

REMARKS BY
ADM. MIKE MULLEN
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
AT THE
DoD ACTIVATION CEREMONY OF UNITED STATES AFRICA
COMMAND
PENTAGON CONFERENCE CENTER
OCTOBER 1, 2008

ADM. MULLEN: Secretary Gates, Administrator Fore, ambassadors, other distinguished guests, welcome. And it is indeed an exciting day here as we stand up an incredibly important command.

To Kip Ward, the Ward family, who's worked so hard to lead this great new organization over the last year and a half, we are excited to have you here and excited for you as this command stands up in full bloom of a vision that was put in place not that long ago. And we are grateful for your presence and for your leadership.

I had the opportunity a few months ago to visit the Africa Command headquarters and visit with those who've worked so hard to put this -- to make this vision real.

And it is unique in the sense that while there is certainly a uniform combatant commander, and a very important one, and we couldn't pick a better individual to do that, it is the combination of that plus two deputies and a structure in the command that is different from what we've done in the past and, I believe, leads in a way that will allow us to engage a part of the world that is critical to the world and indeed critical to the United States of America.

And I'm excited about what the future holds with respect to the specifics of that engagement. Clearly, the challenges abound when you look at the vastness of the continent, the variety in the continent, the peoples who live there, the resources that are there, and, I think, an emerging continent of great importance to all of us.

And where there are challenges there are boundless opportunities. And I know that it is those opportunities that will both present themselves and that this command will meet -- will meet head-on.

And in my time with the staff, there was an excitement about what the mission was. There was an excitement about making a difference. There was an excitement in the newness of the construct and in the ability to engage in a place that heretofore we have not been able to dedicate

the resources and the people to do so. And it is in that -- it is in that both dedication and focus and engagement that we think will make so much difference in the long run.

That excitement which is in the staff throughout across the entirety of the staff was contagious in terms of what we know will be great success and the many, many challenges.

When we -- when I look at our -- the missions that we have and the opportunities, I am always focused on leadership, and leadership being able to make a difference. And as I indicated earlier, there isn't an individual that I've met who is both better prepared -- has spent just a little bit of time in Europe, in that part of the world -- and more focused and more able to take this command to the next level than General Kip Ward -- a good friend, extraordinary leader, warrior, ambassador, in many ways.

And Kip, to you and your people, we wish you nothing but the best in this great new command and great step forward for us. And for those of us across the entirety of our government, it is -- as I look at these flags, I must admit there -- I haven't been to any ceremonies where we had the flags that -- of our armed service and the Joint Staff, but joined by the flag of USAID. And I think that message is a very important message about not just who we are now but who we'll be in the future, and that together across the interagency and together across -- with the capability of so many good people, we can make such a difference in the future.

So again, it's a real honor to be here, very important day, certainly in our history. And that history is just beginning to be written by some very special people that we are thankful for and dependent on.

So, to Kip, you and your command, we wish you nothing but the best. Congratulations on all the hard work that has gotten us to this day. And we know there's -- there are plenty of great things that will happen in the future. Thank you