

Admiral Michael G. Mullen
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QUESTION: We know that Turkish and American naval forces have close relations, but as far as I know, this is the first visit at this high level that we see here in Turkey after two decades. So why is this visit so belated?

ADMIRAL MULLEN: Great question. I was here in 2005 visiting. -- I was stationed in Naples in a NATO job, and it was pointed out to me that a CNO [Chief of Naval Operations] had not visited here since, I think it's 1987. So, I was announced for this job and committed to come back. So that's why I'm here, because I was asked to come, and I said I would. The relationship between the two navies is -- I first came to Turkey in 1971 -- the relationship between the two Navies has always been important. We've operated with the Turkish Navy for a long time, and I'm here to really reaffirm that relationship, to see Admiral Karahanoglu, Admiral Tas, -- you know my schedule -- most importantly just to reaffirm the friendship and the relationship of our two navies. We need to move forward; it's not evident to me why it's taken so long to come back.

QUESTION: Thank you. My second question is about the US Navy. Could you give me some information about the security of the seas and future actions that US Navy plans to take?

ADMIRAL MULLEN: Part of why I'm here is to discuss exactly that with the Turkish Navy. We have a very important relationship in terms of this concept of a "Thousand Ship Navy," what I call Global Maritime Partnerships, focused on securing, making sure that the seas are secure. The seas provide the transport for 90 percent of the cargo that moves around the world, and there a lot of illicit, illegal activities, illegal immigration, drugs, weapons, those kinds of things, and providing security for those is very important. So, partnerships, not just between the United States and Turkey, but among many nations are very important. The Turkish Navy has been a leader in the Black Sea and that's very important. We've worked together to figure out how to share information in the Black Sea, and over the last couple of years that's been very important as well. So, we've got many programs, exchange officer programs, we operate together and have for many years, and we need in this very complex world with the many challenges we have right now, we need to work hard on how we're going to do this together in the future.

QUESTION: As you know, the Turkish Navy leads the operations named BLACKSEAFOR and Black Sea Harmony. May I have your comments on those operations?

ADMIRAL MULLEN: They've been very important initiatives in terms of the kind of both maritime security and information sharing that I spoke of before -- both of them. And Turkey leading in those areas has been very important as well and more and more countries are participating in those which is a very good sign as far as I'm concerned.

QUESTION: Last question. In terms of modernizing the Turkish Navy are there any plans in the future, any aid in the form of grants or foreign military sales from the United States?

ADMIRAL MULLEN: There are two of our frigates that have been proposed in legislation in my country to be transferred to Turkey, and I would never presuppose the approval of that legislation -- that's in my Congress -- but over time, I'm very supportive of that transfer, and I know, I've talked with the head of the Turkish Navy last night, Admiral Karahanoglu, and he is very anxious to get those frigates, and I'm very supportive of that.

QUESTION: Have you ever been to Istanbul before?

ADMIRAL MULLEN: Yes, actually as a young lieutenant I commanded a ship, the USS Noxubee, which in 1974 I anchored in Istanbul and we had a great time there. And I actually visited there in 2005 when I was here as well.

QUESTION: Thank you very much.

ADMIRAL MULLEN: Thank you.