



## ADDRESS BY ADMIRAL MIKE MULLEN

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**WELCOME/MODERATOR:**

**Jessica Mathews,**

President

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

**SPEAKER:**

**Admiral Michael Mullen,**

Chairman,

Joint Chiefs of Staff

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Washington, D.C.

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JESSICA MATHEWS: Good morning. I'm Jessica Mathews, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. I've the great privilege of introducing Admiral Mike Mullen this morning, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and to welcome him to the global think tank.

[00:15:40]

This institution, its commitment to a presence on the ground and to expertise from within key societies, is an appropriate setting, I think, for parting thoughts from a chairman who is known and admired, among many other things, for the enormous amount of time that he has spent in the field, on the ground, with the troops, seeing and investigating firsthand the progress of the two wars that he's been charged with overseeing.

Admiral Mullen was appointed chairman in June of 2007, a tumultuous time in Iraq in the middle of the troop surge, as you may remember, and he's leaving with another surge underway in Afghanistan whose outcome is still far from clear. Like his chairmanship, his career in the Navy has been bookended by wars, with his first posting as an anti-submarine officer in Vietnam. He later served on six warships, commanding three of them, and eventually as vice chief of naval operations, as commander of NATO's joint force command in Naples, as commander of U.S. Naval Forces Europe and eventually as the Navy's chief.

In these last four momentous years, Admiral Mullen has overseen the Iraq War rising to a peak and then winding down; he's played a key role in exhaustive strategy reviews in Afghanistan with a focus now on similar handover to Afghan forces and political leaders. And perhaps he will share with us his thoughts on the stiff challenge that we still face there.

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He has met exhaustively with Pakistan's military leadership and of course has presided over the tracking down of Osama bin Laden. He's overseen a major shift in doctrine and weaponry with the escalating use of drones against Islamic militants. And his attention has by no means been limited to South Asia; deepening the engagement between the U.S. and Chinese militaries, for example, has been a top priority.

At home he has helped to reconstitute the force after a decade of war and has fought for clarity and intelligence to be brought to bear in future budget cuts. On this day when repeal of "don't ask, don't tell" becomes final, it is worth recalling the quality of his personal leadership. Anyone, like myself, who heard his testimony before the Senate on "don't ask, don't tell" will not soon forget the quiet power of his personal statement. Leadership is a cheap and overused word in Washington but anyone who was listening that day heard the real thing.

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One other aspect of Admiral Mullen's tenure as the president's chief military adviser is worth noting. He has served two enormously different presidents – different in every possible way – political party, personal attributes, world view – and not in quiet times. He served them both with distinction and most importantly, in this very politicized town, he has managed to do so through two very contentious wars without his personal political views ever entering the picture. That will not be the least part, I think, of his distinguished legacy.

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Next Friday, after more than 40 years of active duty, Admiral Mullen will formally retire. We offer our admiration and our thanks for his service and for coming today to share with us his thoughts looking back and ahead as he leaves his post as America's chief military officer. Please join me in welcoming Admiral Mike Mullen. (Applause.)

[00:19:33]

ADMIRAL MIKE MULLEN: Thank you, Jessica. I very much appreciate that kind introduction. When I was interviewed on several morning shows on Memorial Day, which was obviously four months before I was due to leave, it – I had hoped to speak to the wonderful military that we have and the sacrifices, the need to really single that out.

And I was able to do that but that was also the morning that President Obama was going to announce my relief, trying to get that story out of me at six in the morning. And by the time I was done with, I think, five or six interviews I kind of walked away because they had reflected somewhat on my tenure almost as if I were at my wake – (laughter) – or as if it were over. And I still had four months left.

And if I wound the clock back four months from that moment I would have said, oh, if I used the last four months just to some measure, we could start in Egypt and Tunisia and Libya and Yemen and bin Laden and Japan and certainly not expect that the world was going to go quiet here for the last four months – nor do I expect it will be for the last four days – just the way events continue to unfold.

I've been asked to reflect – and actually I think, Jessica, you captured a great deal, sometimes more than I can even do myself. This has been a tumultuous four years. I do remember when I took over this job the state of Iraq, the despair that was there in so many corners, the vector that we were on, which was certainly headed for failure.

And that – and that has – to look at that and then be there a few weeks ago on my last trip – and I was flying with a couple of Army guys who had fought and lost comrades, and we were flying over Baghdad at night. And it looked like a sea of lights like you were in Las Vegas. And they'd never seen traffic in the streets of Baghdad at night. And it was jammed.

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And since I started going to Baghdad in – or to Iraq in 2004 and where we are now, it truly is extraordinary. And there are many factors, and they will be debated by many people and historians, as to why it turned. There are two factors from my point of view which must never be lost with respect to the military: one, courageous leadership at the top and, two, our men and women who executed that surge and changed the tide, if you will, there. And look at where we are right now.

On the eve of reducing our troops some 46 (thousand) or 7,000 there at the beginning of this month – and we'll be down by – down to 30,000 by the end of the month, and we'll continue on that glide slope under the current – under the current strategic framework agreement to have our troops all out of Iraq by the end of the year. Admittedly, we're in negotiations with them right now. What we seek is a long-term relationship with them. And I'm – based on what I know, certainly, I'm confident that we'll get to that long-term relationship. And that's a people – 26 million people who have a much brighter future than they had, certainly, when I took over as chairman.

When I came into the job I prioritized three things.: One is focus on the broader Middle East, certainly ; the war in Iraq. I felt very strongly about Afghanistan and struggling with Afghanistan – where were we? We didn't have enough resources there – and that we needed to, at some point in time, certainly, focus there – focus on the al-

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Qaida threat. That is really, and it still is today, the epicenter of terrorism in the world – continues to be. And I think we need to hold that focus.

Al-Qaida's in a much different place right now than it was four years ago. People ask me what the – what the best day on this – in this job has been. It's really the day we got bin Laden. And it's not just because we got bin Laden, although that certainly is the highest priority in terms of that, but that also represents 30 years of work since Desert One when we failed in the Iranian hostage rescue and we rebuilt not just our special forces and special operators but our military.

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And we've been able to get to that point through blood, sweat and tears – a lot of losses – and become the best military in the world. We adapted who we are in Iraq through the shift to counterinsurgency. And obviously we're in the middle of executing a very difficult and challenging campaign in Afghanistan – very well led with both Ryan Crocker and with General John Allen there; steady security progress over the last couple of years since we put 10,000 Marines in Helmand in the summer of '09. And if you were to go to Helmand now or to Kandahar now and compare it to where it was, it's vastly different – routing out the Taliban of their own internal safe havens in their country.

Clearly I've focused – I've tried to focus this on the region. This isn't just about Afghanistan. This is the region. The two countries most – that draw most focus, obviously: Afghanistan and Pakistan. But it's bigger than that. I mean, it's about India, it's about the “stans,” it's about the neighbors, it's about Iran, it's about China. The totality of the region is what I think we all need to focus on responsibly so that it doesn't deteriorate into either a civil war, a failed state with nuclear weapons, which is huge danger to the future not just of the region but I think of the world.

So obviously lots of focus there and still lots of work to be done there. On the Afghanistan side, while we've made improvements in security clearly these – the attack on the embassy, the high-profile attacks which have occurred, and just earlier today where Rabbani was assassinated in Kabul. These are – we know that that's the campaign that the – that the insurgents are on. We've got to adjust to that, protect the leaders, look at the security issues – and we are.

Also in Afghanistan we've got to get at the corruption. That has to be – there has to be significant steps taken there so that when the campaign is done, when we've turned over and finished the training of the Afghan security forces which has gone exceptionally well compared to where we were a couple years ago, that's it's a country and a government that the people actually have some faith in.

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Likewise, I've spent a lot of time on the relationship with Pakistan. I just was with General Kayani, as has been reported, Friday evening on the sidelines of conference of all the chiefs of defense in NATO. And I spent almost over four hours with him both at dinner and then privately after that. So we – and we covered a full range of issues focusing on the danger of the Haqqani Network, the need for the Haqqani Network to disengage.

(Background noise.) Seems to have gone well so far. (Laughter.)

The need for the Haqqani Network to disengage, specifically the need for the ISI to disconnect from Haqqani and from this proxy war that they're fighting. And without that we can't succeed in the overall effort as well. What I

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believe is the relationship with Pakistan is critical. We walked away from them in the past and in walking away from Pakistan, walking away from Afghanistan, it's where – look where we are today. And I think that cut-off has a lot to do with where we are. So lots of focus there.

Second priority – and there are certainly other issues in the Middle East which has evolved through now: the Arab Spring, obviously; Iran; the challenges that we have in Yemen in – that Syria now presents, et cetera.

Second thing I tried to focus on was health of the force – a force that certainly in '07 had been through an awful lot – 15 month deployments. I was a – I'm a – what I call a Vietnam baby. I remember one-year deployments. I remember how long we could sustain them. And 15 months, when we got there, just wasn't sustainable. And our major units now are on their fourth, fifth and sixth deployment since 2003 with however long that deployment has been – and notionally they've been 12 months at a crack – they've been home only that long. And we've got to give them some relief there.

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They have been unbelievably resilient and effective. Their families have been unbelievably resilient and effective. And part of what I try to do in this job is connect that message to America because the American people know we're at war, they know we're losing people; they support our men and women in uniform. But they don't know the details of it. I've traveled extensively throughout the country and talked to community leaders to see if we can make sure that we can connect that leadership locally with veterans who have so much to offer in the future.

And they are, almost to a person, unaware of the depth of the stress and the things that we've been through and yet recognize the potential for these young men and women in their communities and, quite frankly, for the country. So we've tried to emphasize that not just men and women who served but, with my wife Deborah, we focus on the families because we just couldn't do it without the family support that we've had. And so we've got to create more time at home. We're doing that now.

But the pace is going to continue. Despite the drawdown in Iraq, despite the 33,000 coming home next year, our pace – the time between deployments will slow down, but I seriously doubt over the course of the next two or three or four years that the deployments themselves will slow dramatically.

And then lastly, the third priority has been – you can't forget about the rest of the world. I have spent a lot of time actually with my counterpart in Russia through the – through the negotiations and eventual signing of the New START treaty, which is a big deal. And I have worked as hard as I can on deepening the relationships in the Pacific with Japan and Korea. If you have not – if you have not seen the – personally seen the extent of the damage in Japan, you just – you just can't fathom it.

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And when I was there one of the things that struck me was how the Japanese people handled it, how they're recovering. And I consider them, quite frankly, an example for the world in that regard. The challenges on the peninsula, the challenges brought by Kim Jong-Il and his leadership to destabilize that part – and obviously I've worked hard to be heavily – as heavily engaged as I could with China. My counterpart came here a few months ago. I returned that visit. His visit was the first one since 2004.

We haven't had a connection with Iran since 1979. Even in the darkest days of our – of the Cold War we had links to the Soviet Union. We are not talking to Iran so we don't understand each other. If something happens virtually

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– it’s virtually assured that we won’t get it right, that there will be miscalculations which would be extremely dangerous in that part of the world. So – and I think the Pacific and Asia, stability there as the – as one of the economic engines for the world for the foreseeable future, is something we all need to spend a lot of time on.

So that – I guess between what Jessica said and certainly just the brief comments I’ve made about focus – it’s been an enormously, I think, both important but also humbling experience to serve in this capacity, to represent 2.2 million men and women who are the best I’ve ever seen – active, Reserve, Guard – we shouldn’t forget our Guard has completely transformed itself over the course of the last 10 years. We would not be able to fight in either place successfully without our Reserve and Guard components. And I actually look to a great future with them – with this combat-experienced force that we have.

And then lastly, and I see some of my friends here who have never asked me a policy question but certainly have asked me budget questions. And I understand that’s a pretty topical subject right now. I actually have some background in that and we’re spending a fair amount of time on trying to get that right. My priority there is to make this strategically focused, to have a strategy and then make decisions about what the budget will do to support that – what we need in our Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard.

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What are the capabilities and what do we think about the future? That strategic set piece is critical because then all of us can make, I think, informed decision about – informed decisions about the budget. I think those that just want to do math – that path is a very dangerous path. This is not 1990; this is not 1970. This is a world that, from my perspective, still is very, very dangerous. And we need to make these decisions in a balanced way given where we’ve – where we are and our best estimate of what’s going to happen in the future.

With that, I’m happy to take your questions. (Applause.)

MS. MATHEWS: Can I just ask, please wait for the mics and I think it would be good to please introduce yourself as well.

Q: Trita Parsi, National Iranian American Council. Admiral, thank you for your –

ADM. MULLEN: (Inaudible) – national what?

Q: Iranian American Council.

ADM. MULLEN: OK.

Q: Thank you for your comments. Your comment in regards to Iran I thought was very interesting. Could you specify, are you specifically talking about military-to-military contact or a broader set of engagement between the two countries?

[00:35:51]

ADM. MULLEN: I’m talking about any channel that’s open. I mean, we have not had a direct link – communication – with Iran since 1979. And I think that is – that plants – that has planted many seeds for miscalculation. When you miscalculate, you can escalate and misunderstand. This isn’t about agreeing or disagreeing. That’s why, from my perspective, the visit that General Chen from China – his visit here, my visit there

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– we don’t – there’s a lot of things we don’t agree on. There are things we also – that we do agree on, but we have a channel that we can discuss things with each other.

And it can be mil-to-mil – and actually my own experience is it sort of depends on the country what the most effective channels are. Some of them are diplomatic, some of them are political, some of them are mil-to-mil, some of them are economic. But we have not had a clear channel with Iran since 1979.

And the reason I point that out is because of the world we’re living in, the instability in the Middle East, the hegemonic, strategic direction that I think Iran seeks as a destabilizing influence there, as a deconstructive as opposed to a constructive country. And that that’s very dangerous – when a country that seeks nuclear weapons and achieving that goal would further destabilize that region, from my perspective, because I think it would generate others who would – who would seek the same capability. It’s just a very dangerous time.

Q: If I could just have a quick follow-up on that, mindful of that, do you believe that in the case of Iran, mindful of what has happened in the last three years, that it’s a military-to-military conversation that is easiest to begin with?

ADM. MULLEN: I really wouldn’t make a judgment on that. I think it’s – I think any channel would be terrific. And I can honestly say I don’t have a preferred one based on what the hopes would be, if you will.

[00:37:56]

Yeah?

Q: Zaha Guia (ph) with the Pakistani American Leadership Center. Obviously, we’d like the Pakistanis to go after the Haqqani Network and move into North Waziristan. You know, we got this constant refrain of “do more.” One of the things that they’ve asked from the U.S. is attack helicopters. Can you tell us about any progress –

ADM. MULLEN: Is what?

Q: Attack helicopters. And it seems like the delivery of U.S. helicopters to Pakistan hasn’t been what they would like it to be. Can you comment on that at all?

[00:38:24]

ADM. MULLEN: We’ve actually, over the course of the – certainly the time I’ve been chairman, I don’t know what the exact number is – but there’s a huge – there’s a large amount of equipment that has been delivered to Pakistan – the Pakistani military. If I – there are two things when I travel globally that are sort of global shortfalls. One are – one is what I call strategic lift, C-17-like airplanes, and the other is helicopters everywhere. So you never have enough helicopters. We know that is an area of focus both in terms of trying to get their Mi-17s supported to work and fly very reliably, as well as their Cobras.

And the problem is they’re – those helicopters are – in fact the parts – you know, we don’t – we’re not making them anymore. So support in that regard is very difficult. But it’s an area that we have put great focus on. My own view is – and I might have this wrong – I don’t think there’s a – I don’t think there’s a direct link between improving their helicopter fleet and the decision that I think the ISI has to make to strategically disengage. The ISI has been doing this – working for – supporting proxies for an extended period of time. It is a strategy in the country and I think that strategic approach has to shift in the future.

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And I say that given the number of Pak-mil soldiers who have died fighting terrorists. There have been a tremendous number of Pak citizens who've lost their lives, huge internal threat that the Pakistani military and other forces have worked very hard to combat. But it's – my own view, it's going in the wrong direction in addition to those that they are – that they're – the proxy issues associated with Haqqani and others.

There's absolutely no doubt in my mind that Haqqani was behind the attack on the American embassy the other day. Haqqani was behind the attack – the truck bomb attack which injured upwards of 77 U.S. soldiers, killed five Afghans. And, you know, the Taliban have an atrocious record for killing Afghan citizens. And that should never be lost. So we're very focused on that. I mean, we've been focused on it. The Haqqani piece of this has got to be reversed – period.

Q: Morning. I'm – (inaudible) – from AFP. It's a follow up on Afghanistan.

ADM. MULLEN: How are you? Yeah?

Q: There's been some very tough language from you and other top U.S. officials in recent days about the Haqqani Network. And is the U.S. prepared to take stronger action or to adopt new methods to go after the Haqqani Network?

ADM. MULLEN: I think the U.S. is prepared to take appropriate action to protect our men and women, first of all, in the fight and certainly to protect the Afghan citizens who have been devastated by this network as well. And I – I mean, I would say that broadly but I would never go into the specifics of what that would be, as much as you would like me to do that. (Laughter.)

[00:41:54]

Q: Thanks. Admiral, I'm Garrett Mitchell and I write the Mitchell Report. And I – Jessica made mention of your very personal leadership on the “don't ask, don't tell” question which I think a number of us found very powerful. There's another lingering issue that I'd be interested in your thinking on, and that is that in the interest of creating the very best military, we've privatized it. We've taken – we've created a sort of cul-de-sac where member – people who serve in the military and their families are dissociated from the rest of us and we from them.

And I'm interested in your – having lived through this from the time when you graduated from the academy and there was a draft all through the various posts that you've had, what you think the civic costs to the democracy are for having made that efficiency and effectiveness decision on the military and how and in what ways might it be eroding the sort of civic fiber and strength of the country?

ADM. MULLEN: I have worried about this for a considerable period of time having come into the military, obviously, when we had a draft. I have – I feel very strongly that we need not return to that, but the effects of a draft in terms of exposure and connection with the country – I believe we have to kind of – when I say we I'm pointing at myself and other leaders – we have to figure a way to connect better with the American people and to understand that and to be understood.

As I said in my opening comments, I've been too many places where American citizens are stunned at what we've been through, stunned at the number of deployments. I talked about five or six major deployments, no time at home. Half your time at home is spent away from home because you're training to go on the next one. If I were to

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pick out the special operators, those numbers to go 14, 15, 20 deployments that – and the American people really don't understand the details of that, even though they're incredibly supportive.

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And I do worry – because we are less than 1 percent of the population; we come from fewer and fewer places – that over time our connection is eroding. And I think that's a very bad outcome for America. I think that's an outcome that this democracy could not – could not stand, the – to have its military essentially be detached from its people. And so I believe all of us have to figure out a way to achieve that kind of effect at this point in time without going back to a draft.

This is an incredibly good, professional military – a level of excellence that I have never seen and years ago could not have imagined – with huge challenges in the future. When asked if – I'm somebody – and probably a little bit biased just because I've seen too many 18-year olds come in the military and their lives get changed for the better, and when they stay or go they become different people.

I believe – I believe broadly a couple years of service – in any capacity – would be good for our young people in the country, in neighborhoods, in communities, with the Peace Corps, with the military, with other organizations – NGOs – something that exposes them to the broader world and gets both a better connection to the challenges and a recognition of the opportunities.

So I don't think we're there. I don't think it's been that corrosive yet. But it has, from my perspective, been brought into stark relief by these wars and where we are and certainly what I've seen. And I think we need to face that and actively – and I think it's a two-way street. It's a military issue. Military leaders have to voice this and figure out a way not just to talk to ourselves. But it's also an issue that I think the American people – leadership need to recognize as well and figure out if we can create that same effect. And that's a big challenge.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: (Inaudible) – Express News Pakistan. Admiral, you met General Kayani in Seville for four hours, as you just said. When you told him about your – about the Haqqani Network attack what kind of response did you receive from his side? Have you – has there been any kind of commitment or any – as you said, the ISI needs to disengage with its proxies. Has – did you receive any kind of commitment, any kind of explanation from Mr. Kayani?

ADM. MULLEN: One of the ways I've protected my relationship with him over the course of the last four years is not to talk in detail about what we talked about. But I – we had a very – I mean, we've met a lot. I've visited Pakistan I think 24, 25, 26 times. I've met him many other times in other places as well. I've talked to him on the phone many times. So we have a very close relationship.

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It's a relationship. We're both military leaders. It's a difficult one. It will have its ups and downs. It has had certainly recently. But I think the strength of the connection is what's important so that we can get through the hard times because both of us believe that, in the long run, a strong relationship between our countries and our militaries is very important. But I wouldn't go into the details of that.

Chris. Is this a policy question? (Laughter.)

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Q: Budget, sir, budget.

Chris Castelli with Inside the Pentagon. Admiral, you talked about the need for strategy to shape investment decisions. You've been working on that for months now. Can you say anything about what the strategy is?

ADM. MULLEN: The strategy is really for the president of the United States to set. It's not for the military to set. It's not even for the – it's not for the secretary of defense to set.

MR. : (To set ?)?

ADM. MULLEN: I'm actually very comfortable that we have, in process, worked very hard to look at different strategic views and continue to have those discussions so that, when we make decisions, as we will – and when I say “we,” probably that's the big “we” – with respect to the budget over the course of the next six months – I mean, there are going to be some major, major decisions with respect to the budget of the United States, not just internal to the Pentagon. And I am one who believes we need to pay our fair share in this.

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I am one who voiced very early that I think the biggest threat to our national security is this debt, and we've got to get our arms around it. But we got to do it carefully, and I believe it's got to be, as I said, strategically focused.

And so what have we learned from these wars? How does that inject into the future? What do we believe in terms of – obviously this administration has put the QDR-focused, you know, given the budget – I'm sorry – the QDR out there – given the budget constraints that we are in right now, you know, is that still relevant across the board? Is there a different strategy for the future? And we're in the midst of that right now, Chris, and I think it's going to take a while to really – to really pin that down.

But I just want to reassure you that the work is going on and I'm very comfortable with the work so far, and I think the best outcome would be if we can make sure this just isn't a budget drill or, as a prior secretary of defense said, it's just math. And quite frankly there are too many analysts that just want to do this by math. We did this before in the '90s, and I was in the trenches when that happened, and it almost broke us where I was.

Q: Just a quick follow-up, sir: The uncertainty surrounding what the deficit commission's going to come up with here this fall – I mean, how significantly does that inhibit your ability to, you know, develop that strategy now?

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ADM. MULLEN: Well, I think it – the strategy that we have – that we are working on, if you will, allows us to look into what I would call strategic – a strategic approach if it's a trillion dollars out of Defense, which is – sort of – if – or 1.3 (trillion dollars), whatever it is – if the sequester, you know, bomb goes off, if that happens, we're – from my perspective – we're in a different strategy arena and a different military arena.

So the work's that gone on, I think, exposes it from that standpoint. We can see that; we can see next steps. With respect to, if that thing were to go off – and you've heard Secretary Panetta and others, and I would say the same thing – I think that would be very dangerous for the country right now, given the national security requirements that we have globally.

All the way in the back.

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[00:51:03]

Q: Yes, sir. My name is Kami Butt. I write for the Pakistani Spectator, and my question is about addressing Pakistani insecurities.

Given that Pakistan lost every war when they fought with India and now Pakistani general(s), especially Kayani, believed that India encircling Pakistan, without addressing Pakistani insecurities and especially the issue of Kashmir, I believe that we can stay in Afghanistan for a hundred years, and we are not going to resolve this issue. So when you look at American mother(s) who lose their son(s), can you – can you tell them honestly that it's worth to give up blood in Afghanistan for the – they're the country that's has become battleground between India and Pakistan. So my question is mainly about addressing Pakistani insecurity given they have lost every war of – fighting with India. Thanks.

ADM. MULLEN: I think it's – I think that's a fair question, and I think we need to listen. We need to understand what – where Pakistan's interests are, how does Pakistan see its future and, where certainly those shared interests combine, I think we need to help each other achieve that.

I said earlier this isn't just about Afghanistan and Pakistan. It's a regional issue, and that includes India and other neighbors. But certainly in India – and I know that has been for a significant period of time – an existential threat with respect to Pakistan. It remains today. I've said a couple years ago, and I believe today – I think solving Kashmir unlocks the whole place, that that's the path for long-term solutions. Very difficult issue; that isn't going to go away, it isn't going to get better over time. And I have had those discussions, actually on – with both Pakistani leadership as well as Indian leadership.

Yeah.

[00:53:04]

Q: My name is Muhammad Tahir from Radio Free Europe. What's your take on impact of Rabbani's assassination to the transition and peace process in Afghanistan?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, obviously, as the – as the chairman of the High Peace Council, in that regard, certainly someone's going to have step in pretty quickly because that's a critical part of the whole peace process.

Any – I think anytime you obviously lose a leader like that, it's going to have an impact. I think it's – honestly, since it happened a couple hours ago, it's really too soon to tell what the impact will be. I think leaders need to, you know, I think, respond deliberately here, ensure that this is not destabilizing, certainly it – from the standpoint of looking to the future, and it does represent what is a very clear strategy on the part of the insurgents and the Taliban to try to assassinate as many leaders as possible. I don't think – it doesn't derail the strategy.

Clearly they are not winning in the field, if you will, and they've had – from their overall campaign, they've had a pretty difficult year. At the same time, the strategic effects here are not insignificant, and we need to pay attention to it.

Yeah.

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Q: Yes, sir. Robert Kemp from – I'm from – with Georgetown University. What you said about decreasing – the possibility of decreasing military budgets, here in the United States, how do you see NATO evolving over the next five or 10 years given the situation in the European economies?

MS. : (Inaudible.)

ADM. MULLEN: Well, it's a difficult challenge. Many of the NATO countries have already taken steps to dramatically reduce their budget. I was just in this meeting in Seville, it was a NATO CHODs meeting, and obviously Libya was something we talked about.

And I give NATO an awful lot of credit for reacting quickly, for standing up – once given the mission – for standing up and executing a mission that many people would have possibly doubted they could do. We haven't run an air campaign like that in many, many years inside NATO, and it's had the strategic effect. Obviously it doesn't have Gadhafi gone, out of the country yet; but for all intents and purposes, his regime is gone. There's still some fighting that's left.

And so I'm encouraged by what I saw with respect to NATO, and one of the things that the – my counterparts from several countries said to me, very publicly, is they could not have done this without the U.S. They couldn't have done it without the U.S., both leading it initially, getting it going, and then the support – incredible support structure that we put in from fueling to electronic attack to support across the board – munitions support, et cetera.

And so it's still part of the team, but it is – I think one of the questions that's out there is, what does – what does an operation like Libya mean, so close to Europe? Will Europe take the lead in these kinds of things in the future? And one of the questions they're going to have to answer is do they have the military – do they have the military capabilities to be able to execute it? And those are some of the lessons obviously that we will take forward.

But I'm – you can't – I mean, I think Bob Gates said this very well in his last speech to NATO: I mean, you can't wish this stuff to happen; you got to have capabilities and, to have capabilities, you have to make investments. Some of the investments are expensive. Nor can you just depend on everybody else. We can't and I don't think they can. And we're going to have to figure that in the future.

Michael (sp).

[00:57:17]

Q: Mike Costi (ph), retired. Admiral, what light could you shed on the negotiations with the – ongoing with the Iraqis in terms of the numbers of troops that will remain in Iraq post this year? And where did the number 3,000 come from?

ADM. MULLEN: Not a – I can't shed a lot of light on that right now, except to say that we are in negotiations. I guess some of them – and this goes back to my experience before – I was – in the – I was at the heart, when I started this job, of negotiations of the last strategic framework agreement with Iraqis. This is really hard stuff, and we're in the midst of that right now.

[00:58:03]

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I think it's – one of the nice things about Iraq is the vast majority of the problems are political problems. So Prime Minister Maliki and working with the other – the leaders from the rest of the coalition are going to have to figure out and address what kind of relationship they want with the United States. All of them, at one time or another, have been very positive in that regard, save Sadr, and so I think, you know, the prime minister is working that very hard right now. And having been through this, I know how hard this is, and it's going to be – it was hard last time; it's going to be hard this time.

And then I – you know, there's all kinds of numbers out there. Everybody wants numbers, deadlines, times. I'm not going to say anything about that. (Laughter.)

Yeah.

[00:58:56]

Q: My name is Ahmed Fahd Lamy (ph). I am from Voice of America, Afghanistan service, Ashna TV (ph).

Well, despite criticism from Afghan government and international groups, controversial night raids are still going on in Afghanistan, and actually it's – it has been increased. So are these raids so important that makes NATO to ignore this criticism?

ADM. MULLEN: I think this is something that President Karzai – we've engaged with President Karzai over the last couple of years. We certainly have recognized his concern with respect to that.

They are – they have been, on the military side, enormously effective: the absolute minimum number of civilian casualties – fully 90 percent or so get executed without a shot being fired.

We are certainly sensitive to the Afghan civilian population in that regard. We do get feedback from an awful lot of civilian leaders that they are in support of these raids because we're getting the right people. So we know where – we know this is an issue we have to continue to work on. We are continuing to work. If you follow the recent negotiations for the strategic partnership declaration, obviously this issue is still one that's out there that we have to continue to work on.

I think – I think we can get to a solution that protects the Afghan people, gets the right individuals and recognizes certainly the strategic impact that President Karzai is so concerned about.

We have time for one more question.

[01:00:50]

Q: Thank you. I'm Anne Penketh from the British-American Security Information Council, BASIC. So when you look at the big picture and strategically and, as you are soon leaving office, what are your personal views about possibly eliminating one leg of the nuclear triad, when you look at all the threats that are out there, things like cyber warfare?

ADM. MULLEN: Eliminating – my personal views?

Q: Yeah.

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ADM. MULLEN: Fortunate – fortunately this is not – this isn't a congressional hearing.

I've spent a lot of time on this – in the engagement of the New START. I think the vector is correct – I think the vector is right with respect to nuclear weapons. Clearly the triad is one that has – it's been tried and true for a long time.

I talk about two existential threats to the United States right now. One is obviously the nuclear weapons that exist in Russia. We think that we've got that, you know, well controlled inside the treaty and inside the relationship. So the likelihood of that is, you know – is virtually nil.

[01:01:58]

And the other one is cyber, and I think cyber actually can bring us to our knees. And at some point in time, and maybe it's because I'm tied to my background, that because cyber's a place that has – there are no boundaries, no rules. There are governments, nongovernments, hackers; you pick it. But, at some point in time, we may need some kind of structure not unlike nuclear weapons because the danger is so significant in terms of having agreed to both doctrine, regulations, et cetera. We're a long way from that right now.

So I think, I mean, clearly President Obama has sent a message to continue to reduce these – the nuclear weapons. We are doing that in the – through the New START. Like all things, I think – I think we just need to be careful about this.

At some point in time, that triad becomes very, very expensive, you know, obviously, the smaller your nuclear arsenal is. And it's – so at some point in time, in the future, certainly I think a decision will have to be made in terms of whether we keep the triad or drop it down to a dyad. I didn't see us near that in this recent – over the last couple of years, with respect to the New START. But I spent enough time to know, at some point, that is going to be the case.

MS. MATHEWS: Admiral, before you – before we let you go, can you give us –

ADM. MULLEN: Is this a question?

MS. MATHEWS: This is. (Laughter.)

ADM. MULLEN: I already took the last one.

[01:03:32]

MS. MATHEWS: I know it's a basic rule: Never take the last question. But I hope it's – what's your assessment as you leave it, about the health of the chiefs as an institution and your – what's the most important thing you've learned in this job, and what piece of advice, if any, might you give to successors?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, I feel – I feel more than just strongly about retaining both the independence and the – of this advice to the secretary and to the president as well as keeping the military completely apolitical. And in a political town, that's a real challenge.

And – but for the institution and – for the institution – for the military, but also quite frankly for the presidency and for the country, it's absolutely vital that we – that we retain that. And then, given that advice, the president makes a

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decision and we march off. We don't question it. So I – and probably more than anything else in this job, because that's what I do virtually every day – and from my perspective, even as a chief, I had – and I was a chief – I was a member of the Joint Chiefs for a couple years before I took over as chairman, and I've worked hard to include the chiefs in the – you know, in the discussions, even when decisions are being made very, very rapidly – and to have the presidents engage with the chiefs, to get their views as well, and I think that's important.

[01:05:10]

I think the chiefs, as an institution, are exceptionally strong. I mean, I've watched them inside two administrations right now. They're not shy about their views, and I think that needs to be – that needs to be continued. And these are very difficult jobs and very difficult times. When people ask me, you know, what do you depend on? One of the things I depend on – in addition to, you know, the woman I've married for over 41 years, who has been an incredible partner – has been the military colleagues of mine who are exceptional. I have had the great privilege of leading young men and women who are the best I've ever seen, but doing that with a group of four-stars that are exceptionally strong. So I think we're in pretty good shape.

[01:06:05]

MS. MATHEWS: Thank you.

ADM. MULLEN: Thanks. Thank you.

MS. MATHEWS: Please join me in thanking the (admiral ?). (Applause.)

MR. : Thank you.

(END)