparkle in all our young men and women from all the services and I am inspired by the courage of their families, and I am humbled by their selflessness. All of us this evening should take just a moment and remember them, the battle groups who serve in harm's way and their families who support them better than they have ever have far away from home. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

As CNO, one of the perks that I enjoy is that my office in the Pentagon has windows. From my desk, I have a sweeping view of the manicured lawns

and neat rows of headstones set upon the rolling hills of Arlington National Cemetery. The view is one of serene beauty but it serves as a vivid reminder always of the heavy price of freedom and how many heroes, just like Corporal Dunham, how many have sacrificed so much to pay that price for us. As we keep our sea services ready for today and shape them for tomorrow, we should honor our heroes in the same way as Corporal Dunham, Dr. Kahn, and Lieutenant Dussell have honored us - - by doing our duty, leading by example, and by taking the fight to the enemies of freedom.

Thank you for your continued and steadfast support, for helping us tell our story to America. Thank you for standing tall in the corner of the men and women who serve so nobly. God bless our Navy and the nation we so humbly serve.