

**REMARKS BY
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CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF**

USO SALUTE TO OUR TROOPS GALA,

NEW YORK CITY

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2008

ADMIRAL MICHAEL MULLEN: I appreciate you sitting down. I've got a 60-minute speech and you were taking up part of my time. Thank you, John. Actually it's just a few minutes. And most of all, it's express appreciation for those who made this possible. I spoke to a few of you earlier. And coming to the city, it is always very exceptional. And those of you who live here and work so hard to take care of our young men and women in uniform – and have my entire military life – you're a very special group. It's a very special city.

When I travel throughout the world and I meet young men and women from all our services, usually I'll get in the conversation about where they're from. And when you are from the city, there's only one answer: I'm from New York. Not any other part of New York. It is the city. It is a very special place. So it's great to be back in the city. And certainly this event is representative of everything I've seen the city provides for our men and women throughout my career. And I greatly appreciate that.

To Brian and to Elaine, to John – John who was giving me that single standing ovation there – among other things, as he said, you know, he's Elaine Fox's boss. And if you know Elaine, you know that John will end up in a very special place in heaven when all this is done because that energy that she has that brings so much to the USO and makes such a difference in so many people's lives has to be channeled. And I know John well enough to know that he does that. And it is that combination of people in the USO who make such a difference and have for decades, and certainly very focused on the very special group we have here tonight. And to Brian and, in particular, the USO from New York – and I've been with you before – for you to devote the kind of time and dedication and effort to focus on these 25 very special people and their families, words will not capture how much that means.

To those who are here, to the wounded, you represent 35,000 or so who have been wounded. You also, in ways, represent – in ways you don't know – you represent the families of the fallen and those who have fallen, and the entirety of our efforts to support you. And it's really the inspiration that you bring as I've had the privilege of visiting so many of you in so many hospitals and so many places. I always come away more inspired than when I go in. And it is certainly those who serve and who are wounded. It is as much spiritual healing that the

families provide in order to help move back to a life of normalcy in terms of both recovery and rehabilitation and reintegration.

And so I give equal praise to family members – and we do – my wife and I do – to the family members as well as those who sacrifice so much. You're very special people. You have given more than any of us really know. You've sacrificed. You've done what our country has asked you to do. And you have cared in ways that we can't imagine. We need to make sure we care for you for the rest of your life.

We are so blessed to have you, and I've been doing this a long time. We are so blessed to have you that it is difficulty to describe. The best military we've ever had; the best family support we've ever had; and certainly we live in challenging, challenging times. And we would not be succeeding as we are without your extraordinary service.

So this day or couple of days you're here in New York is a tribute to that service and to all those that you represent who couldn't be here tonight that are so special as well. This is wounded care month; and it's wounded care month, appropriately, in November where very shortly on Tuesday we'll recognize all our veterans as we should. And it is this month that we recognize those who are wounded, the families of the fallen, all of what many people have done to try to move great support ahead. And we've made great progress particularly over the last couple of years. Yet, we have a long way to go.

In my travels, whether it's in the field, overseas, or back here through hospitals, military hospitals or VA hospitals, there are again – there's been great progress. But there also is great progress to be had in the future. And it is the totality of our system in America – the Department of Defense, the VA, and communities throughout the land that must come together to make sure that those who sacrifice so much, those whose lives have changed forever, are still able to achieve the American Dream, for they tell me that is all they seek. They still would like to raise their kids; they'd like their kids to go to schools; they'd like an education; they'd like job opportunities; and they'd like to own a piece of the rock, own their own home. The path to achieve those dreams may have been altered. But the dreams are the same. And for those who have sacrificed so much, we must figure out a way to assist and support and meet those needs over time as they occur.

And I want to assure you that the leadership of our military – and Pete Chiarelli who I know well, General Newton, others who are here, Admiral Jeffries to name a few – are dedicated in every way we can possibly be to achieve that dream and assist in that regard. And we need certainly to do everything that we can in the Department of Defense, in the VA, and reach communities throughout the land to assist and support those who have given so much.

So again, for all of you who have done so much to inspire us in your service, your families, we'll never forget. I promise you we will never, ever forget You are our inspiration and we care for you and we will always care for you. Thank you and God bless.