

**Media Roundtable with Adm. Mike Mullen  
Chief of Naval Operations  
Beijing, China  
21 AUG 07**

I'm pleased to introduce Admiral Mike Mullen who is the Chief of Naval Operations for the U.S. military. Admiral Mullen will speak a little bit about the purpose of his visit to China. Before he does that though, I just wanted to ask you – since we're a little bit limited on time – that when you ask your question, you give your name and your organization. And we're going to start just one question per organization until everyone has had their chance. Admiral Mullen?

MIKE MULLEN: Good afternoon. I appreciate your coming. I've been here since Friday the 17<sup>th</sup>, and I have found the visit to be very productive. I just personally, the way I am able to absorb information and reach an understanding, I do it much better in person than I do by long-range views or not having actually physically been in a place and met with people who are the leaders. So from that standpoint, it's been a very, very productive visit for me. And there was a great deal of effort put into the visit by an awful lot of people, and I'm very appreciative of that.

The dialogues have been, I think, very healthy. We've talked about how to deepen and broaden the relationship, how to take steps with respect to the kinds of things we're doing now, whether they're exchanges of officers or ship visits or other kinds of activities that we've been involved in, in recent years. And I look forward to that continuing as well. And really, both committed on my part from the military-military standpoint, and seeing a consistent commitment on the part of the Chinese military leadership to do the same.

I think that a dialogue and an understanding of each other is absolutely critical, and that's really why I came. I find certainly from the visit that Admiral Wu who is the head of the PLA navy had when he visited me in April. We've worked hard to open up lines of communication, establish a dialogue, and that certainly continued. I know he personally, as well as the other members of the PLA leadership, I know that they worked hard on my program, and I'm very appreciative of what they've done. We've tried to talk about things that we can work that we have in common, which we consider to be important challenges, whether it's in this region or other regions of the world, as well as certainly we've had discussions about those differences.

One of the most important parts, I think, in both my recognition and the reason I visited is because I think this relationship at the very senior level, the state, the nation-to-nation level, the government-to-government, and the military-to-military is one of the most important in the world. So I am here to understand that better, to work hard to try to improve it, to make sure – and I've had very frank and open discussions. I have been frank and open, and my counterparts have – from all I can tell – have responded. We still have a long way to go. I think there's been a lot of progress in recent years, but we still have a long way to go, and I think all of us have to work very hard to try to continuously improve this – back to the comment about how important the overall relationship is.

So with that in mind, I'm happy to open it up to questions.

QUESTION: Good afternoon, Admiral. Ed Lanfranco, United Press International. Before I ask my question, I'm wondering if you could give us a rundown of the leaders that you met with and in the various places? And after that, I'd like to ask a question.

ADM. MULLEN: I met initially with the leadership of the Navy. And in fact, in the beginning, Admiral Wu Shengli who is the head of the PLA navy, and then today, I actually had a meeting with Admiral Hu who is the political commissar for the navy. In the interim, with the navy, I met Admiral Xu who is the Eastern Sea fleet commander, Admiral Su who is the North Sea fleet commander, and then several other senior officers in those areas.

I spent time at the Dalian Naval Academy where I met the commandant. And actually, one of the highlights for me was to address several hundred young midshipmen at a very high level. It's, I believe, very important. And I express this in many fora here that we invest in our young people. And so an opportunity to make remarks and actually take questions from the young midshipmen at Dalian Naval Academy was another highlight.

I also met with a minister of defense, actually two vice ministers of the – vice chairmen, sorry – of the CMC today – Admiral Cao and Admiral Guo. And then, I had a meeting yesterday evening with the – I said admiral; sorry, those are generals – with General Liang – that was here in town. And I think that's basically kind of – that's who I met.

QUESTION: Okay, and my question is, you mentioned that you met with the navy political commissar. I wonder if you could tell us what some of the challenges are in establishing military-to-military ties with an armed forces that is controlled by a political party as opposed to a national government?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, I think that to the heart of what I'm doing here is I'm – in my both visiting and engagement with him is understanding who they are and how they think and what their challenges are and how they view our relationship and where we can work on things that we have in common and really a commitment of where we need to work on the challenges that we have. Quite frankly, I haven't spent any time on the connection of how the Chinese government works or the political aspect – I'm not a political individual; I'm a U.S. military guy in the U.S. military. And that's where I spend my time. So I haven't really spent any time either studying what you've asked or reaching any kind of conclusion with respect to that.

It really – more than anything else – it's been the development of a personal and professional relationship with the leadership in the military in China. And I think that whole – the tone has been set by President Hu Jintao and President Bush that we're going to work together – and I think rightfully so. That then comes down, or it certainly waterfalls down to those of us who are in the military. And what I've found is I've been

well received here by the senior military leaders I've spent time with and worked very hard to be open with them in our communication.

QUESTION: Okay, so I'm from Global Times. And the United States have a lot of – (inaudible) – about Chinese naval developments, especially the aircraft carriers and the rise of Chinese navies to the Asia Pacific community, and what will become of that?

ADM. MULLEN: The development, in fact, Admiral Wu, when he visited me in April, one of the places he went was to one of our aircraft carriers, basically, to look at our capability. And one of my goals was to again – this relationship is to give him some understanding of what a significant challenge this is to develop this kind of capability. Certainly, the development of military capability in China is up to the leadership and the government of China. And so, the kind of capability that China develops, and when it develops it, is really up to them.

I would just say that this is a really challenging capability to develop and one that will take a considerable amount of effort and resources. So from that standpoint, that's really all I would have to say about that particular issue.

QUESTION: Okay, so do you think there will be a conflict between U.S. and China on the sea sometime in the future? And is this avoidable?

ADM. MULLEN: And the question is do I think there will be a conflict between U.S. and China on the sea? I understand. One of the reasons that Admiral Fallon initiated in recent years the military-to-military – he recently initiated the military-to-military relationship improvement, and we've continued that, which is why I'm here – is to create an understanding so that there isn't a misunderstanding or a miscalculation, and that in these engagements, quite frankly, we work to develop a better trust of each other. We have some differences and I think those are well known. But there aren't any of us that think getting into a conflict is a good idea. And so, we work very hard to make sure that doesn't happen. I also have seen that kind of sentiment certainly returned to me in my meetings here as well.

QUESTION: Peter Spiegel with the Los Angeles Times. If I could just follow up on the aircraft carrier really quickly, the China power report did a lot of sort of informed speculation as to whether China is indeed developing carriers – is actually indeed developing a carrier.

ADM. MULLEN: Who did?

QUESTION: The China power report – the quarterly – the annual report that – I wonder if you'd have any further insight as to whether they are indeed proceeding in that regard, how far along they might be, if you were able to pick up any of that on your trip here?

ADM. MULLEN: The first conversation I've had about a Chinese aircraft carrier, you've heard in the last few minutes. It was a subject that just did not come up while I

was here. I guess I would reiterate, I understand how challenging developing this kind of capability is, of the significant investment that it takes, and technically how difficult it is. And I have seen – I haven't seen the report of which you speak, Peter – but I have seen discussions of it in the press. And I just know that from where – if those facts in the press are accurate, it's a very significant capability to try to deliver in any kind of timeframe in the near future.

QUESTION: And just briefly on another policy issue, the ASAT test that happened a few months ago, I know this is largely a Navy-focused trip, but I wonder if you have brought up the issue with the Chinese yet, or are planning on bringing up that issue – a better explanation of why that occurred and the U.S. desire to get a better explanation on that?

ADM. MULLEN: Only in the terms of – actually didn't spend any time on the ASAT test, per se – but only briefly discussed the need to make sure we get it right in space, and that our position of not weaponizing space – and certainly the idea that we would want to because we're both in space – we're not the only countries that are up there – we'd want to certainly have a clear understanding of what the expectations were and what we were doing in that regard so that we both do it safely.

QUESTION: Thank you from Reuters. Several times you've mentioned that in developing its military capabilities, especially on blue water force, China faces challenges. What other particular challenges do you see? And how successful do you think China is in overcoming them?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, actually I didn't use the term blue water. It's been very clearly articulated to me that the Chinese – from the Chinese point of view – that their doctrine, their strategy is active defense. And so clearly that is how – those have been the terms that we've discussed. I was – in some of my visit here, there were several firsts. And by that, I mean there were several things that I did that I was told had not been done before. And I think that's important.

I think when we have these visits and where we have reciprocal visits that we don't just repeat what we've done in the past, so we can continue to learn. And I saw some very capable Navy ships, very specifically – in fact, went to see and observe some exercises. And then, I saw some other ships, which were not new ships – were older ships. And I've been around in my navy a long time when we've had old ships, and I know that that's a challenge in terms of maintenance and sustainment of capability.

So clearly, with the increased investment in defense, the emphasis on the navy, and each – not each – but many of the leaders I spoke to talked to the modernization of their military, and specifically in the navy, obviously the modernization of the navy. So my expectations in terms of their modernization is that they're committed to this. It's been the capabilities and the understanding – it's been understanding the capabilities that has been something that I had sought, and the U.S. leadership has sought, to understand specifically where they are going and why they are being developed.

It goes back to my comment about the carrier. I mean, China is going to have to make up – and it has made up – its mind how it's going to modernize, what it's going to invest in. But it's really through visits like this and other venues that a better understanding of that is reached. And I have reached a better understanding of that. Although again, Admiral Wu visited me in April; this is my first visit here; and I think we will need to have visits not just at my level, but at many levels in the future to better understand each other.

Not unlike the United States, China is a maritime nation. It's got a long maritime border. There are challenges we both face in the maritime domain – piracy, drugs, illegal immigration, the transportation – the illegal activities that are there – and that a country would invest to provide better security in the maritime domain, to provide better security for itself as well as in the region – from that standpoint – it makes sense. It really is that long-term where are you going question that is one that we need to continue to just reach a better understanding on.

QUESTION: Thanks. Chris from AP. All these things, Taiwan must have come up in your discussion, since – (inaudible). And there's been a lot of speculation that China is sort of – (inaudible) – on the U.S., perhaps taking advantage of the distraction of Iraq or other concerns the U.S. has in order to really make some major leaps in terms of denial of access or other capabilities, other strategies that they would want to use in a conflict over Taiwan, as when – (inaudible).

ADM. MULLEN: Taiwan does come up in nearly all the discussions. Based on my understanding of where both countries are, there wasn't anything new. I mean, my president has made it pretty clear that we're not supportive of Taiwan's independence, and any unilateral move in that direction on the part of Taiwan won't be supported by the United States.

At the same time, we are, consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act and the three communiqués, we encourage Taiwan to invest in defensive capabilities. We view that as a deterring – having a deterrent effect. And that continues as well, and that we are supportive of the one China policy. And so all those things – that continues to be reiterated and it's very clearly understood.

There are some areas we disagree on at this point in terms of the weapons piece for Taiwan, and that was pointed out for me. But clearly at the very high level, there is – I think – a very clear understanding of what our policy is and that is essentially what we discussed; and no change to that. I'm sorry, the second part of your question?

QUESTION: Yeah, just would you agree that – I think what would you think of the theory that China is using U.S. distractions?

ADM. MULLEN: If you look at the United States last year in our QDR 2006, made a very conscious decision to shift some of our naval forces to the Pacific. And this happened right in the middle of – obviously, it happens right in the middle of the war in

Iraq and Afghanistan. And we're about doing that right now. The message there is of the Pacific is one of ever-growing importance. And in fact, we think that we need to have more naval forces out here because it's a big ocean and it's very much a maritime – a maritime theater. So that continues.

We have operated pretty vigorously in the Pacific. In the last – I mean, for a long period of time, our level of operations hasn't in fact decreased at all. The balance in the area, the relationships we have not just with China but with other nations, South Korea and Japan, Australia, the emerging relationships with countries that we care about – Malaysia, Indonesia, the long-standing relationship with Singapore are all of those things, they are very important. We are still focused on them. I haven't seen on the Navy side, I have not seen any diminishment in both capability or dedication to that as a result of the Iraq war.

QUESTION: Admiral Mullen, David Lague from the IHT, from the IHT.

You said that you developed –

ADM. MULLEN: Is that the International Herald Tribune?

QUESTION: That is yes. Sorry.

ADM. MULLEN: That is all right.

QUESTION: You say you have developed a better understanding of China's military goals and where it's heading from your visit. Are you reassured by that, and can you give us any specific examples of how your understanding has improved. I mean, what have you learned?

ADM. MULLEN: The areas that I have seen with – and, again, I want to reemphasize, I'm the head of the United States Navy, and that has been the emphasis of this visit. And so what I – one of the areas that was particularly significant for me was the amount of work and the comprehensive schedule that was created for me, along two lines. One is, where I went, and secondly, who I met with. And when I extended myself – we – I extended myself to work a very comprehensive schedule for Admiral Wu's visit in April. He has done the same. And I consider that a very positive step for us.

And I talk about there have been several firsts in that regard. Actually, the each's of them aren't as important as the fact that there were firsts that are representative of that, and that in that schedule, we worked very hard to try to understand each other better, what our priorities are, why we are doing things the way we are doing.

And it's going to take some time. I mean, he visited us for roughly a week. I've been here for a little under – I will be here for a little under a week. That is two weeks between two leaders of navies. You know, there is a long way to go in that regard. But I'm reassured, again, because of the physical presence, the physical contact, the actual engagement, the ability to spend quality time with leadership, I am very encouraged

about their commitment to continue to improve this relationship. And it's not just at my level because we have talked about junior officer or mid-level officer, exchanges. We have talked about additional port visits, which we are doing.

And it hits at the essence of what navies can do because navies can do many of these things much more easily than other services just because of the footprint. So a port visit, which lasts a few days, as an example, of short exercises. You know, we – a couple of years ago, we had no exercises with the Chinese navy. This last year we have had a couple who are committed to advancing those exercises in the future. And so I take away with it – my takeaways from this visit is the leader of the Chinese navy is very good to continue with that and, in fact, making them more than just very basic exercises.

So it has been the – it has been the wholeness of the visit from beginning to end rather than an individual event.

QUESTION: Could you say that you leave China more comfortable? About China's military preparations say than when you arrived?

ADM. MULLEN: I leave China with a much better understanding of the leadership, I believe certainly an improved relationship between the two navies and a commitment to continue to improve that.

QUESTION: China News Daily. According to some military experts, there are – you know, between the Chinese navy and the U.S. Navy, there is a gap. I think you had said the U.S. Navy is leading the Chinese navy at least by several years. After your visit here, what is your comments?.

ADM. MULLEN: I certainly wouldn't give a specific number because developing a navy is a huge challenge no matter what country, and I certainly can attest to that just in my own navy. The leadership consistently pointed at – the Chinese leadership consistently pointed out to me that there was a gap. And although it was not a stated goal of theirs to close that gap, clearly the capabilities that the Chinese government and the Chinese navy specifically are investing in are headed in that direction. That is this whole modernization program.

So I – again, I went to see. I was impressed with the exercises that I saw and one of my views is I'm not – that they had – the Chinese navy has worked very hard to both modernize and improve the professional level of its navy and done so very rapidly over let's say the last 10 years, and that is very evident.

I don't think it – I just don't think it would be – I don't think it would be useful to pin it down to – actually, I mean, I just couldn't accurately do that to say it's 10 years or 20 years or 30 years. Certainly, as has been previously discussed, the investment in high-end technology, high-end capabilities is of a concern in some areas, and we need to continue to work together to make sure that we understand where each of us is going with respect to that.

QUESTION: Can I ask you to talk a bit more about your trip to Dalian, the naval academy, particularly the Q&A session? Did you get a sense that the young officers viewed the United States as an adversary? Was that how their questions were framed, or was there some sort of another relationship that they viewed bilaterally?

ADM. MULLEN: Actually – and I'd expand it to beyond Dalian because I had some time with the young officers in the wardroom of the destroyer I was on. And I have a tendency to try to pick off young people when I see them just to kind of find out what is on their mind.

And what I – I guess how I would characterize that is the young Chinese midshipmen and officers that I saw are very aware of challenges that we have as two countries and two navies. They seem to be very bright, very attentive, and very open for answers to questions that wouldn't be different from some of these questions. So where are we going with respect to Taiwan? How about the exercises that we have done, that we have accomplished between our two navies? What – the questions I guess is what is important to you as a leader with respect to where our young people should be heading.

And I try to impart just some ideas not unlike I do for my own navy to some of our young people about things that are important in the – and the world that we are living in right now, that we have some mutual challenges. And they seemed eager, eager to learn, eager to listen, and very enthusiastic in what they were doing. And I saw them in a – I saw them in a big audience in an auditorium. I also saw them in simulators and watched them do some simulations. I saw them in sea as well. So it was a variety.

But nothing, Peter, nothing particular, I mean, there wasn't any – there wasn't [anything] alarming about it. They were pretty normal questions for young officers and midshipmen who are looking to the future, looking to their leaders for how that – what that future entails, and in a couple of cases, they are expressing some similar concerns that are raised by these questions.

QUESTION: Like how specifically?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, I received a question on Taiwan, for example, which wasn't – was a very sincere question about the – is a young officer who really wanted to know if he thought we were going to get into a conflict. Or certainly he expressed the concern that his job was to figure out how to defend and win this, and he was anxious to understand what my views were, which I thought was a pretty healthy question.

QUESTION: I have got a laundry list of things here.

ADM. MULLEN: Just one at a time.

QUESTION: Okay. Did the issue of the hotline come up?

ADM. MULLEN: The issue of a hotline came up in a couple of my meetings, yes it did.

QUESTION: Any progress on that?

ADM. MULLEN: There is – I know there is progress being made. I know both sides have – continue to work at – I noticed that in fact there was a – there was a delegation from the – from China, which had just returned from Washington working this issue. So I know it continues to be worked. I am encouraged by the plan to get there and the importance of it. At an even higher level than that, it speaks to the – I believe the commitment on both sides to have a line which can be used or a communications path to potentially defuse anything – any kind of miscalculation. I am encouraged by that. As far as the exact status of it, I don't have that, and we really didn't get through that.

QUESTION: Another thing if I might. Do you have a better understanding about Hu Jintao's military doctrine? You mentioned active defense. I was wondering if you could explain that a little – or articulate your understanding of what the Chinese say is their active defense.

ADM. MULLEN: I can't – I wouldn't speak for President Hu just because I mean I haven't spent an extraordinary amount of time studying him or looking at that. But it is – the specifics of my engagements with some of the military leaders has been – that term has been used, and the posture, the doctrine, the strategy, for the Chinese is a defensive strategy rather than an offensive strategy. So it's not a threatening strategy per se; it's really to defend those interests, those – what I'll call – these are terms I would permit – these are American terms, but vital national interests that the government of China has decided it views as important to defend and beyond that, I couldn't say much more.

QUESTION: Can I just interrupt you?

ADM. MULLEN: Sure.

QUESTION: Hi Loretta Chao from the Wall Street Journal.

ADM. MULLEN: Hi Loretta.

QUESTION: Hi. So you seem to be pretty content with the amount of access you have had for this trip, so I mean, what do you say to I guess complaints that there hasn't been enough access or there is, like, an imbalance, whereas, you know, U.S. has been a lot more open about showing the Chinese government around?

ADM. MULLEN: I will speak to my own personal experience. I went to great lengths to ensure that. And I considered Admiral Wu to be a pretty courageous guy in this regard: One, this first visit, which he took over as the head of the PLA navy was to the United States. He was committed to that. He is committed to having a better relationship with the United States Navy at the end of his tour as the head of the Navy, when that occurs,

than when he began. Now, he has said that. He came to my country. We worked hard to getting him an extensive schedule. He had that.

What I asked in return – he invited me to come here – what I asked in return was for him to do the same thing. He has done that. And so what I have seen is actions, not just words, which have met that standard, and I consider that to be very, very positive.

It's not – it's not where we need to be; it's not the final position, but I think it's a very positive step. And I can only speak to what I have been through, not other's views on this or other visits or anything like that. But from my standpoint, he has extended himself, as has a significant group of the Chinese leadership, and that is evident in what is happening literally up until this host.

So in that sense I am encouraged and that we need to continue to have these kinds of military engagements.

QUESTION: Thank you. Financial Times.

You did say earlier that there is an investment in high-end technology – was of concern in some areas. Could you expand on that please?

ADM. MULLEN: I think the two presidents talked about a couple of areas when they met, one of which is how do we deal with the development of nuclear weapons. Where does that go, particularly strategic nuclear weapons? Where we need to have discussions on the whole issue with this and obviously the capability that generates a requirement for the United States to develop a missile defense capability.

We talked earlier about having a – making sure we have a very clear understanding of investment in space and technology. For example, the challenges that we have with the development of ballistic missiles in terms of capability of threatening navies at sea with ballistic missiles is an example. We also – I also believe that we need to be very judicious about technologies that could fall into the hands of terrorists, and technologies which escape the scrutiny of governments and end up being used against us, for example. So it's really those kinds of things that I was referring to.

QUESTION: Slightly off topic, but there was a long editorial with the China daily today about new Cold-War mentality, the U.S. and Russia sort of sharpening of the language and everything. Did that come up? Did the Chinese ask about potential and from a military perspective, is the U.S. Navy concerned about meeting some kind of new challenge from Russia?

ADM. MULLEN: It didn't come up in any of the discussions. Interesting enough, or coincidentally, my counterpart from Russia arrives in Washington to spend several days with me the day I get back from this visit. This is a visit we have been – I actually met him on two other occasions overseas in symposiums in Europe, and this is a visit that we have had to postpone a couple of times just because of schedule conflicts. But I'm

delighted that he is coming to visit literally – actually literally Thursday he arrives, and so I'll see him at the end of this week when we get back.

That is, again, I think reflective of the commitment certainly of the leadership to get together and have a clear understanding of where we are going. So I would put it more along those lines at this point from my perspective based on what I have seen right now. You have seen this probably as much as I that certainly some of the meetings that have occurred lately between the leadership. I am encouraged by the fact that the leadership continues to meet, and I think that is very important. That we will have areas of disagreement probably goes without saying.

So I'm not – I try to pay attention to it from that perspective. We will continue to have challenges, and yet I'm also encouraged by some of – by certainly the Russian navy, which is working to work with us, exercise with us. We are doing that – we have done that in the Mediterranean over the last several years, along the same kinds of lines that we're talking about here with China, from the standpoint of the same kinds of exchanges. And so we'll continue to work those issues.

QUESTION: Have you discovered visual confirmation of these Dong Feng 31A missiles that can travel 7,000 miles, or – do you know what I'm talking about?

ADM. MULLEN: The DF-31s, is that?

QUESTION: Yeah, 31A, the one that travels farther.

ADM. MULLEN: I'm not – I guess I would leave it at the – the way I'd address that is clearly the issue of having an understanding between each other of the capabilities we are developing and why, is one we will seek to continue to try to understand, or seek to try to gain that kind of understanding. In fact, I'm not intimately familiar – I'm not sure we're talking about the same capability. I could get into a classified regime pretty fast, and I don't want to do that.

QUESTION: Would you take one more.

ADM. MULLEN: Yeah, I'm happy to go –

QUESTION: Just one more.

We only have time for one more.

ADM. MULLEN: This is really important.

QUESTION: After this trip, can you tell us what your understanding is China's submarine capabilities, especially after what happened last October with the Kitty Hawk?

ADM. MULLEN: I think pretty consistent with what my understanding has been, is how I say it. They have got some very capable diesel submarines, SONG-class submarines specifically, clearly they have taken – they have taken delivery of kilo class submarines from the Russians. Those are very capable submarines. And the development of that kind of capability for a maritime nation that is in the active-defense mode, if you will, is one view of that. Certainly there is potential for those capabilities to be used beyond that that. That is of some concern.

And that is why – and actually I did see them. I mean, I actually saw exercises with a couple of SONG submarines or a SONG submarine, sorry, this week, so I understand more about their capability clearly. But it's a very capable submarine. It's a very – that submarine in particular is a very capable submarine. And certainly I have a better understanding of that having visited or seen it in exercise here.

QUESTION: That was one of your firsts for this trip?

ADM. MULLEN: Sort of get underway of a destroyer and to see an exercise which include air, submarine, and service exercises. Okay.

ADM. MULLEN: Thank you.