

ADM. MIKE MULLEN
Podcast Transcript
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MC1 MCNEELEY: Welcome to the Chief of Naval Operations' podcast for July 16th. I'm Petty Officer Chad McNeeley. Our weekly discussion with CNO Admiral Mike Mullen will focus on the deployment of USS Enterprise to the Arabian Gulf, the talk of a carrier buildup in the region, and CNO's upcoming trip to San Diego and other subjects. Good afternoon, sir. Thanks for joining us today.

ADMIRAL MIKE MULLEN: Thanks, MC1, great to be with you. Before we get started today, I want to offer my deepest condolences to the families and loved ones of the three sailors who were killed in Iraq last week and I want to do that on behalf of all the men and women of the Navy. In one very terrible IED attack, we lost three terrific young men, three shipmates. And I think we should all pause and reflect on their service and their sacrifice and what that means for those who wear the uniform.

Petty Officer First Class Jason Lewis, a SEAL based in Little Creek, native of Brookfield, Connecticut, he joined the Navy in 1996. I've heard enough about him since this tragedy to know an exceptional sailor who, obviously as all of them did, gave the ultimate sacrifice for their country. And he was married and he had three young children that he leaves behind.

Mass Communications Specialist First Class Robert McRill. He was from Lake Placid, Florida, had spent about 16 years in the Navy, served about Theodore Roosevelt and Eisenhower as well as a significant tour in the Combat Camera Group in the Atlantic. He was attached the Naval Special Warfare group in support of the SEALs. He also leaves behind a wife and three children.

And lastly, CT1 Steven Daugherty, 28 years old from Barstow, California, and he only recently had transferred to the tactical communications unit with the special warfare community. And he's survived by a son.

All three of these sailors, exceptional individuals, and they are all serving on the front lines doing very dangerous work in a very dangerous place at a very dangerous time. And their sacrifice, the loss of their lives, it really is, as I indicated, the ultimate sacrifice. But even as we mourn their deaths, as we should, it reminds us of the challenges we face today all over the world and of sacrifices that are being made, not just by these three Sailors, but Sailors, soldiers, airmen, Marines, Coast Guard men since this war started.

And in a very real way, Petty Officers Lewis, McRill, and Daugherty represent those sacrifices and, of course, because they were Sailors and shipmates, it all comes home to us. And they were fighting, as so many are, for something much larger than themselves. They were fighting for each other and for the future of their children and

also they understand that sometimes we have to defend our national interests and we do so best by defending the rights of others. As their commanding officer put it, these Sailors embody the Navy core values of honor, courage, and commitment, time and again, both in training and obviously on the battlefield. I can't say it any better than that.

We really are going to miss them and we feel for their families. So again, my thoughts and prayers go out to the families of these brave Sailors who I know are deeply suffering at this time and we should all keep them in our thoughts and prayers and assist them, help them, through what must be the most trying time in their lives.

MC1 MCNEELEY: Thank you, sir. I know the rest of the Navy feels the same way. If I could just follow up a bit on the war itself, over the weekend the Navy deployed the carrier Enterprise. There seemed to be some confusion over whether the deployment was designed to boost carrier presence in the Arabian Gulf region. I just wanted to ask about that, are we moving to a three-carrier presence there?

ADM. MULLEN: No, we're not. There's no intention right now to add a third carrier to the CENTCOM region. Enterprise's departure was part of a routine deployment to support the war on terror. She and her crew and the entire strike crew, they're trained and ready to go. She will most likely relieve one of the carriers in that theater, but all the timing and coordination for that, as it is in everything we do, is up to the combatant commander, in this case Admiral Fallon in CENTCOM. And as I've said, we have not received any tasking to increase presence to 3.0

I also think it's important to add here that the Navy has been in and around these waters a long time, actually since the late '40s. And we've been there with great regularity. It's a vital region; it has been for that time, it is now, and it will continue to be in the future. And we're conducting the full spectrum of maritime security operations day-in and day-out in concert with the United States Coast Guard and many coalition partners, truly an international and interagency effort. I don't expect that presence and that level of effort to slow down. Our operational tempo will stay where it is.

I had the chance to get aboard some of the ships over there during the holidays. I actually got to spend a nice night sea on Boxer; I don't get to do that very often anymore. And I can tell you, they were doing great work at sea and in support of the ground forces. And they, as well as I, are very, very proud of what they're doing. So I don't see any big changes in terms of level of presence, in terms of numbers, but I've talked a lot since I've been CNO about it's an uncertain world and it's very difficult to predict what's going to happen. The Navy's out there; it's out there in significant numbers and able to respond. And Enterprise, and the Enterprise Strike Group, represents that very well.

MC1 MCNEELEY: Speaking of Boxer, which is home-ported in San Diego, I understand you'll be going out to the West Coast next week. You may even get a chance to see some of those same ships and sailors that were over there when you were there over Christmas, I believe. Is that right and what are you hoping to get out of your trip to the West Coast?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, that is right. We're planning a trip by the end of next week and my wife, Deborah, and I are going out to San Diego starting actually in the middle of this week, not next week. And we expect to spend a couple days out there. This is one of what has been many trips to the waterfront and to engage with Sailors and spouses on what's going on, what's on their minds. And, as I've said before, we get great questions; great engagement and some of those things come back and have a significant impact on Navy policy.

So I expect to go to the naval station and visit wounded troops at Balboa as well as the staff, the hospital there in San Diego, and spend some time with the SEALs in Coronado. My message is that I continue to appreciate and greatly value their service, their sacrifice, and that it doesn't go unnoticed.

I'll also be getting aboard some of the ships. One of them, I hope, will be Boxer, who I'm eager to see again. They had a great, very, very long deployment and the support that they provided, as well as the support of their families, was really, really critical. They handled the mission well; it was a tough one. They were out there over the holidays, many holidays. And I just want to get aboard and say thanks.

And as I'm talking a little bit about San Diego, San Diego's a great Navy town. Originally, I'm from California, so I've known San Diego my whole life and the city and surrounding areas played a vital role for our nation as well as our navy on the West Coast. We get a lot of support from the local community there and it's great to see that support. I'll have a chance to talk to the San Diego Military Affairs Council as well as thank them for that kind of support.

We've got over 66,000 sailors and about 100,000 family members that live in that area and also over 18,000 civilians, Navy civilians, who work in the San Diego metropolitan area. The Navy alone has contributed just under \$12 billion into the local economy and it's the second largest fleet concentration area in the world. So I'm grateful for the opportunity. I look forward to the trip; I look forward to the interaction with the Sailors. I know my spouse does with Navy spouses, as well as the interaction with the local community leaders. I think it will be a fun trip.

I'll also be attending the National Naval Officers Association national conference. They run this each year and that's one of the main reasons for the trip. So I look forward to all those engagements in a very positive and optimistic way.

MC1 MCNEELEY: Can you explain, sir, what the National Naval Officers Association is and why is it so important for you to get the opportunity to speak to them?

ADM. MULLEN: Actually, the National Naval Officers Association came to my attention almost a little over 20 years ago when I had command of a ship out in Hawaii. A very active group, great organization which supports all the sea services in the development of a diverse group of officer corps through recruitment, retention, career

development, and mentoring. I spoke at their conference two years ago in New Orleans just before Katrina. And I'm honored to be invited to speak again. And I think it's very important for me to attend because I get a lot out of it. It's a terrific event. Actually, after the first time I spoke, I became a life member and I'm very proud of that.

And the issue of diversity is very, very important to me, not just in terms of this kind of conference, but it's a strategic imperative for the Navy. The world we're living in is becoming smaller; it is a diverse world in many, many ways, as is our country. And in the year 2030, 2040, 2050, the majority in our country now become the minority and it's vital for us, as a Navy, to be representative of that country, particularly from the – of our country in terms of diversity in order to carry out our mission. So there's an internal strategic imperative that the Navy be set to do this in the future and it starts at the base. It starts with young officers, in particular.

But there's also an external imperative and that external imperative is tied to the diversity of missions, the diversity of cultures, the diversity of languages, all those things which continue to evolve in the world that we need to stay engaged in. So I very much look forward to continuing to engage not just the NNOA, but engage on this issue. And I think our health as a Navy, long term, is greatly tied to making sure we get this diversity, the diversity aspect of who we are and who we're going to be exactly right. So it's been a priority for me since I've been CNO; it will remain a priority for me really throughout my life, certainly as long as I serve. So again, great to be back and see this group again and I'll be – I'm going to be speaking, but I'm also going to be listening to hear what's on their mind. So I look forward to it.

MC1 MCNEELEY: One last question, unrelated, though I'd like to talk about San Diego for as long as you'd like to, it's a great place. The Navy has decided to change the final multiple-score algorithm to give more weight to test scores and evaluation marks while reducing the weight of time and pay-grade in PNA points. Can you tell us a little more about the rationale behind that?

ADM. MULLEN: I think – I think it's absolutely the right thing to do and it's part of – when I've been on the road, one of the things I talk about routinely is I think our advancement system's going to change in the future. I don't have a prescription for that; I can't say it's going to be exactly – that it's going to exactly look like something that I could write out right now, but this is an example of both a review of this and an emphasis. And I've talked about it in terms of it being more performance-based. And so increasing the emphasis on exam score and, more importantly as far as I'm concerned, increasing the weight tied to evaluations and performance fits that model and continues to head us in a way that I think will evolve the model over time.

It also – and this applies to just the E4, 5, and 6 advancement right now and it was designed also to give both CO's and sailors more influence on advancements. So if you're performing better, your chances are – and your evaluations are better, your chances are improved. And I think that's – that's really the principle here. And it forces the system to emphasize a high level of performance to advance. This is a competitive

business, a competitive environment, and we want only the best sailors to advance. The calculation – the weighting for performance marks within the final multiple score is increased by seven percent and the calculation change to increase the difference from 12 to 16 points from an early promote versus a must promote or a must promote versus a promotable on the promotion recommendation.

So again, it gives the CO's and sailors a little more control of who's going to be advanced and making a person – making a sailor more competitive for advancement. And I think it's absolutely the right answer.

MC1 MCNEELEY: Are the two points for I.A. duty added on top as extra points once the final multiple score is calculated?

ADM. MULLEN: I thought your last question was the last question, that's what –

MC1 MCNEELEY: I always have a last question, sir.

ADM. MULLEN: No, the two points were completing greater than 90 consecutive days in Iraq and Afghanistan, Horn of Africa, Kuwait, Gitmo, Joint Task Force 515, or Joint Force Special Task Force Philippines is added to the awards factor of the FMS. Again, I really think this new algorithm will focus much more intently on performance and those Sailors who perform at the highest level and perform the best and continue to improve will be advanced.

MC1 MCNEELEY: Very good. That was my last question, sir. Thank you very much. Have a great trip to the West Coast and we'll talk to you next week.

ADM. MULLEN: Thanks, MC1. Good to see you.

MC1 MCNEELEY: You've been listening to the Chief of Naval Operations podcast for July 16th. Check back on July 23rd for our next edition. Thanks for listening. I'm Petty Officer Chad McNeeley.