

Naval Academy Graduation
Introduction of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Admiral Michael Mullen
By Donald C. Winter
Secretary of the Navy
Annapolis, Maryland
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Ladies and gentlemen, friends and family, distinguished guests, I am very pleased to be here to personally offer my congratulations to the 2008 graduates.

Well done!

All of you have stood up to serve your country in a time of war.

When this Nation asks, who shall protect us, who will defend us during these uncertain times, they need look no further than this generation of patriots that is known as the Class of 2008.

I am reminded of the passage in Isaiah where the Lord is seeking followers, and he asks: “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Isaiah responds: “Here I am. Send me.”

In like fashion, you have answered the call, and you have volunteered to undertake a great and worthy endeavor.

From this moment of pride and satisfaction on, memories of your time as Midshipmen will soften, deepen in color, and take on new meaning.

You will remember these grounds as the place that formed your character, established lifetime bonds of friendship, and gave you the tools of leadership that will shape your careers in the Navy and Marine Corps.

You will soon enough look back at—with no ordinary regret and nostalgia—the years of rigor on the proving grounds of this magnificent institution.

But now your focus will shift to the new challenges before you.

You have not chosen an easy path.

You have not chosen a way of life that affords well-earned comforts and rest.

You have not chosen a profession sheltered from the dangers of war or from the constant demands of a life at sea.

But in demonstrating your ability to lead others, to handle the unique stresses of

Academy life, and to master the naval arts, you have set a course that offers great promise and rewards that few can claim.

In deciding to accept an appointment to the Naval Academy four years ago, you made a decision at a young age to reach very high in life.

Today, as you enter the officer ranks of the United States Navy and United States Marine Corps, your aim is higher still.

You serve at a time when terrorists make no secret of their goals.

We cannot say that we have not been warned.

From the beginning of recorded history, aggressors have exploited weakness, and demonstrated the folly of nations who refuse to bear the burdens of their own defense.

We must remain strong, and we must fight back.

We must fight our terrorist enemies today—and deter potential future adversaries through strength and preparedness.

You who take the oath to the Constitution as ensigns and second lieutenants now join the finest, most capable fleet the world has ever known.

I am like other patriotic Americans on this day—we cannot help feeling very proud of you, and I salute you all.

Your commencement speaker today shares these sentiments.

Admiral Mike Mullen, former Chief of Naval Operations and now Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is from the Naval Academy Class of '68, and a most appropriate guest of honor for these ceremonies.

I greatly valued the close working relationship I enjoyed with him as CNO, and I was most pleased to see him elevated to the chairmanship.

As Chief of Naval Operations, Mike Mullen established his reputation as a strong and unwavering advocate of the 313-ship Navy, and as a tireless supporter of the Sailors who make our Navy the envy of the world.

Mike Mullen's tenure as CNO was marked by a dedicated effort to embrace a Joint perspective, a focus that is reflected in both the Navy's new Maritime Strategy and in the presence of 15,000 Sailors on the ground in the Central Command theater.

Drawing on the Navy's unique flexibility, Mike Mullen stepped up to meet urgent needs outside the Navy's traditional realm.

To corpsmen and Seabees were added Electronic Warfare Officers, Master's at Arms, Provincial Reconstruction Team commanders and a host of other Navy assets in a wide range of operations from Kunar Province, Afghanistan to the Horn of Africa.

Under Mike Mullen's leadership, the Navy and Marine Corps have become integrated into Joint operations as never before, including noteworthy cooperation with the Coast Guard.

His passionate belief in the Navy's flexibility and ability to adapt to the new threat environment has paid off—on land and at sea, and in operations as disparate as disaster relief in Pakistan, to combat missions in terrorist strongholds in Iraq.

Today, as Chairman, his love for the Navy remains undiminished, but Admiral Mullen now brings his extraordinary energy and passion to the job of advising the President on the entire range of our military operations.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen.