

**REMARKS BY
ADM. MIKE MULLEN
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF**

**AT THE
CELEBRATION MARKING THE 88TH
ANNIVERSARY OF IRAQI ARMED FORCES DAY**

FAIRFAX EMBASSY ROW HOTEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2009

ADMIRAL MICHAEL MULLEN: Ambassador Sumaidaie, other distinguished guests, General Alsodani, it is a special, special treat to be here with you this evening. As I think about 2009, I can't think of a better way to start it, here in Washington, than celebration tied to the birthday of the Iraqi armed forces – 88 years – and certainly an armed force that we are proud to know as friends, proud to know as colleagues, that we have fought hard with in the most difficult of circumstances, and fought the common enemy together, which creates a bond that only those who have fought together really, really understand. And let that bond be one that stays with us for many, many decades into the future.

I'm reminded that, in 1921, you were speaking of bonds – breaking the bonds from the British. We have that in common as well, a few years before that, so we understand. And these celebrations, which I have opportunities to participate in and attend throughout the year, I'm not sure, at least from my perspective, there's a more important one for us to celebrate than this one. So it is, again, a great privilege to be with you this evening.

Secondly, and the ambassador certainly said this very well, but I would only add, for emphasis, it's important to remember those who've sacrificed so much in your armed forces, those who've, certainly, been wounded and those who've given the ultimate sacrifice to defend their country and their people. And there's nothing more sacred than that sacrifice and the trust we have with those who make that sacrifice. And to extend that both gratitude and understanding and humility for not just those who've sacrificed who wear the uniform, but also their families, who sacrificed so much as well for a great country at a vital, vital time in its history.

We look forward to – this is 88 – we look forward to, certainly, 88 more years of celebrations and many more after that, with an armed force that we have great regard for, that we

have friendship for and that we will continue to support in whatever ways we can in development and in the challenges that we have to fight against the terrorists and the tyrannies and to fight for the democratic principles we all hold so dear. So congratulations on your birthday. We look forward to many more. We hold you in the highest regard and we know that the sacrifices that we have shared with you mean so much and make such a difference for a brighter future for your armed forces and for the Iraqi people. Thank you very much, sir.