

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

On behalf of all your shipmates in the United States Navy, I wish you and every other Seabee the very best as you celebrate your 65th birthday.

I hope the occasion finds you and your families well, though I know the separation from them is difficult, the hours long and the work arduous. Please know that your country remains grateful for your service at this critical time in our history, and that we do not take for granted what you and your families so willingly sacrifice to preserve our freedom.

Yours is vital work in the war on terror, in some ways and in some places the *most* vital work we are doing. The goodwill you foster through civil engineering and community relations efforts in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, and yes, here in Egypt, actually does as much to forestall the spread of hateful and radical ideologies as the combat convoys you drive, the runways you repair and the base camps you build.

You understand, perhaps better than most, that we defend the interests of the United States best by defending the right of others to live free ... by providing people the opportunity to raise and educate their children in safety ... and by acting as good ambassadors and representatives of a way of life worth pursuing.

During a trip to the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, I was awestruck by the degree to which the Seabees -- who were clearing debris and rebuilding local infrastructure within hours of the storm's passing -- had contributed to a sense of security and optimism right here on our own shores.

I came across a group of your comrades working feverishly on the wooden platform for what was to become a temporary dining facility. It had been a contract job, but the contractor was having problems rounding up manpower and resources. The Seabees didn't ask permission, didn't wait for orders. They simply rolled up their sleeves and went to work. "Hey, they needed help," one said. "And we know how to do this stuff."

You do, indeed, know how to do this stuff, and you and your fellow Seabees continue to do it exceptionally well all over the world. You honor the legacy of your predecessors. Standing amongst you as I have in Baghdad, Bagram or Biloxi, I was never more proud to call myself your shipmate.

Thank you for your extraordinary service and that of your families ... and Happy Birthday!

MIKE MULLEN
Admiral, U.S. Navy
Chief of Naval Operations