

**Remarks as delivered by Adm Mike Mullen
Navy Boot Camp Graduation
RTC Great Lakes, Mich.
7 July 2006**

Good Morning, it is a wonderful, spectacular Navy day. And I couldn't be prouder to be here, to be a part of this really important ceremony.

In fact, I am not sure in our country that there is a more important ceremony going on anywhere than this one.

Eddie, thank you for that kind introduction, too kind I might say. Admiral Jones, distinguished guests and other visitors, I join Captain Andrews in welcoming you here.

It really is great to be back in Great Lakes. It's a special Navy town, it's always been a special Navy town. And I appreciate the support of the community, for our Navy, for our Sailors and for their families.

It is great to see so many of those family members here today. The 360 graduates today got here because of wonderful parents, grandparents, coaches, teachers, lots of people who made a difference in their lives. And I, having the privilege to lead the Navy, am grateful to you for raising such outstanding young men and women, who have chosen this time in their lives to raise their right hands, serve this country at a really important time in our history. So I am grateful to all family members, mothers and fathers in particular for all you have done. And I would ask you to give yourselves a round of applause.

Also I would like to express my gratitude for all the staff here at Great Lakes, who do such a wonderful job. I had the privilege this morning of going through Battle Stations and seeing an awful lot of what's going on. It has changed the lives of many, many thousands of young Americans into great Navy Sailors. So to the staff who spends virtually every waking moment focused on our young people I want to say thanks for all you do here as well.

Graduates, on behalf of every Sailor and Officer in the Navy, welcome to the Fleet. Today, you embark on what will certainly be a – if not the – defining experience of your life.

I would tell you that I have been around the Navy for a very long time.

And this Navy you have joined is in the best shape I have ever seen. Today, I would like to leave you with three messages.

First, there is no greater calling than to serve your country.

We are currently a maritime nation at war, defending freedom here at home by defending freedom around the globe. Make no mistake: we are facing a determined enemy set on destroying our way of life.

All Americans have the freedom to choose their response to these enemies. When it was your turn to choose, you chose not to walk away from, but toward the dangers and the challenges of this new century.

When it was within your power to stay mute, you instead raised your hand and volunteered to serve.

The oath you took comprises without question the most important words you will utter in the service of your nation.

They are not words of allegiance to a king or prince or potentate — but rather to an idea.

The idea of freedom so carefully scrawled out on a wonderfully brown and wrinkled document lying in the lobby of the National Archives just a short drive from my office in Washington. Our Constitution.

There is no greater promise and no greater calling than to bear “true faith” and to “protect and defend” the ideas set forth in that document.

Thank you for your service – for answering your nation’s call during this critical time in our history.

My second message is that each of you will serve in times of great change.

In fact, I believe that the only constant in our future is change.

As Sailors you face a new world, new challenges, and new missions – you must adapt. Not just to change, but to the incredible speed of change.

In just a few weeks or months from now, you may find yourselves combating terrorists, proliferators of weapons of mass destruction and other weapons, organized criminals, smugglers, drug traffickers and pirates.

You will face threats that are diverse – dynamic – determined and rapidly changing.

Your task – your charge – is to adapt more quickly than our enemies – to be ever ready to defend freedom at sea – on land – across the globe – whenever and wherever it is challenged.

As you progress in the Navy – you must first follow as we adapt to change, but then you must learn to lead it.

That is my third message to you – every Sailor is a leader.

I fundamentally believe that within each and every one of us lies the capacity to lead. No matter where we stand in the chain of command, you have a responsibility to develop your leadership potential.

A big part of that is watching other leaders closely. Emulate the good traits; avoid the bad ones. Seek mentors and mentor others yourself.

Boot camp has given you a great start -- prepared you well to enter the Fleet. But remember there are even tougher challenges ahead of you.

One of my heroes – Admiral Arleigh Burke once challenged Sailors: “This ship is built to fight,” he told them, “You better know how.”

Together we must always know how to fight – and how to defend freedom in every imaginable way. This ever changing world requires no less of us.

Perhaps the best advice I can give you – is the advice I gave myself when I took this job. Listen, learn and lead!

Whether you serve for four years or for forty – I believe that those are the keys to success in the Navy and in life.

We expect a lot of you. I know you will not let us down.

I wish each of you the very best and I will see you in the Fleet.

Thank you. God Bless You and God Bless the United States Navy.