

U.S. National Security Strategy Update

Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Foreign Press Center
Washington, DC
January 12, 2011

Admiral Mullen: Thank you all for coming. It's terrific to be back here at the Foreign Press Center. What I really want to talk about today is our way forward in Afghanistan.

As you know, we just recently completed a review of our strategy. More specifically, a review of how we are implementing that strategy. In essence we found that implementation, particularly on the security side, is on track. All the troops the President ordered in are on the ground; more civilians from our State Department and other agencies are spreading out across the country; and our allies continue to send more trainers and more combat forces. Indeed, I note with great pleasure the announcement last week by the Netherlands to send more than 500 trainers over the next few years.

There's no question that the Taliban have lost momentum in parts of the south and in the east, and that the growth and development of Afghan National Security Forces is progressing in a much more organized way at a quicker pace than we had expected. In fact the Afghan Ministry of Defense announced this week that the Afghan Army added more than 3500 soldiers to its ranks in December. This brings their total to more than 149,000 troops -- an increase of nearly 50,000 in 2010.

I'm particularly delighted to report that the National Military Academy of Afghanistan just completed its selection process for the Class of 2015 -- accepting more than 600 cadets from a record 4650 applicants, all through a process that was fair, merit based, and completely transparent.

We have as a result of these efforts been able to sustain in training and enrollment of nearly 30,000 Afghans, including almost 9,000 policemen. Once trained, these troops are joining coalition forces in ever more challenging and ever more partnered operations that continue to weaken the insurgency.

A couple of weeks ago I had the opportunity to go to Kandahar and Helmand Provinces to visit with our troops and see first-hand the good work they and their Afghan partners are doing. The enemy is being pushed out of population centers; he's being denied sanctuary, and he's losing leaders by the score, and his scare tactics are being rejected by local citizens. All the while those very citizens are taking back their own towns and villages, building schools and roads, harvesting alternative crops, and in general contributing to a growing sense of safety in parts of the south.

General Petraeus in fact spoke yesterday about the courageous stand of more than 20 elders of the Alikozai tribe in the Sangin River Valley. They recaptured the central government and committed themselves in writing to keep out foreign fighters, to encourage their people to identify and report IEDs, and to form a shura for communicating their grievances to Kabul. As one Talib told a reporter, and I quote, "The government has the upper hand now. The people are not happy with us. They are not willingly cooperating with us."

While I was not surprised to see this sort of progress in Nawa and Marjah, I will admit to some surprise at seeing it take root around Kandahar, particularly in Arghandab and Zhari where the enemy is not accustomed to losing. Nevertheless, he is losing and I have every confidence that he will continue to lose so long as coalition and Afghan forces increase their presence and their pressure on his operations and improve their own capacity. That is why General Petraeus and Secretary Gates approved the temporary deployment of Marines from the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit to Regional Command - Southwest, and it's why he continues to adjust his resources to meet evolving operational needs.

Now is not the time to rest on our laurels. Now is the time to press home our advantages and to redouble our efforts. We know the gains we have made are tenuous and fragile and can be lost. We know the enemy is resilient. And we know that things are likely to get harder before they get any easier. A relatively mild winter through which the enemy has continued fighting will give way to spring. Poor governance will, where it persists, encourage Taliban intimidation. Now with 100,000 more coalition and Afghan forces on the ground than last year, we will expand our presence into areas the enemy still wishes to control.

As difficult as it may be to accept, we must prepare ourselves for more violence and more casualties in coming months. The violence will be worse in 2011 than it was in 2010 in many parts of Afghanistan. There is much much yet to do. Over the long term we must work to support an Afghan political process that includes reconciliation with Taliban who break with al-Qaida; renounce violence, and accept the Afghan constitution.

We also must continue building a strategic partnership with Afghanistan, one based not on a military footprint but on mutual friendship. U.S. forces remain committed to beginning a conditions-based withdrawal of American forces in July of 2011 with a goal endorsed by NATO in the Lisbon Summit of being able to fully transition security responsibilities to Afghan forces by 2014. Our military presence will diminish, as it should, but the partnership between our two nations will endure.

Thank you.

Question: Lalit Jha, Press Trust of India, India: Thank you, Admiral, for coming to the Foreign Press Center.

My question is on Afghanistan. You write a very very golden picture about Afghanistan, but now since there are only five months left for the drawdown of troops, can you give us a sense what kind of drawdown it could be to the symbolic and which are the areas which Afghanistan should be taking control of?

Admiral Mullen: If I left you the impression that it was rosy, that's the wrong impression. [Laughter]. It is a very difficult fight. It is a very difficult time in this conflict. We find even in the conflict ourselves in a time of transition, if you will, where we've taken away enemy safe havens that have been there for a significant period of time. And we work towards a future with many more troops but also more civilian capacity, and the beginnings of local governance in places that it just didn't exist a few months ago. So in that regard, I'm encouraged, but I do not want to understate in any way, shape or form the difficulty of the task. It clearly continues to be severe.

And with respect to the July 2011 date, we will begin to draw down forces. It will be conditions based. We don't know from where or how many. And what's equally important I spoke to in my remarks, is to look at 2014. The outputs of NATO, the 28 nations in NATO agreeing to focus on 2014 for the final transition of security forces, was a very positive outcome. So while we're focused on July 2011, and we will start to withdraw our forces then, my expectation is there will be plenty of forces left, U.S. and coalition, after July, and that we are also focused on how we get to 2014.

Question: Shahla Sadighi, VOA Persia Service, USA:

Thanks, Admiral. As the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan is diminishing, how the U.S. forces and U.S. government is going to deal with Iranian undesired presence in Afghanistan. And is there any possibility that in the P5+1 meeting [5 UN Security Council members plus Germany] or other international forum U.S. officials talk to Iranians about common grounds like Afghan security?

Admiral Mullen: We actually look to opportunities to discuss with the Iranians as well as other countries areas of common ground, so I think your question is very well stated. Certainly Iran is a next door neighbor of Afghanistan's, and in speaking with the leadership in Afghanistan, they want a relationship with their next door neighbor. What certainly concerns us over time is that any nefarious activities that the Iranians would present to the challenges, the enormous challenges that exist inside Afghanistan. So we've worked hard to counter those when they've occurred. I have not seen a significant amount of activity. I've certainly seen some activity. Most of it's in the west. Some of it's in Kabul in terms of the engagement. And the goal would certainly be to ensure that the Iranians don't make this any harder. We're very much focused on that.

Whether or not there will be an opportunity at the upcoming talks, the P5+1 talks which are principally focused obviously on the Iranian nuclear capability and my belief that they continue on a path to develop nuclear weapons, I really couldn't say whether that will happen or not.

Question: Michael Evans, London Sunday Times, UK:

Can I just ask you about North Korea because Secretary Gates has been to China? When you were in the region a couple of weeks back you were reportedly quite critical of China's efforts towards North Korea and trying to get them to behave more responsibly. I wonder, following Secretary Gates' comment yesterday that North Korea probably has ICBMs capable of threatening the United States within five years, I wonder whether you feel China is putting enough effort into restraining North Korea's ambitions?

Admiral Mullen: What Secretary Gates said yesterday in terms of the ICBM capability, and then you combine that with the nuclear tests that North Korea has taken in recent years, and my message in the region as well as now is, this is an evolving threat not just to the region, but to the United States specifically. He has not been shy about provocation, and the dangers that are associated with those most recently, obviously, the sinking of the Cheonan, the killing of the South Korean sailors, as well as the artillery incident on Yeonpyeong Island where he also killed South Korean citizens who were not in the military in addition to killing a couple of South Korean Marines.

So I think all of that is meant to say this is a very dangerous time in that regard, and that it is important for all of us to bring as much pressure as we can, in the international community to bring as much pressure as we can to ensure that we can deter the leadership in North Korea during what we believe is a time of

accession, not knowing exactly when that's going to occur, but if past is prologue there the succession plan usually generates a series of provocations and that has been the case recently. It's a really dangerous time.

One of the reasons it's so important I think for us in the international community to come together on this, which includes Russia and China and Japan as well as South Korea and others, is that this capability that he is developing is becoming more and more dangerous. So the potential provocations could become more and more catastrophic. That's been a principal point of focus as we look at engaging the leadership in China and others to say this is something we really have to figure out a way to deter in the future. As I said then and feel now, I believe that China has a great responsibility with respect to this.

Question: Shin Shoji, NHK TV, Japan:

In the Secretary's visit to China he visited a [command center] which holds a nuclear facility, sir. It was the same place where Secretary Rumsfeld was in 2005. Are you satisfied with the access and transparency given the Secretary's going to the same place in six years?

Admiral Mullen: This was actually, what I know about this is this was a specific request of Secretary Gates, so in that regard very satisfied he got the access he asked for. I hadn't correlated it with the visit of Secretary Rumsfeld before. More importantly from my perspective is the visit itself and the need for us to figure out a way to establish and sustain military-to-military relations, and where we can, as was asked before, we do have some common interests. And figure a way out into the future that in this relationship we have a much better understanding of each other.

So I was delighted to see that Secretary Gates both asked and then received that access. I honestly haven't heard from him since he was there so I don't have any feedback on how it went.

Question: Muna Shikaki, Al Arabiya TV, Saudi Arabia:

I want to ask you about the new Republican majority in the House, especially the new Republican chair people heading committees that might affect the work and cooperation on foreign policy goals. How do you foresee the relationship with these chairs in the future, especially with regards to security, whether they can affect security cooperation between the United States, for example, and Lebanon, or the Palestinian Authority?

Admiral Mullen: I know a number of the leaders specifically, and I have long been a proponent across multiple Administrations for the need to have policy lead security and in particular the State Department have a robust enough budget and a robust enough group of Foreign Service Officers and people to be able to both speak to the policy debates in Washington and then execute those policies with the Pentagon in support. I have said for years now that we cut the State Department far too much when we cut them in the '90s and we are just starting to recover from a resource standpoint. I still think it's vital that we resource our State Department so that we can carry on this approach.

I oftentimes get asked about the military doing so many things that the State Department and other agencies should be doing. That's just because we have been in places where that had to be done, we didn't have the kind of support we needed and it was that way in Iraq, it's that way in Afghanistan, it's that way in some other places. We've got to get this balanced right. So I'm still a proponent of making

sure that the State Department's budget in particular is robust, and particularly in this time with the challenges that we have.

Follow Up Question – Al Arabiya TV: Specifically about security cooperation and funding for, for example, Lebanese military which a lot of maybe Republicans might be having a problem with?

Admiral Mullen: I think it's my responsibility to help make the case that the evolution of capabilities not just in Lebanon but in other places actually in the long run decreases the load on the United States military forces and security forces. They get to a point where they can do it themselves. We see that in other countries. So that investment up front is fairly small compared to getting the situation where we had to invest a lot of our security forces which can be very expensive.

Question: Fengfeng Wang, Xinhua News Agency, China:

I'm just wondering, how does China fit into the United States' national security strategy? And does Secretary Gates' visit to China enhance or change those calculations? Thank you.

Admiral Mullen: I think his visit enhances the relationship. And from an overall strategic point of view, again I've long time been a believer in the importance of the strength of the relationship of these two countries. It is set in many ways because of the two economic engines that we are, the evolution of those economic engines, the interdependence of those economic engines, and the potential prosperity that exists associated with their developments. China clearly now reaches globally and in great part because of its economy and has that kind of impact. Tied to that prosperity there needs to be security. They go hand in hand. So having a strong security relationship is equally important to having a strong economic relationship. I think that's the relationship that we are certainly working towards.

President Hu's coming here, as you know, very shortly. We look forward to that visit. We expect it to be a very positive visit. It doesn't mean we don't have challenges. It doesn't mean we don't have challenges. It doesn't mean we don't need to address some very difficult issues. We do. This wouldn't be the first time between two countries that there were differences, but I think it's important we have a relationship in which we can do that. The renewal of the military-to-military relationship is critical because there's a great deal, quite frankly, that we don't understand about each other. We don't have to agree on everything, but I believe we have to have a relationship where we can have the discussion to try to create the understanding.

Question: Sonia Schott, Globovision TV, Venezuela: I was wondering why you didn't mention Latin America, and I would like to know if in the region there is any concern for the U.S. And if you can talk specifically on Venezuela and its relation with Iran, Syria, Russia and so on. Thank you.

Admiral Mullen: Let me just extend from the discussion I just had with respect to China in the sense that not just neighbors, next door neighbors, Latin America, but critical in terms of the development and evolution of security and prosperity I would say next door. So I have again, over the years, both focused on this relationship. I think we need to make sure we stay focused on it. I would use the economic engine that Brazil is in particular in terms of the region and just the amount of trade that we do and the connection that we have. So I think the security relationship, again, is equally important. It's by and large very strong. It doesn't mean we don't have challenges specifically. And then specifically with respect to Venezuela, a leader whose rhetoric is exceptionally strong against the United States and is one that by and

large certainly doesn't support a strong relationship between the two countries and at the same time, the practical side of me, he is the leader of the country so we have to both understand that. I don't consider Venezuela a significant threat to the United States right now. At the same time he spends a lot of money, a lot of money on weapons in his country. Significant weapons in his country, that will be arriving over the next few years. And some of us ask the question what could be the purpose of that, of those kind of high end weapons that he's purchasing. So from that standpoint there's a concern that we actually keep a weather eye on all the time.

Question: Ilhan Tanir, Hurriyet / Vatan, Turkey:

Admiral, as the U.S. troops are leaving Iraq in 2011, how worried are you that Iran's influence will be even more rising in Iraq? Given that given that Moqtada al Sadr, the Shia leader, just came back [from Iran], and some took it as a signal that transition -- signal for transition.

A second question is, the Middle East peace process. Currently it is stalled. How do you think this stalled peace process affects U.S. national security in other wars or areas? Thank you.

Admiral Mullen: I think you express a concern with respect to Iran's influence in Iraq that is widely held in the region. In your country as well as other countries in the region. That said, I've been very pleased with the outcome of the standup of the new government. One of the things the United States said is that it had to be inclusive, and it is inclusive. Included in that, obviously, is Sadr. And I was with Prime Minister Maliki on this most recent visit a few weeks ago and we talked about the inclusiveness of the government and the challenges that are associated with that. Where Iraq appears to be, and I think it's very healthy, is the challenges there are political. That doesn't mean there aren't security challenges, but the standup of that government, the representation of the government for all of Iraq I think presents an opportunity for politics to really kick in and the people of Iraq to be represented; all the people of Iraq to be represented. So I'm very encouraged by that.

There are significant challenges associated with that. I've been very encouraged by the strength, capability, evolution of the Iraqi security forces, from end to end. Are they perfect? No. But they have evolved very rapidly against what a few years ago were some pretty dire predictions about what they could do.

I actually appreciate the leadership from your country in particular as another country nearby, another neighbor with respect to engagement, and I think it's important for all of us, but in particular it's important for the regional countries, the neighbor countries to engage as this new government, and in many ways politically this new way of life emerges. It is a nation recently birthed so they're going to need some help in doing that.

With respect to United States security forces, right now the expectation is, based on our agreements with them [Iraq], is we will remove all forces by the end of the year. We've said that after the government stood up we will start to engage with them on what the long term relationship is, the long term strategic partnership which we all seek. Senior Iraqi leaders that I have spoken with, both political and military as well as in the United States, we seek that long term strategic partnership. What the peace parts of that will be still to be determined. There's a lot of work to be done this year, quite frankly.

Follow Up Question – Hurriyet/Vatan: [Off mike: And the Middle East peace process?]

Admiral Mullen: Oh yes, the easy one. [Laughter].

My own experience is certainly, and my belief is, this is an incredibly important issue that needs to be resolved, and it needs to be resolved peacefully. So I applaud the efforts of working in a direction to resolve it. This is as hard -- It's been going on a long time. I think the length of that is representative, quite frankly, of the degree of difficulty. And it doesn't get any easier, the closer you get to a solution. So I know that the leadership is very engaged on this. I actually believe achieving this will fundamentally change many many things in the Middle East. It will change relationships. It will create an area of peace out of a potential area of conflict that we all have had great concerns for many many years. So getting to a two-state solution and doing it in a peaceful way is absolutely critical. But I don't, again, I don't understate the degree of difficulty here. It is still both critical, being worked hard, and very much the focus of many countries and certainly led by, that focus is certainly here in the United States as well.

Question: He Shan, Radio Free Asia, USA:

Admiral, can you update a little bit the current USA's Internet warfare capability and current situation? Do you have any attack from China, which many reports said they have, some certain PLA background. Any attacks come to your Facebook account, your Gmail account in the last year? Thank you.

Admiral Mullen: I haven't seen any on my Facebook account. [Laughter].

It's actually a great question because it's an area that has received great focus on the part of the United States and other countries, and it's an area of warfare, cyberwarfare that I think needs to be one on which we focus greatly and has devastating potential on the downside.

We've made a lot of changes inside the Department of Defense, inside our government, and we are working towards a very robust system here. But the threat's significant and the threat from China is significant. There are other threats out there that we see routinely. I think we've got to come to a place where again, those threats are diminished if not eliminated. I would never go in certainly in any area of warfare into details on threat except to say they're substantial, we're focused on them, and it would certainly be a better place if those threats went away. That said, I've been around long enough to know you just can't wish them away or ask them to go away. And it's an area, as is [outer] space, cyberspace and space, it's an area with no rules. There are no boundaries. It happens at the speed of light. There are non-state sponsored entities in addition to state-sponsored entities that are involved in this. So it's an enormously complex and critical area that all of us need to understand a lot better and do a lot more about.

Question: Andres Judzik, Perfil, Argentina:

I want to ask you a question related to Mexico. How do you feel the situation that's going on with the narcotic war in Mexico that during the last three years has taken about 35,000 lives? How is it affecting the U.S.? How do you see that the military forces are doing in Mexico? What kind of help do you think the U.S. can give to Mexico on this?

Admiral Mullen: I think that very sad and tragic metric is indicative of the severity. There have been tens of thousands of lives that have been lost in recent years. This is 2007 to 2010, something like that. And I do today and I have before applauded the leadership of President Calderon to focus on this very

significant threat in his own country. And it is principally the drug wars and the drug lords that are associated with that.

We have, and President Obama has given us direction, we are working very closely with Mexican authorities across their entire interagency, all departments. This is obviously a problem that Mexico needs to and is leading on in its own country. Where we are able to give them support, we are doing that. We are working very closely with their military, much more so than we had in recent years, but we also recognize the demand signal comes out of the United States, the money's flowing from the United States, there is a flow of illegal weapons in and out of that country, and there is a focus on doing all we can to help eliminate that. This is our neighbor. It's a country we care a great deal about. And so I applaud the efforts. Again, I'm in my tenth year of war now. We certainly didn't get it all right on day one. We evolved. What I am delighted to see, quite frankly, in our relationship and in the critical areas that the government of Mexico is evolving against this incredibly viral threat. I think eventually they will succeed, but it's a tough fight and a tragic, tragic loss for the country of Mexico and the citizens of Mexico.

Follow Up Question – Gregorio Meraz, Televisa TV, Mexico:

I would like to ask you in the sort of war that my colleague has mentioned, how far the U.S. military can go? It seems like it's more needed in this field, maybe training or participating in more tasks to prevent the flow of drugs as well as to prevent the flow of weapons from U.S. to Mexico. Also how that means a threat to the national security of the U.S.?

Admiral Mullen: We are, on the military side, we're principally involved in training and training support. We've learned a lot over the course of the last decade, and there are aspects of this drug war and how you fight it that are very similar to the kinds of things that we have seen in the wars that we've been in. So we're working -- And with a welcome request from the military leadership, General Galvan and Admiral Saynez, to give the support that's requested. But that is also true in other agencies. Obviously there is great focus on the common border that we have, but even as I say that, every time I say that I remind myself to speak of the southern border, because the countries of Belize and Guatemala and the challenges that exist down there are significant as well. In the same war.

So we are doing all we can across our interagency. So it's the border police, it's obviously our homeland security agencies, if you will, and we've met at the very senior levels as well as at the ground level to execute these capabilities. So it's a huge concern I think for all of us and we want to do all we can, recognizing that sadly this is going to take some time. But I actually am encouraged by the strategic direction, the strategic leadership that is very focused on eliminating this threat inside Mexico.

Follow Up Question – Televisa TV, Mexico: [Off mike: And threat to U.S. national security?]

Admiral Mullen: I think when you have your neighbor, your next door, a country with whom you have great relationships, and as it is a threat to the security inside that country it transmits certainly to concerns and great focus on the part of the United States. Which is one of the reasons we're doing what we're doing.

Question: Delawit Mesfin, IHLAS News Agency, Turkey:

With Secretary Clinton's visit to Yemen this week and talking about Turkey as an ally in the region, I was wondering if you could comment on the meeting between President Abdullah Gul and [Yemeni Prime Minister] Ali Mujawar yesterday announcing that they would eliminate visa restrictions between the two countries. And also Turkey's announcement of an 8.2 percent increase in their defense budget.

Admiral Mullen: In their own defense budget? Obviously these are decisions that get to be made internally to Turkey. We've got great relationships with the Turkish military. They have been enormously supportive in Afghanistan, for instance, where they lead, they command the forces in Kabul. And I would only say that the security conditions in Kabul have been much improved and we haven't had many incidents in recent months. I would use that as an example.

I've had enough engagement with the Turkish military leadership to understand where the investments are going and the need to do that and the need to evolve.

There are also still certainly the country, I think, and the military very focused on the PKK threat, the terrorist threat in northern Iraq, and that's something I think in the long run needs to be resolved as well.

So without going into details, and I haven't seen the specifics of the budget, but certainly I know that previous investments are, from my perspective, have in execution provided Turkish capability that we rely a great deal on.

With respect to the visa issue per se, without speaking exactly to it, but what it would represent certainly is a growing and stronger relationship between two countries which I think is a very positive step.

I am worried about the terrorist threat in Yemen. I am specifically worried about al-Qaida in Yemen that has grown up fairly dramatically over the course of the last two years, who now threatens the United States, who is seeking to kill as many Americans and Westerners as they can. We are working with the leadership in Yemen, and that's one of the reasons that the Secretary of State visited Yemen as well, and it has been a long time. I should know the exact number of years, but it's been decades since we've had a U.S. Secretary of State visit Yemen. So we all are working to strengthen that relationship and focus on this threat.

Along with the security side of our relationship with Yemen it's also very important that the other investments that get to development, the kinds of things that in the long run don't allow this to continue to be fertile ground for this threat to continue to grow, that's the long term solution there. In the mean time we all are trying to focus on this threat right now and mitigate it as rapidly and as much as possible.

Question: Sveinn Helgason, Icelandic Broadcasting Service TV, Iceland:

Directly from this, talking about fertile ground [for] terrorists, what about Pakistan? How important is progress there, and can you assess how progress is being made there for progress in Afghanistan?

Admiral Mullen: Progress in Pakistan is critical in terms of the region. Since I've had this job I've never talked or wanted to leave the impression that it was about one country or the other, because it's about the region. I think progress there is critical as well.

Obviously the recent assassination, the political challenges that we've seen with MQM [Muttahida Qaumi Movement political party] leaving and returning to the coalition to ensure that that government doesn't fall, I think that political aspect is something I keep an eye on all the time.

It is absolutely critical that the safe havens in Pakistan get shut down. We cannot succeed in Afghanistan without that. I've had many meetings with General Kayani on this subject and he has evolved his military against this threat. This threat is evolving as well, because it's not just Haqqani Network anymore, or al-Qaida, or TTT [Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or Pakistani Taliban], the Afghan Taliban, or LET [Lashkar-e-Taiba], it's all of them working together in ways that two years ago they absolutely did not.

I've said it before and I'll say it again it [Pakistan] is the epicenter of terrorism in the world right now, and it deserves the attention of everybody to do as much as we can to eliminate that threat. But we cannot succeed in Afghanistan without shutting down those safe havens.

One of the things that I spoke to in my remarks was support for this reconciliation process, and that process includes everything, not just the Afghan Taliban, in terms of getting to a point where Afghanistan is peaceful and stable and can take control of its own life and move forward in every respect.

Question: Raghbir Goyal, India Globe, India:

You have just returned almost two dozen visits I think in the region, you have been there. My question is one, you said you cannot win the war in Afghanistan without the full cooperation of Pakistan. Is Pakistan doing enough that you are happy that you don't have to say any more in the next time visit here that you are preparing for more violence and more casualties in Afghanistan. So you think Pakistan is doing more? What have you told them and what are they doing in order to shut down the safe haven?

Admiral Mullen: I don't go into specifics of discussions that I've had, private conversations that I've had. But one of the facts over the course of the last year is Pakistan is emerging from these devastating floods and their military, their army in particular, was diverted, and rightfully so, to take care of their own people. They're emerging from that. And even as I say that, some of the flood waters in the south are still very severe.

So the Pakistani military leadership has had to both guide that and readjust. I'm confident that the military knows what it has to do and I've been through this with General Kayani, and intends to do this.

There are some challenges that are there to ensure that where they have been before -- in Swat, Bajaur, [Kot] Moman -- that there's no reemergence of the insurgents there as well. So the challenges are enormous.

We are in full support of those and strategically the safe havens have got to go. When I talk about the region, it isn't just Afghanistan and Pakistan. We had a question earlier about Iran. I talk about this with my Russian counterpart. The neighbors in the area to include India. I think we all have responsibility and we all want to see this resolved as rapidly as possible. That is a call for action for everybody that's involved in this.

Question: Guohua (John) Zang, CTI TV, Taiwan:

Admiral, how do you see the recent test flight of China's J-20 stealth fighter? Did it come as a surprise to you? How significant is it in China's military organization? Thank you.

Admiral Mullen: It didn't come as a surprise to me because I've watched them evolve this capability. And in that regard it is significant. It looks like it's a significant capability. But in the sense that it's not a surprise and I've spoken to this many times. China is investing in very high end, high tech capabilities and the question that is always out there is to try to understand exactly why.

The opaqueness of that tied to our lack of relationship is something that I'd like to see if we can crack open. But it's not the only high end capability, on the one hand.

On the other hand, the Chinese are not ten feet tall. I have gone through cycles over time. I know they have their own challenges. The Chinese have every right to develop the military that they want. They're an emerging global country with global influence as the United States is. We develop our capabilities to protect our interests.

What I just have not been able to crack is the why on some of these capabilities. Whether it's this, whether it's anti-satellite, whether it's anti-ship, many of these capabilities seem to be focused very specifically on the United States. So that's why having this relationship is so important.

Thank you.