

**REMARKS BY  
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**NOTRE DAME HIGH SCHOOL  
SHERMAN OAKS, CALIF.**

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ADMIRAL MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, it's a real honor to be here today and actually, I was – when I walked into this gym and one of your classmates asked me if this was the original gym. It is the original gym and I was hoping that they actually wouldn't post what class I graduated in because that starts to give away our age. I walk in here while it was a long time ago and a lot of memories come flooding back pretty quickly. First of all, actually, way back then in '60s, one of the really great units that we had here at Notre Dame was the band and the band is still terrific and I want to thank the band.

I want to thank Brother Nick, Principle Connelly, the faculty, all those who serve. Ronnie Renoe, Bob Kelly, I see other classmates here that I grew up with and I actually sat where you're sitting with them at the same age. And many of them have stayed dedicated as alumni. Their children have come here and graduated and they've given back. And that's a really important message for everyone and one that I hope, someday, when one of you might be standing here, that you be thinking about that as well. As impossible as that may sound, believe me, when I was sitting where you were, I had no idea that this would happen.

The faculty's here and there are supporting staff and friends. What I hope to do in the next half hour or so is really talk to you students. Actually, I'm not going to do very well just standing here. I'd like to move around a bit. And I want to talk – I'll talk about a couple of things and then hopefully – you haven't had lunch yet? Is that correct? So I'm just before food. That can be a challenge but hopefully, a couple of you will ask questions because I learn from you when you ask questions and hopefully I can talk a little bit about – and answer those questions and give you an idea of where we are, where we might be headed, depending on the question.

As I think about Notre Dame and I think about you being where you are and those that – and first and foremost, I would be remised if I didn't tell you I went to St. Charles Grade School right down the street for eight years before I came here. And actually, and I was telling some of the students earlier, that year was the year that Cresby (ph) High School was opening. So that's how long ago it was. And my father one day said to me,

gee, I think wouldn't you like to go to this new high school – Crosby. And I thought because I had wanted to go to Notre Dame for a long time as a young guy and I had to talk my father out of sending me to Crosby to go to Notre Dame and it was one of the best decisions he ever made in his life.

And it's a great school and a great place with an awful lot of dedicated people. And it's a big deal to come here. I was talking to – again, a couple of students – one senior, a couple juniors, and it goes pretty quickly and you are receiving an underpinning to make decisions and you will and almost every one of you will go on to college and that's a great thing. And that'll be a big decision for your future. And when I was here, I was actually influenced an individual who went the year before me to Annapolis.

Now, back in those days, you didn't visit schools that you were going to unless it was SC, UCLA, UCSB, or UCSD. You just didn't go very far. Now, you routinely visit schools across the country. So for because his father, who was a Beverly Hills cop, stayed on me as his son was there – a year ahead of me – you ought to look at Annapolis, you ought to be thinking about that. And because, among other things, and some of my classmates will know this. We had a pretty good time here. And I won't say a lot more than that. I got decent grades, didn't have to study too hard not encouraging that either, but I knew I needed to somewhere to college was important. I knew that, oldest of five kids, there were four more to follow me and my dad basically said, if you want to college and go to a good school, you need to work hard to get a scholarship.

So Annapolis was a free education and I use that term loosely. It seemed free at the time because I certainly didn't plan on staying in the Navy a long time after I graduated. They've gotten more than their investment back after 44 years but making the decision, I needed to go somewhere that would press me on discipline and press me on performance, in great part because a lot of what I learned here about competition, about teamwork, and the academic curriculum back then was – was an outstanding curriculum and individuals who still – in fact, I asked Brother Nick if Brother Robert was still here. And Brother Robert was the principal way back when. But individuals like Brother Robert, Brother Marcelle (ph), Brother Anthony, Brother John, Brother Navard (ph), still are in my mind and the differences they made in my life.

And it underpinned me – that academic underpinning, the social underpinning, the sports and competition. Needless to say, in the business that I'm in, coming in second place is not acceptable and so a winning – an appetite for winning and an understanding. So I got in a plane and went to – flew to Baltimore, Maryland. It was in June, it was 95 degrees, it was 90 percent humidity. I had – I'd been out of the state one time and I said I cannot believe people live in a place like this where it is so hot and so humid. And then my life – and I was 17 at the time and my life took off. I met great people on the first day I was there in Annapolis – great people and it's just never been any different.

For me, in terms of serving and being in the military and I now have the privilege of being around 2.2 million young people who serve their country in the United States and around the world and they are the best military we've ever had. They are, on

average, in any unit, they're 20 years old and they carry a burden. They love the challenge and they are making a difference. Friday in New York, I had an opportunity to speak at a conference called Service Nation. And it was a group that's been working for the last 10 to 20 years to focus on service, and not just – not service in military. In fact, service across a full spectrum, whether it's national, in the United States, local, or whether it's around the world. And there are tremendous activities. And at that conference, I was taken back by the number of young people, the number of 22, 23 year olds who just graduated from college and who were committed serving somewhere, whether it was the Peace Corps, or whether it was in their local neighborhood, or something, or in the military, or volunteering somewhere else – spectacular young group.

It then takes me back to here, where I grew up and what Notre Dame meant to me – the underpinning that I have – had across the board and that which the school still gives, I know. I've actually followed – I was talking to a couple of the football players. When I was here, our arch-rival was Loyola. And Loyola was as dominant in football back then as Notre Dame has been in recent years. And good friends talking about – actually I better – is there a game tonight? And who is going to win? Who? (Cheers.)

And again, all of that, and I see all these championship banners here. And believe me, we didn't have them like you do – like you do here. So hats off to you in that regard.

So depend on – I mean, you are well guided by those who are the faculty here and the counselors here. And in the end, decisions that you make will be made well because you have a strong foundation. And I want you to be confident in that.

The other thing I'd ask you to at least think about is keep your options open. Don't burn any bridges because you never know what life brings you. That which you don't plan on – and believe me, I hadn't planned initially to go to Annapolis. I hadn't planned to stay in the Navy long. I certainly hadn't planned to be in this job a year ago when I got selected for this job. And you need to be ready for lots of change in a time where the world continues to change. Change is the norm. It changes rapidly.

Lots of innovation, lots of competition. And you will grow up in a much more globalized world. You're in touch with a much greater part of the world than I ever was certainly at your age. And that's going to continue. One of the – someone asked me to just make a few comments about what is my routine day or what have I been up to? In fact, my brother-in-law here said, when I said – I said, gee, you know this is going to be a tough audience. He goes, tough audience? Come on, you testified in front of Congress last week. I do that actually fairly routinely.

But in the last week or so, literally a week ago Tuesday, testified in front of Congress. A day after that we had the memorial at the Pentagon for 9/11. And that was a memorial – in fact, I was in the building when that plane flew into the building in 2001. There were 42 members of the Navy that got killed that day. So it was a very emotional reminder of us as a country, of the need to remember and to never forget, and the world

that we're living in and the threat that's out there and that continues out there, and will be out there for a significant period of time.

Not too long after that, I got on an airplane and went to Bulgaria. Spent a day in Bulgaria; went to Turkey for a day and a half. Went to Baghdad and then went to Pakistan. And I was in Pakistan Wednesday and I flew back here Wednesday night. Flew out here yesterday by way of Ft. Bliss, Texas, and talked to 1,000 soldiers and their families and their spouses. My wife, Deborah, and I want to say I could not – and she is a West Lake girl. That is different from being a Harvard West Lake girl – – because back then it was a girl's school. And I could not be here with you today without her tremendous support over these 40-plus years. And our mothers who actually met out here at a reception. We met back in Washington, D.C.

So we talked to soldiers who are under great pressure right now because we're in our sixth year at war. Spent time with them and then came out here to do this among other things. And so it's very special to be back.

But in that time, spent time with the prime minister of Turkey, the prime minister in Iraq, and the prime minister in Pakistan. To give you an idea of at least some of what goes on normally, my daily routine starts – if you think you're getting up early – I get up at a quarter to 4:00 in the morning. And actually I usually go to the gym if I can get there and done by like 5:30 or 6:00, into work a little after 7:00. Probably in the White House four days a week for an hour or two with the National Security Council. Oftentimes, that includes the president. And we're dealing with a host of issues that affect all of us, both here in our country and globally. We usually get home at 7:00 or 8:00 at night. We don't stay up too long and get ready for the next day. Have the great privilege of speaking publicly across this country and really around the world.

I was just down at the LA City Council earlier today, a place that being a Valley guy, I didn't spend a lot of time downtown Los Angeles when I grew up. And back then, we just didn't do that. Very special place – and I'm reminded down there of the number of people who are serving the city and serving our country in various ways and really making a difference in terms of what they're doing and that there are an awful lot of people like them who are making a difference in so many lives. So it's really exciting to come back and really come back home in so many ways.

I traveled about 40 percent of my life. Half of that is in the country and half of that is in exotic places around the world that I couldn't imagine that I'd be traveling to. So it's a busy – constantly, it's a busy day. It's a great pace. It's an invigorating time. And it's a very serious time for lots of reasons because of the wars that we're in, the threat that's out there, and the need to address that not just from the point of view of the United States of America but indeed address it with countries around the world. And that threat and those challenges are going to be out there for the foreseeable future.

So you're in a very special place. I know you know that. You need to think about taking good care of yourself and your friends. They'll be with you a long time, as

indicated here. Although as I come back today, two of my classmates very recently passed away – Jimmy Sader and Flip Smith who also were very dedicated to you as students, to Notre Dame High School over many, many years. And it's a reminder, because we actually think we're pretty young – it's a reminder to live each day and take good care of yourself and take care of those that you really care about. Again, special place, special time. And I want to wish each and every one of you nothing but the best. And you've got a great future ahead of you – great, great future. And I wish every one of you good luck and Godspeed.

Thank you. So I've certainly got time for a few questions.

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: If I were to choose one word that would sum up where I go today, what would it mean? The one that immediately comes to mind is persistence. I have – and I've – while you can look at where I am and say I've certainly gone to a very senior position. But typically, I've learned more when I've failed than when I've succeeded. And I have fallen on my face more than once, been mentored by, led by, cared for by people who saw something that might work and didn't eliminate – you know, didn't take my career off the plate at the time. And what is most important about failure is not that it happens but that you get up off the floor, regroup, and move forward.

So I have persisted through – and I started this out – you know, our time was Vietnam. Those were very challenging times in the military, in our country. And yet, somehow – and it was in fact underpinned here in many ways that I was taught to persist and not give up. Never give up. Never give up. Never give up.

Actually, I can stand here for a long time. Go ahead.

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: If I could change one thing about my past, what would it be? I mean, I wouldn't change a lot. I've made mistakes. I certainly think more about that. Actually, I was pretty serious about having a good time here at Notre Dame. You know, in looking back on it, I actually wish I'd studied harder than I did because that translated to Annapolis, believe it or not. I had a pretty good time there. And as I look back now, I wished I'd worked harder while I was there.

And I didn't know anything about the Navy. My father wasn't in the military. I certainly lived in a neighborhood back then when – as most of us did – where most of the men had served in World War II, didn't talk much about it. So I didn't know much about the military. But again, I met people who were very special people from all over the country. I barely knew anybody from Los Angeles when I left here. And then, you start meeting people from all over the country and eventually all over the world. So I would encourage you to work hard. Persistence is one thing. The other thing is success is tied,

more than anything else – you got to have a little luck. But it is tied to hard work. In the long run, it is tied to hard work.

And when I graduated, I actually came back out here, got on a ship. Didn't know much about them – got on a ship. Went to Vietnam. But going to sea was something that was just really special. Didn't have the background, but I took to it like a duck to water. And then, obviously, there have been opportunities for responsibility and leadership my whole life. And one of the things that you're getting here and I would encourage you to seek is leadership positions because you're going to be leaders for the rest of your life in ways that you don't even know. And the sooner you jump in, the better off you are.

Yeah?

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: If I had to pick one experience, what?

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: One experience that was my favorite experience? Marrying my wife. I've got two young – I was going to say two kids who come pretty close to that as well, but that really is it.

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: The advantages and disadvantages of attending the Naval Academy? The advantages are still the discipline – if you know anybody that's ever done that. Anybody that's graduated will tell you they were the last, best, toughest class. Just not true – it's more demanding now than it ever was back then. Academically it ranks very close to tops in the country, except the demands go far beyond academics.

I mean, the athletic demands, the mental, moral, physical. The leadership experience, the teamwork, the opportunity to fail and not have it be a terminal event, the opportunity to learn, to see the world, to understand it globally. It's a great faculty. It's actually a great part of the country, the mid-Atlantic. And while my heart is here in Los Angeles, we've sort of converted to that part of the country, which we really like as well.

But more than anything else, the biggest advantage – best people I've ever been around. From the first day I was there in 1964, I still get together with a dozen of my friends that I met that day. And we are – we have been and will – we're best friends for life. Our wives who met back then when we were dating in many cases are best friends. That's the upside.

The downside – I mean, it can be a – there is a downside if it's not for you. And you need to go because you want to go, not because your mom or dad want you to go, not because a teacher or counselor want you to go. The decision you're going to make when

you graduate from here about where you go next is a huge decision. It will affect the rest of your life. I didn't think about it that way back then. This is what I decided. But it will do that.

And I would encourage you to do talk to people you respect, be curious in many dimensions about what's out there. And in the end, you make the decision, because you have to live with it. You can't blame anybody else. And if you do that, in the vast majority of cases, whether it's Annapolis or UCSB or Berkeley or a local community college, whatever it is. That will be the best decision for you.

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: Given my most recent visit to Pakistan with the Army Chief of Staff and the Prime Minister, what do I see to be the most imminent danger? In that part of the world, Pakistan, which if you do a little geography – do they still teach geography here? Is there a geography teacher around? Pay attention. If you know that part of the world, the Middle East, the broader Middle East, I call from Beirut to Tehran, everything in between is the most challenging and unstable part of the world right now. And extending that to South Central Asia in terms of Afghanistan and Pakistan, that part of the world is the most challenging. It goes back centuries not decades. And understanding that – when I go to Pakistan – actually when I go to any country, one of the things I try to do is to see their view through their eyes. We have a way in America of seeing it all through our eyes, and then we think we have the right solution. And that's just not the case. We've got to see it through their eyes.

And if you do a little history, a little geography, that part of the world is dominated by tribes and dominated by tribal leaders and dominated by a culture that goes back centuries. So it's one that isn't just going to get fixed by an American view overnight. The biggest challenge is in the tribal area right now, the western border of Pakistan in what they called the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the FATA, is that's where al Qaeda is. That's where they're living, that's where their leadership are, that's where they are taken care of by the tribal leaders. That's a sovereign country; you can't just go into a sovereign country because you want to. So my interaction with the head of the Army who is their senior military officer is to work with him to get at this problem. Tremendous insurgent problem in Pakistan right now. They've had some four to 600 civilians killed by suicide bombers in Pakistan this year. So they have an internal problem; they've got an external problem, and that area feeds the fight in Afghanistan. And those terrorists and insurgents, whether they are al Qaeda or Taliban, they're coming across the border, and they're killing Americans, among other countries.

So when I go there, that's why I go there – to have a relationship – and then to be able to address that issue. So I talked about seeing it through their eyes, one, and the other is to have a relationship. You can't do this stuff in the dark. And you can't mail it in. Despite the world we're living in, virtual reality only works up to a point. You have to be able to sit down with people, talk with people, have an understanding about their

concerns, what they're dealing with, so you can get to a solution which is mutually acceptable not singularly acceptable.

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: How do I handle what?

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: The only hegemon is –

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: Oh, you're calling us a hegemon. Okay. How do I handle what?

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: Well, I take issue with your description of us, but I am – this is not a job I do by myself. I have a an extraordinary number of people from all services – this job – though we played Anchors Aweigh – I'm not in a Navy job. I'm in what we call a joint job. So I've got Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and I also have a very close relationship with our Coast Guard. So I work hard across the full spectrum of our leadership and our people, and our Army and Marine Corps, in particular, are under a lot of pressure because of the number of deployments. And their families. So I'm engaged with them all the time, but not unlike my discussion with you as a high school student here, I invest a lot of my time in our young people.

I talked about them being 20 years old and the need to ensure that they are healthy, that they have careers, that they have time with their families, and that they are thriving because the burden of this challenge that we have in the military is in fact one that they share. We ask them to take the responsibility: those that are sacrificing their lives and those who have been wounded and whose lives have changed forever – and their families'. Those who sacrifice so much are – that's where we have to make sure we get it right for them. So I spend a lot of my time devoted to that both externally and internally. Yeah?

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: The next 10 years, where do I see our military involvement, whether it's to stay the course in Iraq or somewhere else. We've seen tremendous progress in Iraq over the last year; violence is way down, and the president made a decision the other day to start to bring more troops out of Iraq. And in fact, because they are available, a group of them will be redirected to Afghanistan. Now, in Iraq they have a remarkable budget excess this year of some 50 or \$60 billion. All right, when their economy gets going, and it's better, and their governance gets correct, and it's improving,

and security can stay to sustain the violence level continuing to draw down, I think Iraq will very much come alive.

Afghanistan, to compare that, and I talked about a 50 or \$60 billion excess budget, the total revenue for the economy in Afghanistan this year is \$700 million – the revenues in the country. If you take Afghanistan and put it in Africa, it's one of the poorest countries in Africa. So there's a developmental requirement there, a security requirement there and a governance requirement there which is going to take a significant period of time to be there. So I think we'll be there for awhile. I'm concerned about the intensity of the threat. The threat is growing there, and we have to make sure that we don't create – that the conditions that took us to Afghanistan in 2002 are not created – or 2002, sorry – are not recreated by providing another opportunity for a safe haven there even though the safe haven has moved to Pakistan.

I – we see it – we are living in a time of what many of us call persistent conflict. Don't know where it's going to be, but we just know it's going to be out there. Not many of us would have predicted a month ago that Russia would have invaded Georgia, for example. We have – we go through these kinds of crises; there are also natural disasters, and they seem to come at a higher pace. Certainly we see from a military standpoint try to support that from a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief perspective as well. So I think we're going to be engaged globally for a significant period of time. That doesn't mean always in conflict. I grew up in a Navy, basically, where I was around the world, and my main job in the Navy was preventing war, was in fact being – showing a strength that did not allow conflicts to come – to break out. So it's both those things.

And there are other parts of the world – this is obviously the Pacific and where China goes – it's a huge economic engine for the future and where India goes, where the economic engine in Brazil is a big power, becoming powerhouse as well. And in the long run, I think these economic engines including the one here in the United States, the one in Europe, and how they grow over time. There is great opportunity for a lot of peace and stability, and there's a great opportunity for parents from all over the world who want to raise their children to a higher standard of living in peace. That is – that is almost a universal goal of every parent that is raising children around the world. How do we get there is the challenge. And there are – there is a lot of instability that's out there and in fact, that part – I think our, the military, the United States military, in part to engage but that's not going to totally answer the mail. You've got to have a strong economy, and these economic engines get stronger over time. Let me go back.

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: If I had a chance to go back, would I fight the Iraqi war? Would I have chosen to start it?

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: Who am I voting for in the election? Actually I'm voting for Pedro. (Laughter, applause.) As was indicated earlier, I've had this job a year. I am the principal military adviser to the president. The president of the United States makes – an administration obviously led by the president – makes policy. As a member of the military, I carry out that policy. This is a really critical underpinning for this democracy that goes back to the day we were founded. In that regard, we are obviously in the middle of selecting the next president as you indicated by your question. And I often times get asked well what if President – what if it's President McCain, what if it's President Obama, what are you going to do? I will serve that president as I serve this one every bit as well, every bit as strongly, based on the decisions that next president makes. That's our job in the military. Again, we are a neutral organization, and we should remain neutral, those of us who serve in the military. So that then gets to your second question, which means Pedro is about as far as I'm going to go. (Applause.)

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: How do I handle – I'm sorry?

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: How do I handle the constant criticism for the war? One of the things I – I mean again, I grew up here. My father was a journalism major. Actually, the family, both my mother and my father were in the publicity business in Hollywood. And I learned very young about the force of – (inaudible) – from them. And I have great, great regard for the force of – (inaudible). Many people criticize it; that's fine with me. Again, it is two institutions that often times get criticized – are the press and Congress, in addition to the military, and I understand that, and our government. Being able to criticize is really important, again, an underpinning. And there are passionate beliefs tied to going back that far – we're a young country when you think about who we are compared to those countries. We just have to take all of that into consideration as the world continues to change. One more? Okay, I'll take one more. I haven't done any on the left. Sorry.

Q: (Off mike.)

ADM. MULLEN: Of all the people I've met throughout my career, whose influence – I mean, really, it was my mom and dad. My father was a very, I mean – back then we had one income, five kids, private school. I won't tell you how much it costs, but it was a lot of money back then. Both St. Charles and here. But he taught me responsibility, he taught me ethics. I mean, certainly my mother did that as well, but more than anybody else, he influenced me, and it was that that sort of got me started on the way to where I am now. Thanks again for the opportunity. Take care.