

**Remarks as delivered by Adm Mike Mullen
EA-18 Growler Rollout
03 August 2006**

Jim, thank you for that kind introduction. Congressman Akin, Mayors York, Carr, Watson, Representatives Day, Beardon, Darraugh, Mr. John Lockhard, Mr. Chadwick, Vice Admiral Zortman, Rear Admirals Starling, Cronk, Wren, Venlet and Emerson, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome.

It is great to be here in St. Louis. On behalf of the men and women of the United States Navy, I would like to start by thanking the people of Missouri for their long history of supporting our troops. Each and everyone one of them deeply appreciates your support.

We have always been able to count on the people of Missouri and on the Missouri congressional delegation to staunchly advocate a strong national defense.

Representatives like Todd Akin. Mr. Akin, thank you for your steadfast support of our men and women in uniform.

President Harry Truman was another Missourian who worked tirelessly to ensure this nation's security.

He once argued that in a rapidly changing world, "you can't have a first class air force with second class aircraft."

Now this is clearly not an Air Force plane.

But President Truman went on to say that the requirement extended to all services – and his words still ring true today.

Our Navy's air force – since its inception – has always been second to none. Rapid – flexible – forward deployed – on call – and on demand: Naval Aviation has been a huge difference maker – both in peace and in war. And it is making an equally tremendous difference today.

As we have seen in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, Naval Aviation brings revolutionary capabilities to the fight and demonstrates – again and again – the enduring relevance and criticality our big deck carriers and combat power from the air. No one does it better.

So it is a great pleasure to accept on behalf of the United States Navy and all Sailors – the EA -18 G Growler – a first-class aircraft – with a key mission – at a critical time in our history.

And this roll out comes none too soon. Because as we speak – the Growler's predecessor – the EA-6B Prowlers – are flying vital missions over Iraq and Afghanistan—and they need to be replaced as soon as possible. We are flying them beyond their original expected service life.

I have recently visited some of our Prowler crews in Iraq. I can tell you that they are superb and – like all the Sailors and Marines I met there – are doing remarkable work.

Each of them expressed confidence in their skills and their mission. They spoke to me of how they used electronic warfare to save lives and to counter some of the most difficult threats our troops now face.

It is hard, grueling, vital work. In some ways and in some places, the most vital we are doing.

It is clear that the demand for electronic warfare is not only going to remain high but is also going to grow.

Growler was designed and built to answer that call.

Its speed, range, and robust self-defense systems will serve as force multipliers for Naval Aviation, greatly strengthening the entire Joint Force.

Its pilots and crews will employ Growler's systems not just to jam signals – but to control all aspects of the electromagnetic spectrum – to protect our troops and engage our enemies.

And Growler is a model of what a strong strategic relationship between the Navy and industry can do.

It underscores what I believe about building the future Fleet. By working together – we can and we must produce capabilities that will keep our nation secure – while keeping faith with the American taxpayer.

Growler truly exemplifies that. It represents acquisition excellence at its finest.

This program has saved billions of dollars with an innovative approach that involved testing cutting-edge technology in existing aircraft, and marrying them with the Super Hornet's proven airframe. And it produced this much-needed capability in record time.

Less than three years ago we signed the contract and here we are today – on schedule and under budget – with a new electronic attack aircraft that exceeds every performance measure.

Growler crews will soon be taking advantage of our world class training and support facilities at Whidbey Island, as they train to go forward and accomplish their mission.

All of this has been made possible by the many people here today – including those viewing via video teleconference. Thank you for working so hard to bring the Growler to life.

To RADM Venlet, Captain Gaddis and your entire program team – you have done a terrific job. Well done.

To Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and Raytheon and to all the sub-contractors – you, too, can be justifiably proud of this fine aircraft you have provided our Navy and our nation.

And to all of you who helped design and build this aircraft, you are among the world's best artisans and experts in your craft.

Right now, day in and day out, Naval Aviators bet their lives on your aircraft – flying at sea, far from land, and in combat over some of the most remote places on earth – and they are succeeding in their tough missions because of the terrific aircraft you have built for them. You are patriotic citizens of this country- dedicated, enthusiastic, and every bit as important as those who serve in harm's way. Thank you for what you do.

And you have done it again with Growler – a first-class electronic attack aircraft for the world's finest Aviators and Navy.

Yours is a great legacy. Each time a Growler leaves the deck, each time it performs its mission with precision and excellence and each time it returns home safely again, it will take a bit of you with it.

Thank you. God Bless you. God Bless the United States Navy and God Bless our brave young men and women defending freedom around the world.