

Admiral Mike Mullen

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As Delivered by Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center, Detroit, Mich. Thursday, August 26, 2010. His remarks are included below:

ADM. MICHAEL MULLEN: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Ford, for that wonderful introduction, some of which is actually true. (Laughter.) And to Bev and to Barb and to Sandy and so many others who've made today possible, I want to express my appreciation for inviting me to be with you today. And there are a lot of things that I can cover but I am going to try to focus at least my comments on the last issue that Bill brought up.

It really it is a – it is heartening to be able to come here and to see so many who are in support of our men and women who serve. Actually, before I really get going, what I'd like to do is just have those who are currently serving stand up. Anybody that's here. (Applause.)

And moms, dads, aunts, uncles of those who have members serving, would you please – (applause). And I would be remiss if I didn't thank you, personally, for raising young men and women who would come to do this – serve our country in these extraordinary times. Very for me to say that, since I've been in – came in 1968: This is the finest military I've been associated with.

And I'm also fond of reminding everybody that typically in any military unit – Army, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard or Marine Corps – the average age in that unit is about 20 years old. And it's always been that way. It is that way today. And they are extraordinary young men and women, as are their families, without whom we would not be able to achieve what we are tasked to do and succeed where we have succeeded, particularly, in these wars. So I am grateful to parents that somehow get their kids to a point where they'll raise their right hand and do what they do.

And then lastly I'd just like any veterans who are here to stand up as well. (Applause.) And to say thank you because actually, for you, we are fortunate in so many ways to be able to stand on your shoulders and the foundation that you built in this country.

I'll make a few brief remarks and then open it up to questions. First of all, to just reemphasize the gratitude for the service of almost 2.2 million men and women who served. This is all five services. This is the active side, the Guard side, the Reserve side.

And, in particular, I just want to emphasize in that gratitude for – I want to emphasize the Guard and Reserve side. We are dramatically different in so many ways in the military than we were when these conflicts broke out. And we are indebted to the change that has happened particularly in our Guard and Reserve.

And that includes those who employ members of the Guard and Reserve and see them go away for 12, 15, 18 months at a crack and welcome them back, sustaining their jobs at that time, supporting their families when they are deployed overseas in these wars. And just a complete transformation in the Guard and Reserve force.

And if I were a senior officer in the Guard and Reserve, I would tell you that the vast majority of those who are members of the Guard and Reserve right now signed up after 9/11 with sort of malice of forethought: that we know these wars are going on and we want to participate. And they have, and they've been magnificent. So I feel very fortunate to be able to wear the uniform and be with all of those who serve in this extraordinary military that we have.

That said, they're less than 1 percent of the population. They come from, increasingly, the same parts of the country. And one of my concerns as a senior military officer is that we stay attached to our people, the American people. I just believe that – and it is part of my upbringing – that the military is so important and needs to be – is and needs to be representative of the American people. And to the degree we are, we are stronger. And to the degree that we aren't, over the long term, it's something that I would really worry about. So part of why I'm here is to reemphasize that connection and the importance of that connection.

Secondly, we live, in so many ways, in an extraordinary time of change. And I don't have to tell anybody here about the challenges of change, the opportunities of change. And there's no part of the country that has gone through a more difficult challenge than Detroit, specifically in this area, and all of us are aware of that.

And I'm actually heartened as an American citizen by the glimpses of light that are out there, after the very, very difficult decisions that had to be taken as we dealt with this fiscal crisis that we're in. And at a very high level.

I started out a long time ago when my first appointment was to Vietnam and I met people in places I hardly knew existed. But I have traveled the world widely over the last 40 years. And there's sort of one underpinning principle that I've seen in virtually every country in the world. And that is parents would like to raise their children to a higher standard of living and they'd like to do it in a peaceful environment. And what underpins that, from my

perspective, is an economic underpinning which allows growth which creates jobs and opportunity. That's not just to true here; that's a universal principle that parents have transmitted to me over the last four decades.

So I try, in my own way, to pay attention to what goes on in the economies around the world because they portend security problems. And that is evidenced in more places than I'd like to list right now. So many things continue to change and we have changed as a military.

And back to these extraordinary people, and we've lost over 5,500 of them in these wars. And we've had tens of thousands of them physically wounded and hundreds of thousands we're not really sure, quite frankly, that are exhibiting the symptoms or will have post traumatic stress and mental challenges, mental health challenges that all of us, all of us, I think, are going – we need to deal with.

And we have a system, and this is just the system that we've built up over the last many decades, where we've got the Pentagon and its silo, we've got the VA and its silo, and we've got communities throughout the country, and the silos that are those communities. And we pass these very precious individuals that I just said are the best I've ever seen from one silo to another. And we sort of say, do the best you can in that silo and then have a nice life.

That's not acceptable from my perspective. What I am anxious to try to achieve, or at least start to have a conversation about is, how do I connect those three entities in a way – and every entity cares. I know that. And as I travel the country – and this is really why I'm here – I find in so many places, actually everywhere I go, an extraordinary number of people who want to help.

Much different from Vietnam. I don't have to tell many of you this; that the men and women in our uniform are incredibly well-supported by the American people. And that was not the case in the late '60s, certainly, when I was first commissioned. And there is a desire to support them in many ways.

The problem is that we don't know enough communities and I don't know – we don't know the VA; we don't know each other that well. So how do I take advantage of this sea of goodwill which is out there across the country and connect that with these young people who sacrifice so much? And these are families of the fallen, and there are thousands of them; these are those who've been wounded. And those invisible wounds that will affect these individuals for some time to come as they transition back into communities throughout the country.

And I can speak to a model for that, a notional model, but each community is going to be different. And customizing that, if you will, is really going to be up to local communities throughout the country. So where we're disconnected, what I'm anxious to do is to do as much as I can to ensure that we are connected across those three entities.

And leadership, I know, wants to do this and do it in a way that looks at these young people who've done exactly what we've asked them to do as an American people. Many of them lost their lives, many of them whose lives have changed forever, but whose dreams have not changed one wit. They still have the American dream. They would like to have a family, they'd like an education. Typically now, it's two incomes. And they would like to own a piece of the rock. And so what is the path to do that?

And they are exceptional, as I have indicated, with life experiences, with skills, with values that will serve America for the next five or six decades exceptionally well. And what it's going to take is some investment on the front side of this to take advantage of that; some mentoring in transition some – you know, transition assistance, if you will, as they transition to a new part of their life.

And in the end – and Bill talked about the priorities for me – the second priority has been to reset and to focus on the health of our force. And in the end, they become the best recruiters for the United States military because they tell those stories and their parents tell those stories. And other young people look at that and say, this is something I want to go to do.

So in that regard very – it is something I am very much both concerned about and responsible for. How to do that? Because again, we have these entities that don't talk to each other very well. And I would believe – I mean, I – it's easy for me to state. In the Pentagon, we can be a pretty tough outfit to penetrate.

And I've met with business leaders who have reinforced that – it doesn't take much – with me about how do we get to the Pentagon, how do we make this happen? And what I need is your assistance in what you can do and in my ability to tell you, okay, here's where I think you can do that here.

And I was talking to Mr. Ford earlier today about what Ford has done specifically to hire veterans. I've met with small-business leaders. Veterans who run small businesses, they don't know how to get ahold of us. And they're veterans and they know the value and they would hire.

And I recognize that jobs are issue-one right now in the country. And rightfully so. But this isn't just about next week or next month. This economy is going to turn at some point in time. I have great confidence in that. And when it does, I would like to be positioned for the opportunities that are there both for communities throughout the country as well as the individuals.

We're also at a time – and again, I talk about change, here. We're at a time where the GI Bill has never been more – it is more robust now than it's been since World War II. And so that tens of thousands of veterans are going to come – are going to leave the military and

they're going to go to school. And we'll see some of that at Wayne State this afternoon. I've seen it in universities that I have visited in parts of the country.

And because of that, there is great opportunity as well. And also because just like here, the universities are incredibly well-connected to the communities. And so they know all the community leadership. So it is in sort of that model that I focus – or, on that model that I focus in terms of opportunities that are there: how to connect this sea of goodwill to the needs and the futures of those who've sacrificed so much.

One of the things I'm trying to change is how we focus on those who've given so much because our system focuses on disability. And the disability is associated with compensation. And we've got to have money. You need an income flow. I understand that.

But my focus isn't on disability. My focus is on ability. My focus isn't on whether or not these – or, that these individuals may be a burden. They are an opportunity. And given an opportunity, they will – and I'm not asking for anything more than that – they will take it from there and, I think, provide an extraordinary leadership and professional competence far into the future.

And the other sensitivity I talked about, Vietnam. For me, the other sensitivity I have, tied to Vietnam, is the homeless population that we generated of my generation in the hundreds of thousands after those wars. It took about 10 years before they really started – or, we, my peers, really started showing up in droves.

There are those in the homeless world right now who tell me that we are generating them at four times the clip and four times the rate, right now, out of these wars. And we should not, from my perspective, as a country accept that we're going to do that again.

And I've met with them, not – a couple years ago, I sat down with about 25 homeless vets from OEF and OIF who are all of 26 or 27 years old. And those were the ones that actually came out of a deep dive. Tragically, there are those that don't make it.

And inside the homeless world, on the population – the female population of homeless vets is gone up dramatically. And it is occurring at about 10 times the rate that it is for the male side. And they have the children.

So all of this, this is, in ways, the totality of both the opportunity and the challenge at a time of change. And more than anything else, it's an incredible group of people that are in this kind of change, reaching all the way into those that are serving right now in active duty as well as those that will transition.

And then lastly, I'd just like to talk briefly about leadership. We've spent some time during lunch talking about this. There's nothing that will solve tough problems better than

good leadership. And so what I'm trying to inspire here, or connect to here, is local leadership who will take this on. This will not happen because of good words. It will only happen through leadership that can start to try to make these connections.

And I don't have a nice clean model. I can talk about some of the aspects of it. It's education, it's employment, it's health. That's sort of a triangle of excellence that I use to focus this initiative. But it's going to take someone locally to connect the dots to try to make this happen, to reinforce where the gaps are and how we might close those gaps between where I live and where you live.

And I know that it's here. I mean, it's here in the room. I can feel it, in the meetings that I've had just this morning, how much you care about those who serve and those that make a difference. And they make, quite frankly – I mean, I know you know this. I'm preaching to the choir. They make what we do as a country possible.

So with that, I will be happy to take your questions. Grateful for your support, grateful for their service. We continue to change and change creates wonderful challenges and wonderful opportunities. And we have changed dramatically.

One other way I'd like to talk about us changing is that this is now, for our military men and women, as much about their families as it is about them. Our readiness right now in the military is directly tied – for our missions, is directly tied to our family readiness in ways that did not exist prior to 9/11.

Always been critical but I will tell you, with the repeated deployments, a young 10-year-old boy or girl in 2001 when 9/11 occurred just saw his father or mother – mostly father – leave for their fifth year – their fifth one-year deployment – since 2003. And that young 10-year-old just went off to college. So those are some of the sacrifices that have occurred. And challenges that, that portends, quite frankly, as we now come down out of Iraq.

We're going to have a little bit more time at home. But for the last four or five years, we basically have been gone a year, back a year. And when I've been back a year, I've actually been gone about half that time to train and get ready to go for the next year.

So they have been extraordinary. We built resilience into them. We built resilience into our forces. But we are stretched and stressed in ways that must focus us as leaders to make sure we get this right.

So again, thanks for your leadership and spending time this afternoon. And I'm happy to take your questions. (Applause.)

Q: Admiral, welcome to Michigan and Detroit. As a proud parent of a soldier, I very much appreciate your comments and concerns about the folks in the military. And I wanted to

follow up on one of your last comments.

I've read with great interest Gen. Casey's comments that he's trying to bring down the length of the deployments to 18 months and eventually down to 12. And I was just wondering if you could comment on where we are in that process of bringing these deployments to a reasonable length.

ADM. MULLEN: And I appreciate the question, and also, as I said earlier, your parenting someone who made a decision to serve.

Right now, we are in 12-month deployments in the Army with the major units. And typically, our big units, brigades, which are about 4,000 people total – three (3,000) to four (4,000) depending on what kind of brigade we're talking about – they have been on 12-month deployments.

The most recent deployment they've made typically has been 12 months. The one before that was 15 months. And for many of our units, the two before that were 15 months. They never got any longer than 15 months. That doesn't mean some people haven't deployed longer than that.

And what Gen. Casey is talking about is, it's his view we need to get to nine months. And there is this balance between what it takes to deploy a unit, come up to speed on the mission and then be effective, obviously, on the ground when you're deployed. So right now, actually, it is 12. What Gen. Casey is speaking to is we could possibly get to a point in about two years where deployments would come down to nine months.

Now, one of the – and this goes back to Vietnam – one of the things that is different now from Vietnam – and it took us awhile to figure this out – is it's not just everybody take your turn. I don't have to spend a lot of time talking about Afghanistan. I don't have a lot – I have a sense of urgency about time in Afghanistan, whatever it turns out to be. I can't afford to take a unit that's never been to Afghanistan of this size, own battlespace for a year, and take it six months of its time there to figure out its mission.

So there's a very delicate and careful balance here about both experience levels as well as time away, along with all these other challenges. As we come out of Iraq – and great focus last week on this last combat unit out of Iraq – we shouldn't forget we still have 50,000 troops there. But it wasn't that long ago we had 170,000. And we are roughly at about 100,000 – a little under that – in Afghanistan. And I expect those numbers – certainly, with those numbers, we can start to extend the time at home.

The key has been less the length of the deployments than it has been the time at home to recharge. And what we see happening in the next couple of years is to get to a point – actually, by the end of next year, 70 percent of the Army units will be home for two years after

a one-year deployment. And about a year later, it'll be 100 percent, based on what we know right now.

Q: Hello, Admiral. First of all, I think I speak for everyone here in thanking you and your staff for their service to the nation. And we appreciate that.

Maybe a little lighter question, it's said that you're the first chief of the Joint chiefs to have a Twitter account. So what are the troops telling you on that Twitter, and what would you like to share as that value as a leadership tool?

ADM. MULLEN: Actually, from the leadership standpoint, it's not something – I try not to do it just because it's en vogue. I have spent my life in the military trying to figure out what was going on. In the Navy, we call it "on the deck plates." In the Army, we call it "going on in the field." You know, where they live.

And in particular, in combat, I want to understand as much when I'm asking a young man or young woman to go potentially sacrifice their life, I want to understand as much about that as I possibly can.

Now, I could have some fun telling you, you know, when I go into Iraq or Afghanistan about how close they let me get to actually that. Because they're – no one wants to be – no one wants to have the watch when the chairman gets in trouble on the ground in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The whole idea is how – and communications is more and more important. I don't have to tell you that. And I want to both set an example with respect to that and also try to be in touch. And I've got two sons who are now a couple – they're in their late 20s, early 30s, and they're a couple generations out of communication touch with what's really going on with our teenagers.

I was struck the other day – if you haven't seen it – with this Beloit story that came out about the college freshmen that are just showing up right now who were born in 1992 and what they know and what they believe and what they don't know. One of them was, you know, Clint Eastwood is only someone that is a producer. Well, pretty much everybody before that knew him as Dirty Harry. They have no concept for that, as an example. They don't know anything other than wireless communications. I can talk about it. It's not interesting to them.

All of that is one of the reasons I focus – and my wife is actually much more active in these accounts than I am. We try to use it as a bellwether.

So the Department of Defense, three or four months ago, ran out of money in a program for spouse education. How I found out about that? My wife sends me a text saying, do you have any idea what's going on? Because her Twitter account was getting hammered by

spouses that said – which was also a pretty good indication it was a good program. You know, some programs we have are not good. You take it away, nothing happens. In this case – and spouse education is a big deal. So we are able to use it, and it's tied to, you know, flatter and faster and being able to adapt in a changing world.

And this is more – less on Twitter, but when I make the rounds, I hand out my cards. And I'll leave them here today. But I get a lot of young soldiers and sailors and airmen and Marines that e-mail me. And I tell them, I will read your e-mail – I actually read my own e-mail and I answer my own e-mail. And it gives me a feel for what's going on in their lives. And I try to use that whole social media aspect to understand that. And in the end, if the average age is 20 years old, I've got to be communicating with them. And I've got to be connecting with them.

And if you sat down with a millennial and what they're talking about – I mean, one of the things the other day – just for example, these college freshmen don't know what cursive is. Period. And actually, at some point in their life – and I've got two sons that went through this, quite frankly. In some point in their life, being able to write is going to be important, even in the world we're living today. So it is really that reason that I focus on both Twitter and Facebook and to try to tell the story and to try to connect.

I was taken back – I spent a – I'm trying to understand the technology and how it impacts, quite frankly, the war fight that I'm in right now. And there is huge potential there in terms of, I think, opportunities and challenges, specifically. Not just in communicating with my people but what's happened in these wars is the ability to move information that becomes knowledge into operations – to generate more of it. To generate more intelligence, to generate more operations.

And the time gap between what I call the speed of war – the enemy is a pretty tough enemy. Pretty adaptive enemy. And what the technology has allowed me to do is match that speed of war, where, in 2003 or 2004, I wasn't even close, for example. I need to get ahead of them in that regard. I am in some ways.

So in many ways, it's focused – I've focused on this for lots of reasons. Principally, it's trying to understand their lives because I make decisions all the time that affect them. And I remember being a junior officer, wondering if anybody had a clue that was making a decision in headquarters, or made a decision in headquarter on what they were doing because I thought they were on occasion pretty dumb decisions. It was a long time ago but I remember it. And I make major league – major decisions that affect their lives and their families. Yeah?

Q: Sir, my colleagues and I here at table 24 from the Osh Kosh Corporation in Osh Kosh, Wisconsin, we're proud to serve both with the products that we provide the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force, and with support to the Guard and Reserve. And we're very proud of that service to you. And thank you for what you do.

Obviously, a strong defense industry is important to all of us. Would you comment on how to maintain the viability of our defense industry in the face of strong budgetary and economic times? And finally, sir: “Go Army, Beat Navy!” (Laughter.)

ADM. MULLEN: What was your first question? (Laughter.) That hasn’t happened in awhile, by the way. (Laughter, applause.)

I do actually want to first of all say thanks to you and to so many others – other companies and corporations. I have – not so much in this job. But I was raised as a senior officer in the Navy in budget and programming. And so I’ve had a lot of engagement over the course of my professional life with companies that produce capabilities – equipment that we need.

And when I can – and I’ve done this, again, more in the past than recently, although I have done some of it recently. I always try to visit the factory floor for the same reason that I was talking about earlier. And what I have found, if I walked into Osh Kosh, and I know this because actually – and I’ve talked to SECDEF about this because I know he was up and visited you.

But what I have found universally is a group of people who care every bit as much about our country, every bit as patriotic and want to make a difference where they live as those who wear the uniform and are actually in harm’s way. So I am grateful, and I would hope you would take that message back to your people because it is something that I know is there. And can’t say enough about how much we appreciate what you and those who work in the industry do.

Secondly, today’s theme – and I’ll come to the industrial-based part of this – but today’s theme: I need you to hire vets. And I’ve got that now in numbers. Meaning, small numbers – tens, kinds of – and I’m not picking on Osh Kosh here, although if the shoe fits, please put it on. (Laughter.)

Because I honestly don’t know. There are companies that hire a lot of veterans. And Mr. Ford and I talked about that earlier today. And Ford is one. But we’re not easy to know and we’re not easy to hire from. And certainly from the small-business perspective, it’s going to be – at least, now, it’s going to be in small numbers.

But I need the defense industry in particular, and this is – my budget in the procurement world is over \$100 billion. I need to be able to leverage that as much as possible with an expectation that those who do that really reach out and scale this issue for me. Not in the tens. I need it in the hundreds and the thousands from those who – and that’s part of my message here specifically.

And then thirdly, we’re going through – and I’ve said publicly. I’ll restate it now. I think

the single-biggest threat to our national security is our debt. We are going to pay interest on the debt – I think it's in 2012 – of close to \$600 billion. That's one year's worth of Defense budget.

It's one of the reasons you see Secretary Gates' initiative now, in order – the way he and I see this is in order for us to sustain ourselves, given what's on our plate, we need about two to 3 percent growth when not much is growing. So you see the initiative he has undertaken now to move overhead into the pointy end, if you will, to go from tail to tooth, to sustain that. Largely, procurement growth, force-structure-size modernization. That's a huge challenge for us.

We're not a business. Parts of us do this really well; parts of us have never had to. Plus, we have been – our budget has doubled over the last 10 years since 2000. And when you have – when you are in that kind of a vector, you lose some of your skills. You don't have to make tough decisions, you don't prioritize as well as you should, your analysis goes away, you don't have to make the trades. So a lot of those skills have to be sharpened for us right now.

I think it's imminently doable for us to do this, but I am concerned about the base sort of across the board. And in the end, this is going to be as much about jobs as it is anything else. And I understand that. That said, I think we are a considerable percentage of the discretionary spending in the government. So I think we have to gird ourselves for some pretty significant challenges given that. Given the national security challenges that we have, as well as the responsibility to steward every dollar that we have.

So I'm anxious to, certainly, continue to have an industrial base that will provide; to cut the fat from it where it exists – and we're going to have to do that if it's going to survive at all, and do it in a way that is predictable, as best we can, and not have this bow wave of debt run over us in a way where our budget must be cut dramatically just to facilitate that. We get to that point, then I think we really are going to be in trouble.

So it's responsibility on both sides of this: from industry leaders to tell me what they can do, the best way to do this, as well as for us, Secretary Gates and myself and others, to make good decisions as we move forward in this fiscal climate that we're in, and I think we're going to be in, certainly, for awhile if the debt figures that I look at there to the right are anywhere close. Yeah?

Q: Admiral, thank you for coming to Detroit to speak with us. And I know everyone joins me in wishing you continued wisdom and strength in making the decisions that impact the challenges – strategic and security – that our country faces. And I'd like to ask you about one of them, Iran.

This administration, to its credit, has embarked upon a very sophisticated sanctions –

ADM. MULLEN: And tell us who you are?

Q: I'm David Victor, is my name, sir.

ADM. MULLEN: For?

Q: As I introduced myself to you earlier, I'm chairman of the board of AIPAC.

ADM. MULLEN: Right.

Q: This administration has embarked upon a very sophisticated sanctions strategy which has demonstrated bite but has not yet changed decision-making in the regime. Should it be determined that it will not change the regime's decision-making? Can you tell us the nature of our country's commitment to stop Iran's acquisition of nuclear capability?

ADM. MULLEN: Well, I think the president has been pretty clear about that, that their acquisition of that capability – that his position is that having that capability is unacceptable. And from my perspective, and we talked briefly, I've spent – I'm very close to my counterpart in Israel, specifically.

When those priorities were read earlier, my number-one priority since I – actually, before I got into this job, in this job, has been stability in the broader Middle East. Certainly, that goes from Tehran to Beirut, expanded well into South Asia, and to some degree that we need to pay attention to, Central Asia, an area about which a lot of us didn't grow up learning a great deal about. But I view it as one that is more and more important in terms of potential both stability and instability.

Iran is a particularly difficult issue for – and I've said, and would repeat, I think their achieving a nuclear weapon capability is unacceptable and incredibly destabilizing. I also think that striking Iran would do the same thing. And what I worry about as much either of those things are the unintended consequences of doing that, which smart people can sit down and say this is what we'll think they'll be. Sometimes we get some of that right – we never get it all – in what is a remarkably unstable part of the world as we speak.

And if I were just to speak to the oil prices for an example. A commodity that obviously we are still very closely tied to, and will be for the foreseeable future, as an example. And back to my point earlier about what underpins all this is some stability and some economic stability so economies can grow.

So these are very – it's a very difficult issue. You said sophisticated and I would agree with that. And we're dealing with a country without which we've had any relationship, any discussions since 1979.

And we're tied to our own experiences, but even at the height of the Cold War, with the potential that was there, which was obviously catastrophic – it was existential – we always had contacts. We were always in communications with the Soviets. That is not the case with Iran.

So when you're not talking at all, you don't know each other very well. And you may think you know enough to make a decision one way or another and understand the consequences, but I worry about miscalculation here. I worry about a small incident rolling itself up into something that could get out of hand.

And it's a regime that is a state-sponsor of terrorism. It is an existential threat. This capability in hand – nuclear capability – is an existential threat to Israel. I understand that. And we are very close to Israel; have worked that very hard. And enormous challenges.

And I've visited frequently, so I have some understanding. I'm not Israeli and I don't live there and I could never, try as I might, put myself in other people's shoes, but I do have a pretty clear understanding of the requirements there and the challenges. And we're working hard to make sure that either one of those outcomes doesn't occur because I think they both are bad for all of us. We are at out of time?

MS. : One more.

ADM. MULLEN: I'll take five more questions just to see if they have a really – (laughter). Pull me off the stage here. Okay, one more.

Q: Yes, as a Vietnam vet, I'm driven to help my fellow veterans. And as a hospital administrator, I'm well-versed in living and operating within bureaucracies. Your silos are impenetrable. So if we could, if we want to work together, if we could have one office, one phone number, one human that we could talk to, that maybe it might give us a chance to start working together.

ADM. MULLEN: Well, I'd give you my office but that'd probably discourage you. (Laughter.) Actually, it's a great question. And I think you have to know you have a problem before you can start to solve it, and that's certainly one of them.

I have with me here today an Army colonel, post brigade commander from Iraq, who himself, as well as his people – he lost a lot of people in Iraq – named Dave Sutherland. So it is – I can give you – (applause). I can give you my number, and I'm happy to do that, and my e-mail address. But he is really the key guy.

Now, just to allay any – some – concerns, he is a direct report to me. So there's nothing between him and me. That can make his life pretty difficult because he's only a colonel. (Laughter.) And in the world of generals and admirals, sometimes we can make it tough. But he's a direct report to me on all of these issues, from wounded to health care to spouse

employment to day care to education. And in fact, he is the – he's my point man for this whole vision, specifically. And he will be back here in October to look at the possibilities very specifically about how we might put this together, including the whole health-care issue.

Because again, this is – we are generating some huge health issues inside a system that is the gold standard in the country. And when I say gold, I actually do mean gold in terms of how it's executing but also its cost. I spend \$16 billion in 2000, \$19 billion a few years later – 2005, I think. I think I'm at \$51 billion next year and I'm going to 64 (billion dollars) over the next four or five years. Not sustainable. Not sustainable. We know that.

And then the other information piece I'd give you is we have put a portal in place. Not a website – a portal in place that is a clearinghouse called www.warriorgateway.org. It's a pilot. Business Executives for National Security took a year-and-a-half to put this together. And what it is, is a clearinghouse to match need to donor, very specifically. It's done by zip code; piloted this year in five states: Texas, North Carolina, Pennsylvania – he keeps saying Virginia; it's not Virginia – Florida and California.

And what we hope to do is roll that out nationally towards the end of the year, beginning of next year. That essentially, by zip code, a vet – somebody can punch in – doesn't have to be a vet; could be somebody that is active duty – can punch in by zip code and look at all the organizations and help that is potentially out there.

And it's actually a self-policing portal. Over time, if you're not graded very highly, there's not going to be many people that will be using you on the portal itself. So again, thanks, thanks for your time. Thanks for the leadership that you're providing in the community here. And we look forward to staying connected with you. Thank you.