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# Mullen Says Military Must Adopt Wartime Attitude

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 28, 2008 – In a broad-ranging all-hands meeting with Joint Staff members here today, Navy Adm. Mike Mullen discussed the stand-up of U.S. Africa Command, the challenges of leadership in a changing world, and the increased speed of war.

Military officials need to adopt a wartime attitude, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Mullen said he believes that, more than six years into the war on terror, people still follow a peacetime frame of mind. “There are things that we’re still doing that’s under peacetime rules,” he said. “We’re in a couple of wars, and too often we get caught up in what I call peacetime responses or adapting peacetime rules, policies, regulations to what we need to do in responding very rapidly.”

Changing that attitude is important because the nation must respond quickly to an adaptive and creative enemy. “We have a responsibility to lead, and being as lean and fast and focused and as precise (as we can be) to answer some of the mail that we have to answer routinely is really important,” he said. “We need to adapt to what the future is going to be, and we need to develop policies and procedures and structures” to meet it.”

The admiral said no one can predict what will happen in the world. Just in the past two months there has been crisis after crisis, he said, citing the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, elections in Pakistan, election troubles in Kenya, and war in Chad as just a few recent worldwide events of significance. The military needs to be ready for any eventuality, he said.

Changes in the world have convinced the chairman that U.S. conventional forces are going to have to take on some of the attributes of special operations forces. Conventional forces are going to have to be more culturally aware; they are going to have to build relationships with other peoples and make quick decisions under constant and extreme pressure, he said.

The only constant will be change, Mullen said. Military recruiting, education, training, promotions and retention will all change to meet the new realities of the 21st century, he said.

All of this is driven by the increase in the speed of war. "We are up against a quick and adaptive enemy," the chairman said. "We're not going to win until we get ahead of the enemy, and that takes some creative thinking. We've made a lot of progress, but we've got a long way to go.

"We need to be adaptable, flexible, lethal and do it in a way that gets well inside the enemy's decision loop," he said. Mullen said the military has done that in some areas, such as against al Qaeda in Iraq; it has not done that in others.

He told the Joint Staff members that the absolute top priority for U.S. national security is preventing the nexus of terrorism and nuclear weapons.

The chairman also talked about how a concentration on events in the Central Command area has increased risks elsewhere. Troops that would ordinarily be involved in building relationships in other parts of the world -- such as U.S. Pacific and Southern commands -- are serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. For the short-term, this can continue, the chairman said. But, if allowed to go on for any length of time, it could become dangerous, he added.

The chairman also talked about political change in the United States. He told the Joint Staff members that they "need to continue to be the solid foundation, totally apolitical in our view, totally supportive of the president of the United States -- whoever he or she might be in the future."

"As is the case right now, we take our orders and march on," he said, adding that civilian control of the military is his bedrock principle.

No matter who becomes president on Jan. 20, 2009, the change in administrations will be a significant challenge for the military.

Changing the subject, a Joint Staffer asked the chairman for a status report on U.S. Africa Command, the new combatant command that reached initial operational capability Oct. 1. "What is unique about AFRICOM is its structure and goals," Mullen said. "It is not a normal combatant command."

The command's deputy is a Foreign Service officer. The driving force behind the command is not fighting wars, but "developing relationships, providing support, being engaged and doing that where we are invited," Mullen said.

The admiral said he realizes there are great sensitivities against U.S. involvement on the continent, but that the command is “not about footprint and headquarters and lots of troops on the ground” in any country in Africa. It is about economic, political, humanitarian and medical engagement to help the continent handle the scourges of famine, AIDS, war and extremism.

Overall, Mullen said, the war on terror “will be won by the strength of these long-term relationships.”

“This is full-spectrum engagement: It’s training; it’s education; it’s assistance; it’s listening to what the needs are rather than imposing solutions. That’s why security is just a part of this.”