

PROFILE: ADMIRAL MICHAEL G. MULLEN

Chief of Naval Operations

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In recent testimony before Congress, Admiral Michael G. Mullen, succinctly outlined the situation confronting the nation and today's Navy. "We are a maritime nation involved in a long, irregular and global war that extends far beyond Iraq and Afghanistan. The threat we face breeds within failing states and the under-governed spaces of the world and preys upon those weakened by poverty, disease, and hatred. It thrives where there is no rule of law and spreads like a malignancy through cyberspace and the vast maritime commons that serve as a connecting tissue in this age of globalization.

"We are also confronted by nation-states determined to develop sophisticated weapons systems, including nuclear arms. We cannot allow ourselves to be fixated on one threat alone. Our national security is dependent upon a strong Navy that can keep the sea lanes free, deter aggression, safeguard our sources of energy, protect the interests of our citizens at home and reassure our friends abroad. We must never relinquish overmatching capability and capacity.

"While our ground forces are engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Navy - - with its ability to deliver two unique attributes day to day - - global reach and persistent presence - - will continue to support our responsibilities worldwide and provide a powerful deterrence, both in day-to-day operations as well as being a vital element of our nation's 'Strategic Reserve.' As we pace the rapidly changing security environment, there is no alternative to a well balanced fleet."



While many have nodded in agreement with such sentiments during the past 20 years, the nation has seemed less than eager to maintain a strong, diverse fleet. From the high of nearly 600 ships during the Reagan Administration, the fleet has shrunk to about 280 ships today despite repeated analyzes showing that a minimum of 300 ships is needed for the Navy to meet all

of its commitments satisfactorily. Along the same lines, lawmakers have repeatedly cutback programs designed to replace aging Cold War hulls with ships that reflect current technology and which are designed to meet the threats of today and tomorrow.

The reasons for this situation are straightforward. After the fall of the Soviet Union, politicians and the media demanded a “peace dividend” by which they meant a cutback in spending on the very institutions that had brought peace in the first place. Later, when it became apparent that there were still hostile forces at large in the world, the high cost of the technology and the seeming absence of a traditional-looking naval opponent, has led some to balk at authorizing the necessary spending.

Whatever the reason this situation, Admiral Mullen has had to deal with it since becoming Chief of Naval Operations in July 2005. “Probably the biggest challenge I have is to get the ship building key right, to get the future capabilities right. We are at 281 ships today. We have come down, and I believe are projected to go up -- and we need to sustain that projection to a positive direction.

“In February 2006, the Navy unveiled a new 30-year shipbuilding plan that will provide a Battle Force of approximately 313 ships by 2020 with more capacity and capability than was ever dreamed when our fleet was much larger in size.” A battle force of this size is “the minimum force required to guarantee the long-term strength and viability of U.S. naval air and sea power with acceptable risk.

“Last year, we began to see our future Fleet taking shape. We currently have 38 ships under contract for

construction, and in FY 2006 ships that had been designed a few short years ago rolled down the ways. By the end of FY 2007, we will have stopped the free fall of our Navy and our Fleet’s net size will have grown from a low of 274 ships in March 2007 to 279, including five newly commissioned ships.

“Future platforms and combat systems must be designed and built with the knowledge that we plan to continually upgrade them over their lifetime. An Open Architecture approach to software acquisition and development of integrated weapons systems is a critical part of this business model.”

The dictates of the times have also meant that there is no place any longer for service rivalries and attempting to go it alone. “We [have] also pursued the broadest possible approach to strengthening maritime security through partnerships. This include[s] closer cooperation with the US Coast Guard and our other interagency partners, international organizations, non-governmental agencies, commercial shippers, and maritime nations great and small.”

Indeed, while the Navy is seeking to expand the size of the Fleet, Admiral Mullen has also championed the concept of the “1,000 ship navy” - - a coalition of like-minded nations acting together. “Sea power in this century cannot be harnessed by a single nation acting alone. If we are to build a fleet capable of keeping pace with globalization, we must leverage the capability of our partners with common interests. The positive potential of Sea Power and freedom of the seas can only be achieved through a collective and cooperative approach

focused on international rule of law and freedom of the maritime commons.”

“We have put the rudder over, and I believe we have the course about right. Simply reacting to change is no longer an acceptable course of action if our Navy is to successfully wage asymmetric warfare and simultaneously deter regional and transnational threats. Two

Challenges, One Fleet. Our nation’s security and prosperity depend upon keeping our shores safe and the world’s maritime highways open and free.”

A native of Los Angeles, California., Admiral Mullen graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1968. He has served in Allied, Joint and Navy positions, overseas and in both the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets.

As a junior officer, he served in various leadership positions aboard USS COLLETT (DD 730), USS BLANDY (DD 943), USS FOX (CG 33) and USS STERETT (CG 31). Admiral Mullen commanded three ships: USS NOXBEE (AOG 56), USS GOLDSBOROUGH (DDG 20), and USS YORKTOWN (CG 48). As a Flag Officer, he commanded Cruiser-Destroyer Group Two and the GEORGE WASHINGTON Battle Group. Admiral Mullen's last command at sea was as Commander, U.S. Second Fleet/Commander, NATO Striking Fleet Atlantic.

Ashore, Admiral Mullen served as Company Officer and Executive Assistant to the Commandant of Midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy. He also served in the Bureau of Naval Personnel as Director, Surface Officer Distribution and in the Office of the Secretary of Defense on the staff of the Director, Operational Test and

Evaluation. On the Chief of Naval Operations' staff, Admiral Mullen served as Deputy Director and Director of Surface Warfare; Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Resources, Requirements, and Assessments (N8); and as the 32nd Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

Admiral Mullen graduated from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., with a Master of Science degree in Operations Research. He is also a graduate of the Advanced Management Program at the Harvard Business School.

Admiral Mullen's last operational assignment was Commander, Joint Force Command Naples/Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe. Based in Naples, Italy, he had operational responsibility for NATO missions in the Balkans, Iraq, and the Mediterranean as well as providing overall command, operational control, and coordination of U.S. naval forces in the European Command area of responsibility.