

**ADMIRAL MIKE MULLEN**  
**Podcast Transcript**  
**26JUN07**

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MC1 MCNEELEY: Welcome to the Chief of Naval Operations Podcast for June 26th. I'm Petty Officer Chad McNeeley This is a continuing discussion with CNO Admiral Mike Mullen. This week we will discuss the CNO's recent trip to Japan and Vietnam and the homeporting of the aircraft carrier George Washington in Yokosuka.

MC1 MCNEELEY: Sir, let's start off talking about the trip you just returned from. You visited Japan and Vietnam. You hadn't been to Vietnam since taking office. Can you discuss what you were trying to get out of the visit?

ADMIRAL MIKE MULLEN: Well, I went to Vietnam because my counterpart, Admiral Khuyen invited me there. And I had a meeting with him in Hawaii at a naval symposium, which was a group of many nations who meet. And I met with him last November, and he invited me to come. I likewise have invited him to the United States. And what it represents is really the growing, as well as emerging, partnership with not just Vietnam but maritime nations around the world. So I was able to accept that visit. And they're looking at strengthening their navy, and we might be able to assist them, where they ask us to do that.

Our relationship is clearly improving. As you may know, the president of Vietnam happened to be here last week as well, and visited President Bush in the Oval Office. And so all those kinds of things are headed, I think, in a very positive direction. We face, as we do with maritime nations around the world, common challenges at sea, whether it's weapons of mass destruction, piracy, fisheries violations, protection of our economic sea-lanes, which are so vital to all of us. It's all part of this 1,000-ship navy, which is taking root in the Pacific as it is in other places around the world.

And so, Vietnam is starting to participate. We're in some exercises that we're involved in. And I'm excited about the relationship and the evolution and I had a great visit. It was one that I'll always remember.

MC1 MCNEELEY: As you mentioned, sir, the Vietnamese president was in the United States the same time that you were over there. He was asked during an interview 34 years ago at the end of the war if he ever thought he would be welcomed so warmly in the White House. I'd like to ask you the same question. Being a Vietnam veteran, did you ever think that – one – you'd get an opportunity to visit the country and – two – be so warmly welcomed?

ADMIRAL MULLEN: Well, I hadn't really, certainly, spent a lot of time pondering that over the years. I mean, I was a young junior officer when I went to Vietnam initially during the war. And I'm just delighted to say that we've progressed so far. We now have a recognized and improving and solid relationship with Vietnam, and I'm encouraged by that. Lots of things change in time, and relationships are very, very critical to continued evolution. We live in a much smaller world now. Globalization continues to occur at a very rapid pace, so that we're much more closely tied to Vietnam than we used to be, is a very real part of who we are and what we're going to be in the future.

So I didn't really anticipate going there from that standpoint, although there certainly was – it was an amazing visit in that regard, because I at one point flew over where I had actually been on the gun line, which was – actually, it's a great reminder of what possibilities are in terms of positive outcomes, not just necessarily focusing on the negative side of where we've been involved historically.

MC1 MCNEELEY: You also spent a fair amount of time in Japan. Can you tell us a little bit about that aspect of the visit?

ADMIRAL MULLEN: My second visit to Japan; I hadn't been there in about 18 months. Clearly, Japan is a vital ally in the Pacific and is very supportive of our forward-deployed presence over there. We've got thousands of sailors and families who are standing us in great stead. We continue to support the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. Stability in that part of the world, security in that part of the world continues to be vital. And there's an awful lot going on. We're involved in multilateral exercises. In fact, we had our first – a couple of months ago had our first exercise with an Indian ship, a Japanese ship, and a United States ship. I think that's very important in terms of indications of the future.

In the next year, we're going to move the George Washington first nuclear carrier to Japan. That's tracking; many, many people have worked that hard. For everybody involved in that, it's important we focus on that and stay with that – as I like to say – until all lines are doubled and she's in port over there. But we're tracking right now.

But most of all, I had a chance to speak to a couple thousand sailors both in Yokosuka and in Misawa – my first visit to Misawa. And what I found were great sailors doing absolutely spectacular work, great ambassadors for our country. So I get a lot out of that. My wife went with me. She met with spouses in both Japan – I'm sorry – in both Yokosuka as well as Misawa. We always get some good tough issues that we need to continue to address. And so, those were the kinds of things that really make a visit like this a highlight in what we do in terms of leadership of the Navy.

MC1 MCNEELEY: What's the latest with respect to the George Washington home port in Yokosuka?

ADMIRAL MULLEN: GW is expected to go next summer, summer of '08, and we're moving ahead very smartly on that. She's due to tie up, I think, in the third week – 18, 19 August of '08. And she'll relieve Kitty Hawk. And Kitty Hawk has just been a stalwart throughout her life, including this life she's contributed so much with while she's been home ported in Japan.

I met, for the second time, with the mayor of Yokosuka. He's been very supportive of that. I find the city very supportive of this move for George Washington. And all preparations are tracking. So I look forward to that continuing to – that will be a historic move – continuing to be something that we're all both proud of, focused on, making sure it happens on time.

MC1 MCNEELEY: What were some of the things you found to be on sailors' minds during your visits?

ADMIRAL MULLEN: Well, I mentioned that in my all-hands calls, we always take questions. I didn't have MCPON with me this time; usually, I do. And usually, it's a great opportunity for he and I to get a feel for what's going on. And very often, it involves what our advancement opportunities are, what our education opportunities – and I discussed the recent change that we

made, which removed the requirement to have a two-year degree to be advanced to E8 in fiscal year '11. And the reasoning for that, and critical to that is an understanding that that change doesn't devalue education; education is now and will remain a really a critical part of everybody's development. But we just had a lot of sailors that couldn't get there.

I get asked about uniforms often times. And it's going to be next year; it's going to be 2008 before the changes, which were approved in the uniforms last year actually go into effect in terms of uniforms being issued, because we're making them right now. It just takes some time to make uniforms for over 400,000 sailors on the active and reserve side.

I actually get asked about – I got asked about training issues, and for instance, is our visit board search and seizure training about right. Are we really using that? And that was a great question that a master chief asked me. And I need to come back and do some homework on that and get back to him, which I'll do. But I'll also look at how we're doing across the board. So particularly, the other thing that has changed dramatically since I last visited Yokosuka is Admiral Kelly and other have really focused on putting sailors ashore. They're E4 and below, under Four Ashore. We have almost 1,700 sailors who have moved ashore. That's about 40 percent of our requirement. We're committed long-term to get all the sailors E4 and below, under Four Ashore.

It's going to take us a while to do that, but I was with a couple master chiefs who really made that happen. They've done what deck plate leaders – what MCPON talks about all the time – they've done what deck plate leaders are supposed to do, and what I've watched chiefs do my whole career. They've made good things happen for their people. And I saw a visit with excited sailors that were delighted to have these courses. We've still got some work to do there.

I looked at where GW is going to go. The pier development there is actually going well. And so we've talked about issues like that, the importance of not just sailors, but also the family support, particularly overseas, in Misawa as well as in Yokosuka. And up in Misawa, the P-3 community – and we've got almost a couple thousand people up there between sailors and families who again are representing us incredibly well and enjoying Misawa. And I asked them about what some of their concerns were. Often times, it's manning.

And one of the things I'd like to encourage sailors from around the world is there is still a great opportunity to – when you're in the Navy, to see the world, and to look at a place like Misawa. And the vast majority of sailors I talked to in Misawa were delighted to be there, surprised at how good it was. And I'd encourage others to just kind of open that window up and maybe take a shot someday at going to Misawa and living in a foreign country that is very supportive of our presence there.

So all in all, a great visit. Learned a lot, as I always do when I'm out at all-hands calls. And we got some things we've got to work on.

MC1 MCNEELEY: Very good. Welcome back, sir. Thank you for your time.

ADMIRAL MULLEN: Thanks. It's great to be back.

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MC1 MCNEELEY: You've been listening to the Chief of Naval Operations Podcast for June 26<sup>th</sup>. Check back next week for our next edition. Thanks for listening, I'm Petty Officer Chad McNeeley.

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