

## **U.S. Institute of Peace Women and War Conference**

*As Delivered by Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Ritz-Carlton, Washington, D.C. Thursday, November 04, 2010*

ADM. MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, good morning and, Richard, thank you for that introduction. And I'm honored to be here today and think so much of what USIP is and so much of what USIP does. So it's very special. And I want to commend this organization for hosting such an important conference on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and for continuing to call up the empowerment and the protection of women around the world.

While I do not profess to be an expert on international law, I come to you as someone whose life has been deeply impacted by superb leaders, men and women, and the transformation our military has undergone over the last 40 years. So for the next few minutes, I'd like to – I hope to offer my perspectives on how this transformation has benefitted our military and the world and identify some trends I see for the future. And I certainly look forward to your questions.

First, let me say that I'm privileged to serve alongside some of the most accomplished and most influential women in this country. I rely on their talent and counsel every single day. Women like Gen. Ann Dunwoody, our first female four-star general and Vice Adm. Ann Rondeau, otherwise known recently as Dr. Ann Rondeau. She'd want me to point that out. She just achieved her doctorate and so proudly serves on this board as Richard said.

And as I meet women in uniform and other female leaders, they tell me how important it is for young women to be able to look up and see female leaders to emulate. Leaders like Dunwoody and Rondeau and many others who kept the faith when role models were rare because opportunities were extremely limited. Times have clearly changed.

Ann Dunwoody may be our first four-star female in the military in our nation's history, but I can promise you that many more are on the way. As I think of the progress we have made and the work that remains, I can't help but view this in the context of my own growth and development.

I started my career in the Navy back in 1960-whatever – (laughter) – in the thick of the Vietnam War. I went to sea, traveled the world and even got to command a ship at a very young age. And I'll be the first to admit that at that age, the woman's role in the military was just not something that I focused on. My high school was all male. Annapolis, back then, was all male. The ships I served on were – well, I think you get the idea.

If I wanted a female's perspective on things, I had to go home to get it and I certainly did get it there. Now, I grew up in a household where both my mom and dad worked very hard in their professional lives. So I'd like to think that I was not stuck in the Stone Age. But in the Vietnam era, gender equality in the military was anything but.

Eight years after I graduated, I came back to Annapolis and I was looking forward to a break from life at sea and to spend more time with my family in a town that I had grown to love. And then a telegram came from Washington telling us that women were on their way to Annapolis. Congress did the right thing even though we couldn't. Needless to say, life became a whole lot more interesting after that.

I was selected to serve on the admissions board and we had to move quickly to plan for the integration. We had eight men and one female psychologist trying to figure out how to do it. Fair to say, she had her hands full and I think she ended up needing therapy after that effort. But it was a great lesson because it focused us all to think about things we never had to consider before. To look at problems as best we could through someone else's eyes.

It's a lesson I've carried with me throughout my career and which extends – that lesson extends far beyond just the issue of diversity. It also taught me that as important as it is to have – it's very important to have the right people and voices at the table to broaden our perspectives. And you can bet that today, when we consider future efforts to expand opportunities for women in the military, we aren't doing so with an 8-to-1 ratio of men to women.

Eighty-one women entered Annapolis that first year and into a military that was less than 5-percent female. And I've watched many of them blaze trails and do extraordinary things. Paving the way for so many to follow since that

telegram 35 years ago. Today, women are rising through our ranks and expanding their influence at an ever-increasing rate, serving magnificently all over the world in all sorts of ways.

And each time we open new doors to their professional lives, we end up wondering why did it take us so long? More critically, in these wars of ours, they've served and sacrificed and led every bit as much and every bit as capably as any man out there. Well over 200,000 women have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, demonstrating tremendous resilience, adaptability and capacity for innovation. Indeed, they have given us a competitive advantage.

Five years ago in Iraq, when the enemy was using Iraqi women to subvert our security checkpoints, female Marines began the Lioness program to counter this threat and then conduct broader outreach to the women of Iraq. In Afghanistan, female Marines are providing hope and promise through female engagement teams in the Taliban strongholds in that country.

Lt. Col. Diana Staneszewski is in Afghanistan for a year as a mentor to the female engagement teams. And she reflected recently, learning the language and interacting with the population makes me a strategic and tactical game changer. And while these young warriors may face cultural and language hurdles, they have also been able to operate where male troops often cannot go.

For instance, one Afghan elder who opened his home so female Marines could visit with his wife told Washington Post reporter Tom Ricks, your men come to fight but we know the women are here to help. Now, I would tell you that all of our deployed troops, men and women alike, are there to fight for and to help the local population.

But these women have been able to build relationships and trust with Afghan women, to see things through their eyes and gain valuable insight that we would not have gained elsewhere. Time and again, they show us that courage and leadership recognize no gender. And I believe that those who undercut the contributions of one gender do so at their own peril, sacrificing half the talent, half the resources, half the potential of the population.

President Obama reminds us in our own National Security Strategy that countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women are afforded full and equal rights and opportunity. When those rights and opportunities are denied, countries often lag behind. No one knows this better than my friend, "Three Cups of Tea" author, Greg Mortenson.

The schools for girls he built in Pakistan and Afghanistan are shaping the very future of an entire region and giving new hope to an entire generation. Greg often quotes the African proverb: If we educate a boy, we educate an individual. But if we can educate a girl, we educate a community. Greg explains why this concept has, what we in the military term, multiple-order effects.

When these young women grow up, they are the ones who promote the value of education in the community. Infant mortality is reduced, populations grow in a more manageable rate, quality of health improves. In fact, Greg explains that, culturally, when someone goes on a jihad, they often receive permission from their mother first. And when women are educated, they're less likely to condone or encourage their son to turn to violence or extremism.

Ultimately, as our nation begins its second decade of war, until 15-year-old boys face better options than picking up a rifle or a suicide pack, the seeds of conflict will always be there. So our efforts to educate these communities, to educate women, are not merely the right thing to do, they are essential to our future.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wisely summed it up last week when she said if we want to make progress towards settling the world's most intractable conflicts, let's enlist women. I couldn't agree more – and I would only add: The time to act is now so we don't have to ask, yet again, why did this take so long? But as we think about how far we've come, we must also consider how far we have still to go.

This decade of persistent conflict has had an impact we're just beginning to come to terms with, an impact of untold costs and undetermined toll. And I believe the costs that we see today are truly just the tip of the iceberg. In a war where there is no longer a clear delineation between the frontlines and the sidelines, where the war can come at you from any direction.

This will be the first generation of veterans where large segments of women returning will have been exposed to some form of combat. And I know what the law says and I know what it requires. But I'd be hard pressed to say that any woman who serves in Afghanistan today or who's served in Iraq over the last few years did so without facing the same risks of their male counterparts.

They're also coming home to Dover. And just as their male counterparts have, they are returning with wounds visible and invisible with consequences for our health-care system, our national employment rate and even homelessness. They've seen that many of the veterans have a hard time translating their military experience into jobs. A situation made even more difficult by our struggling economy.

Along with other issues, these financial hardships are driving veteran homelessness to a rate faster than experienced by the Vietnam generation. Experts say that more than 100,000 veterans are homeless on any given night and almost 4,000 are from today's generation and 10 percent of those seeking help for homelessness are women. Many of these women have young children who have already been through so much.

This is something that deeply troubles me because the resources for these women haven't caught up with those for their male counterparts. And they have unique challenges that the system just does not understand yet. The assistant secretary of the VA, Tammy Duckworth, herself a combat-wounded veteran and who spoke here earlier this morning, recently said to Oprah, we are all dishonored anytime a veteran sleeps on the very same streets that he or she has helped to defend.

So as we celebrate the doors that have been opened to our women in uniform and honor the impact they've had around the world, we also have to look very hard at doors that are still closed because all of this, the benefits to our military, our efforts across the globe and addressing the cost of war has implications for our future and the future of our children and yes, grandchildren.

I particularly mention grandchildren because my wife and I have just been blessed with our first granddaughter and I think about the opportunities we want for her – how we need to view these challenges generationally. In the military, we don't bring people into our organization as senior leaders. It takes a generation to build them. So the recruits and young officers we bring in today will be the four-star leaders of tomorrow, 30 years into the future.

That's why when it comes to diversity, I believe we can't go fast enough. And when we think about diversity in the military, we need to be thinking about two generations ahead. In 2040, when our granddaughter turns 30, we will need a military leadership that is truly reflective of and connected to the American people.

And let's face it, when that day comes and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of 2040 looks at her leadership team – (laughter) – those of us who were still here will not want to have to answer the question, what took you so long back in 2010?

So thank you for the attention you bring to these important issues, for helping us to keep moving forward and for the opportunity to participate in this dialogue. I've not forgotten the lessons I learned so long ago in Annapolis. Actually, I've not forgotten anything from those days. So I'm eager to listen and learn from you through your questions. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MS. : We'll have time for a couple of questions. There is the microphone there. Please don't trip over each other running to be the first couple of questioners. But I see somebody is making their way and if you would not mind identifying yourself and keeping the question relatively short. Thank you. Go ahead.

Q: Hi, my name is Jocelyn Page and I have a question about – regarding Somalia. This year Somalia was ranked number one on the Fund for Peace's Failed State Index for the third year in a row. And al-Shabaab has been invoking – (inaudible). Yet, we've seen little attention here in the U.S. both within the political arena and the media and I was wondering if either of you can, kind of, speak to what's being done here in the U.S. to address the conflict there.

MS. : So the question is about Somalia and what is being done to address the conflict there.

ADM. MULLEN: Obviously, this last weekend, Greg focused on another country of concern and that's Yemen. And for a considerable period of time, I've had a focus on and spoken to the potential for new safe havens in both Yemen and Somalia. And they continue to evolve.

So from my perspective, the concern continues to grow. In both of those places – as is the case in any of those countries – it's an enormously complex challenge. We are, from the military standpoint, we're extended right now in terms of both the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and other challenges that we have globally.

And I am concerned, long term, about where does Somalia go? And I think it's very important for not just the United States, I think it's very important for international leadership to come to grips with this. And you specifically mentioned al-Shabaab which is a very – a viral terrorist organization and certainly fomenting as much violence and extremism as they can in Somalia with their ultimate goal being to take over the country.

So I think that you raise a great question. The answers are very, very difficult. And as is in the case in so many places, there's certainly a security component. You have to have security before you can have much else but it goes far beyond that. And I'd go back to my comments in my remarks.

We've got to get to a point where 15 year olds have a better opportunity than just putting on a suicide vest. That is tied to long-term prosperity and security and that is not going to happen overnight in a place like Somalia.

MS. : Second question. And I see our passionate women are now going to probably let you go after two. But we may extend just to a third question. So two and second and then one last one.

Q: Elaine Sarao with Foreign Aid Through Education. And I'm a Franklin Fellow with the Department of State on public diplomacy for South Asia. Adm. Mullen, thank you very much for being here today.

Can you possibly point to how you would think the role for U.S.-South Asian diaspora women could provide support for threshold, societal stabilization in South Asia when you mentioned the multiplier-order effect and the female engagement teams? Do you see a role that we could try to make a link from support from here of the diaspora into your efforts in South Asia?

ADM. MULLEN: I don't know if this is, exactly, the right answer but as I think about where – that you working in the State Department, or certainly, at least temporarily so. I think about opportunities that are tied to USAID as it grows and, you know, as it grows from where it has been recently to, I think, what it needs to be in the future.

And I'm also struck that in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the number of NGOs that are there and, actually, have been out there for – in many cases – decades. Oftentimes, when you ask about a certain group of individuals at the diaspora here the question is – and maybe it is yours – is how do you connect the two?

And I think one of the responsibilities that we have in government is to be able to do that and then get out of the way because I think on the private side you would – with the connection, you would create the, kind of, both entrepreneurship and innovation that needs to occur. Although there's an awful lot of very basic things that need to take place.

If I were going to pick one, I'd certainly pick education. And how do you – you know, how do you improve? It goes back to Mortenson because I think, you know, with education – and this is going to be a long-term challenge – with education comes opportunity. Certainly, you've got to be able to provide for your family.

So it becomes, you know, a combination of education and employment in a part of the world that sometimes doesn't value female, women employees or employment. And so I think, you know, pushing it from that point of view and just taking it, sort of, one step at a time but keeping the pressure on.

Q: Thank you very much.

MS. : Final question.

Q: (Inaudible) – came from DRC. We're all here came from a woman's womb and violence to a woman is a crime. I had the pleasure of witnessing the birth of my children. And I never thought how a woman could suffer when she was giving birth. And when I saw it, it gave me joys but I was also holding my wife's hand and helping her deliver. This is something that we don't do back home in the Congo.

But I had the privilege of being in America to witness this and live this. I say this because when Mobutu was in power, our troops went into Rwanda; our troops went into Chad; our troops went into Angola. There was never, never plan of rape, violence by Congolese military.

They were trained and led by – Sudan's military was trained here in the United States. Even during the military that took place in the Congo when Mobutu was falling, there was no sexual violence done by the military. Everything started when the Rwandese took entered into the Congo. And today, we learn that these Rwandese troops have been trained, also, by the U.S. What kind of training have you given the Rwandese to come to rape our women, to destroy life in the Congo?

MS. : Thank you so much for the –

Q: What are you doing –

MS. : Let me let Adm. Mullen respond –

Q: – to change the situation so that they're perpetrator of these crimes are arrested or brought to justice? They mentioned – (inaudible) – from the FDLR. But the major – (inaudible). Thank you, sir.

Q: Thank you so much.

ADM. MULLEN: I certainly – I mean, I don't – and the United States does not condone that kind of conduct in any way shape or form. From the United States military perspective, in our training programs with militaries all over the world, in fact, train to a standard that is very visible in terms of no kind of sexual violence – the proper kind of conduct.

So I certainly – and I know that for a fact. I certainly take your point. I don't know enough about the specifics of this training program and of this military but I am certainly happy to look into it based on just your question. But it's unacceptable across the board.

And over time, militaries – we spend a fair amount of time in my military and, actually, in my government focusing on proper conduct of militaries and on human-rights violations. And while we may not get it immediately, over time, it is something that very, very significantly gets addressed in terms of eliminating training, the requirement for a military to train itself to certain standards and show that.

Hold accountable those that who have led and perpetrated any kinds of crimes and we've done this fairly consistently so if that all speaks to what is completely unacceptable in any kind of gross human-rights violation. And from our military's perspective we, certainly, don't just train to it when we train with other armies, other military members – we expect that.

MS. : I'm going to ask if folks would remain seated while Dr. Solomon escorts Adm. Mullen out so we can get him swiftly and safely out of the room. And then once he has departed – (laughter) – we will all – I promise. I have promised to stretch and get yourselves and your possessions out of the ballroom so that we can set up your seated, plated lunch. And with that I would like us all to thank Adm. Mullen for being here.