

**ADM Mike Mullen, Remarks as delivered**  
**104th U.S. Navy league New York Council Anniversary Dinner**  
**14 March 2007**

It's a privilege and an honor for Deborah and me to be with you here tonight in celebrating 104 years of the Navy League's strong support of the Sea Services, all of whom are well represented tonight -- the Coast Guard, the Marine Corps, our Merchant Marines as well as all our Sailors.

On behalf of all Sailors, the civilians who work in our services -- and their families -- please accept my deepest thanks for all you do as individuals and as an organization to make our service to this nation possible. I would also add, certainly tonight, that this council in this city is the best council in the best city in our country. And there are places that I will travel on to that I am sure I will hear about that comment.

You have been in our corner now for more than a century -- guiding, cheering, laughing and, yes, crying right along with us during some of the toughest times we have ever faced.

It's all about teamwork.

I'm reminded of a story my lawyer told me the other day. He was giving a tour of a courtroom to some school children while the court was in recess.

Only the clerk and a young man in custody wearing handcuffs were there.

"This is where the judge sits," he said, pointing to the bench.

"The lawyers sit at these tables. The clerk sits over there, and the court reporter writes everything down right here," he continued. He even pointed out the witness stand and where the jury box was.

"As you can see," he told the kids, "there are lots of people involved in making this system and this team work."

At that point the prisoner raised his cuffed hands and said, "Yeah, but I'm the one who makes it all happen."

In the Navy today, however, it takes everyone to make it all happen. As you see and know, it's a total team effort.

You and your shipmates in Navy League Councils all around the world are a big part of that effort, true friends -- family -- and we appreciate more than you know your generosity and kindness.

Deborah and I congratulate all the awardees tonight. You represent a strong devotion to Seapower, and we are all grateful for your service.

It's also great to be back in New York, a great Navy town if there ever was one.

Sailors have loved coming here for just about as long as we've had a Navy, and that is certainly true today.

Fleet week is coming in May, and if you haven't participated before, you should. We are once again looking forward to sending our ships and Sailors up here for a week of festivities. We truly do feel welcomed, and I know that is in large part due to your efforts.

Before I go any further though, I also want to publicly express my deepest gratitude to the parents of the late Corporal Jason Dunham. We all know they are here tonight.

Jason Dunham, a son of New York State, born on the Marine Corps' birthday, paid the ultimate price, made the ultimate sacrifice for his country, and received the Medal of Honor as has been stated.

Dan, Debra -- we join you in this city of heroes in honoring Jason's selfless act of courage in saving the lives of his fellow Marines. Jason proved beyond any doubt that this, too, is a great generation, a generation of heroes.

Corporal Dunham, of course, represents the highest form of selflessness of those we send to war. His act of bravery, hard for some of us to reconcile, is easy enough for all of us to admire -- clear and bold as it was in its execution.

But I suspect even he would say he was not alone, that his buddies were and are just as heroic -- fighting and striving every day to make life just a little better for people who live on the other side of the earth.

I think it's important for us to remember that -- and them -- tonight, to remember that a strong Armed Forces, a strong Navy and a strong Marine Corps are only strong because of the people who raise their right hands and volunteer to serve.

We hear a lot through the media of the struggles in Iraq and Afghanistan. We hear about the car bombs and we hear about the violence.

And, indeed, there is violence and there is death. There is sacrifice.

Prime Minister Al-Maliki's government is working hard to get that right.

We applaud those efforts. We encourage them. We know that the military cannot be the only solution, but that the Iraqi people need security and stability -- politically and economically -- to survive.

The on-going reforms appear to be bearing some fruit, though slowly. And U.S. forces are adapting their tactics and procedures to help harvest this new-found freedom.

Tonight, especially in the presence of the Dunham family, I think we owe it to ourselves and to all those serving and sacrificing overseas, to recognize the stories you don't see and the stories you don't hear -- stories of extraordinary people in extraordinary circumstances, making a difference in extraordinary ways.

Corporal Dunham was one such individual.

But so is a Navy doctor by the name of Saleem Khan. You've probably not heard of Dr. Khan, but he is a Navy Reservist, a Pakistani-American, whom I met on a trip to Iraq over the holidays.

Dr. Khan, who runs a very successful medical practice in Texas, was then on his seventh tour in Iraq.

He volunteered for all seven.

The day I caught up with him in a hospital in Fallujah, he was half covered in blood, and it was the blood of an Iraqi insurgent. The man had been wounded by some Marines, and Khan was saving his life.

How would he characterize his experience? “Wonderful,” he says. “Sometimes we see a whole lot and sometimes maybe nothing. It’s unpredictable.”

He joined the Navy in his early 40s, wanting more than anything else just to serve.

He said, “I never wanted anybody to look at me and say, ‘Hey, you came over here and made a lot of money and didn’t pay your dues. My kids were born in the United States. I want them to know their father paid his dues.’”

Khan stopped a little while to talk to a reporter we had traveling with us. As the reporter began to leave, the doctor gripped his hand and said: “I’m a Muslim. I want you to know that.”

The reporter asked him why he feels it’s necessary to make that known.

“If I don’t,” he said, “then I would be letting down my comrades. I don’t want anybody to ever say there was any discrimination in the service. Maybe there is, but I don’t see it. It’s a great outfit.”

Khan said he will probably put in for yet another tour when this one is done.

On any given day, one-third of our Fleet and over 60,000 Sailors are deployed away from home, away from families, protecting the sea lanes, assuring our friends and deterring our enemies. They too are heroes.

Anywhere you go in the Middle East, in addition to Marines and soldiers and those from the Coast Guard and Air Force, you will find Sailors like Dr. Khan, almost as many are on the ground as at sea. But they are not just the active duty Sailors. Their Reserve counterparts are making a huge impact right along with them, and their employers back home are supporting them.

In Afghanistan, reservists like LT Andrew Duessel, who believes his personal mission in Afghanistan goes well beyond supporting a Global War on Terror, are also making a difference.

“Immediately after arriving in theater,” remembers LT Duessel, “I was taken aback by the deplorable conditions Afghani children endured. I am a very spiritual man, and faith without action is meaningless. I had to do something to make their lives better.”

He immediately got to work. Andrew, his family, his friends, his civilian co-workers, his church, and a civilian shipping company all rallied together to show that, as Americans, our purpose is to bring hope and help create a better future for all Afghans.

With the help of his compassionate network back home, LT Duessel brought thousands of dollars worth of school supplies, toys, and clothes to give the children of several Kabul schools, of an orphanage, and of several outlying villages. He continues this work tonight as we are here.

He’s touching lives and bringing hope to communities that for over thirty years barely subsisted under the oppressive yoke of the Taliban. He is giving these children a glimpse of a brighter future and he is sowing seeds that will bloom one day into a terror-free Afghanistan.

These are but a few of the new faces of American Seapower -- a new generation of heroes, agents of change bridging the gap between war and peace.

And as we bridge this gap, we are doing it in an era of uncertainty, rapid globalization, new threats, and many new challenges.

This new era calls for a New Maritime Strategy more relevant to the change we are facing.

As a matter of fact, next week I'll be right back here in New York to take part in one of many conferences we are holding in cities across America to seek ideas of people just like you in developing this new strategy.

And I am in it with ADM Allen and GEN Conway who are very supportive of this effort.

I hope actually to see some of you there. We want your ideas, we need your ideas, and I'm sure here in New York we'll get plenty of them.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure the maritime commons remain safe and free for all.

The Maritime Environment is dynamic and the burden of security is much too heavy for any one navy, or any one nation, to carry alone. We need all nations with a stake in maritime security to come together to bear the load.

To get there, we need to get Americans and the international community engaged. We need to communicate openly and we need to engender trust.

Just last April, in the waters off Goa, India, as fishermen worked the warm waters of the Indian Ocean, the Indian Navy hosted us during Exercise Malabar, an operation promoting shared maritime warfare functionality and enhance Command and Control procedures and integration.

U.S. Sailors cross-decked over to Indian ships to improve communications and install compatible equipment. Indian and American Sailors learned from each other. Sailors enjoyed the experience.

"The Indian Sailors have been more than helpful," noted Information Systems Technician Second Class Nick Trelawny, from USS Kitty Hawk. "The main difference for me," he went on to say, "has been the food. It's good, but very spicy, even breakfast."

Even while building bridges across the oceans, Sailors still have a way of getting right to the heart of what's really important.

But besides acquiring a taste for Indian food, Nick also gained valuable insight into how one of our closest maritime partners operates.

By openly sharing information at sea and cooperating at the individual level Americans and Indians are forging a stronger foundation of trust.

It is this trust that will lead to the building and strengthening of partnerships -- Global Maritime Partnerships, the concept of the Thousand Ship Navy.

It is these voluntary partnerships between nations with a common interest in commerce, security, and freedom of the seas that will lead to a more secure maritime environment.

And it is a secure maritime environment that will advance global economic prosperity and peace, raise standards of living so that parents around the world can raise their children to a higher level than that which they started.

But we can never forget who will make it all happen.

As I visit the Fleet, I see the sparkle in all our young men and women from all the services, and I am inspired by the courage of their families.

I am humbled by their selflessness.

All of us this evening should take just a moment and remember them -- the thousands who serve in harm's way, and their families who support them from far away from home. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

As the CNO, one of the perks I enjoy is the fact that my office in the Pentagon has windows.

From my desk I have a sweeping view of the manicured lawn and neat rows of headstones set upon the rolling hills of Arlington National Cemetery.

The view is one of serene beauty, but it serves as a vivid reminder always of the heavy price of freedom and of how many heroes, just like Corporal Dunham, have sacrificed so much to pay that price for us.

As we keep our sea services ready for today and shape them for tomorrow, we should honor our heroes in the same way Corporal Dunham, Dr. Khan and LT Duessel have honored us by doing our duty, leading by example, and taking the fight to the enemies of freedom.

Thank you for your continued and steadfast support, for helping us tell our story to America, and thank you for standing in the corner of the men and women who serve so nobly.

God bless our Navy and the nation we humbly serve.