

**Opening Statement of Admiral Mike Mullen before the
House Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans' Affairs and Related
Agencies (Remarks as prepared)
13 March 2007**

Chairman Edwards, Representative Wicker, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for your continued support of our men and women in uniform and for the opportunity to appear before you today.

It is an honor to testify before this committee, today, at such a critical time in our nation's history and in the company of my friend and colleague, General Conway. We come before you today representing the strongest and longest lasting inter-service relationship in our nation's military history: The Navy-Marine Corps Team.

America is a maritime nation. For 231 years we have been sending our nation's finest young patriots to sea, to defend and protect our home waters, to secure our lifelines for trade throughout the world, and to promote the international policies of the United States government.

These Sailors come from America's heartland, mountains, deserts and coastlines. They come from every state in the Union and all of our territories. Some of them will earn citizenship through their service. But as members of the United States Navy, they are all ambassadors of freedom and our front line of defense.

Perhaps it is worth reflecting, just for a moment, on the fact that we remain today a nation at war, involved in a long, irregular global conflict campaign against those intent on using violence, hatred and fear to spread their twisted ideologies. Terrorism is their favorite tactic. But we cannot become fixated on this one threat alone.

We are also confronted by nation-states whose intent is sometimes very hard read, determined to develop and use sophisticated and advanced military technology, perhaps even nuclear weapons.

To help us meet these challenges, I often speak of my three priorities for the Navy: To Sustain Combat Readiness, to Build a Fleet for the Future, and to Develop 21st Century Leaders. And critical to achieving each of these priorities is our shore infrastructure and what I call “family readiness”.

We have invested heavily in the readiness of our Fleet, our ability to surge capabilities wherever and whenever they are needed to support our Combatant Commanders and our national security objectives. Our shore infrastructure must be equally prepared and flexible to support this continuous readiness, by providing the right bases at the right places with the right capabilities at the right price. That is the basis of our Ashore Vision 2030, a strategy to achieve installation readiness. I am committed to ensuring our shore infrastructure is managed with the same efficiency and effectiveness as our fleet requirements, and the Navy is now pursuing an enterprise approach to ensure we do just that.

But as I mentioned, our shore infrastructure is only part of the foundation upon which our Navy’s future is being built. Without the support of our families - and, without supporting them in return - we cannot hope to sustain combat readiness. We owe our Sailors, civilians, and their families the very best quality of life we can offer. This includes top-notch housing and installations, the best health care we can provide, and a strong commitment to child care.

This sub-committee has been very supportive in this regard and I am grateful for that superb support.

I would be remiss, if I did not express my gratitude for your efforts in helping to resolve one specific area of concern which would have a major impact on the Navy’s ability to meet the BRAC completion deadline of 2011. As you are aware, the continuing resolution, failed to adequately fund FY07 DoD BRAC requirements.

Without Supplemental funding to remedy the \$3.1B reduction this law made in the DoD BRAC request, Navy's BRAC FIVE funding will be cut from \$675M to \$299M – a 56% reduction. This would devastate a program entering the critical stages of execution.

This reduction would also delay, or in some cases negate, our ability to harvest savings and reap funds from land sales and transfers. Your efforts to remedy this through a Supplemental are greatly appreciated.

Let me conclude by assuring you we have the best Navy, with the best Sailors, and the best operational readiness I have seen in my 39 year career, arguably the best Navy in history. But we cannot take this for granted.

Maintaining a ready, capable shore infrastructure that paces afloat programs and supports our remarkable families is an area in which I will not accept significant risk.

This coming year, my focus will be on establishing a sustainable, balanced shore investment program which addresses MILCON recapitalization, sustainment, restoration and modernization and base operating support. I will drive this with strategic planning guidance focused on supporting warfighting capabilities and quality of life.

Again, on behalf of your Sailors, Navy civilians and their families, I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you and stand ready to answer your questions.