

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

**JEWISH INSTITUTE FOR NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS
ANNUAL AWARDS DINNER**

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2008

ADMIRAL MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, indeed, this is very special, and made that much more special by being introduced by a very good friend.

Sergio Beraghi, it's great to see you again. And it means so much to Deborah and I that you could be here tonight.

To be honest, this award really isn't about me.

It really is about those six great Americans you saw earlier tonight.

But even they would say that their awards belong to the more than 2.2 million uniformed servicemen and women who serve our nation.

For if anybody is really worthy of this honor, it is the young men and women we send in harm's way. And there are over 280,000 of them serving all around the world tonight.

I know you share my admiration, and we should always think of them and their families who sacrifice so much when we come to gatherings such as this.

Specifically, I want to thank JINSA for recognizing these six heroes with this Grateful Nation award, and for all of you so graciously and generously and persistently provide on behalf of those who serve.

You represent a stirring spirit that inspires citizens of free societies the world over to follow Senator Jackson's words: "If you believe in freedom," he said, "then proclaim it, live it and protect it, for humanity's future depends on it."

Indeed, invoking the timeless legacy of Senator Scoop Jackson and his clear-eyed approach to the terrors of his age could not be more appropriate than right now.

I recently returned from a trip to India and Pakistan, meeting with defense chiefs and partners in each country, after the tragic terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

Our prayers go to the families of the fallen and the wounded.

The images of two-year-old Moshe Holtzberg, soon after his parents were mercilessly struck down in Chabad House, should never leave us.

We are working to prevent November 26th from becoming a tipping point towards chaos in the region, by confronting, once again, a common enemy.

Both India and Pakistan are increasingly targeted with terror, just as we have been. And the futures of these nations are bonded, just as our future is with theirs.

But these attacks in Mumbai crossed a new threshold. Their level of tactical sophistication, with GPS and Blackberrys and satellite phones, matches only the indiscriminate nature of death and destruction they caused, and yet, they intended far worse.

Their aim was to create an intolerable instability to a fragile peace.

We cannot be in denial that this was the case. This is an evil in the sight of our world.

And the only way to face it is to face it with united determination, with every aspect of our influence and power, and with all possible urgency.

This wasn't just an attack on Indians or Americans or Brits or even Jews; it was rather an attack on all of us who love the sacred dignity of human life.

Like you, I've read in silence the many accounts of the mayhem and the horror of Mumbai. But I was struck by the words of one American who barely escaped death and was able to write a few days later: "It is much easier to destroy than to build," he said, "yet, somehow, humanity has managed to build far more than it has ever destroyed."

I think Senator Scoop Jackson would have agreed.

For he, too, believed in the power of humanity to build and prevail, even in our darkest hour.

He walked through the gates of Buchenwald in 1945, saw the evil, as he said, "written in the sky," and vowed, "Never again."

Yes, the name of Senator Henry M. Jackson still means much.

And although many of today's youthful generation of leaders and heroes could never have known him, they are nonetheless inspired and guided by his legacy.

Among the many eulogies upon Senator Jackson's passing 25 years ago, columnist George Will gave perhaps one of the most poignant tributes: "Scoop Jackson nurtured in this

Republic something without which no republic can long endure: a sense that problems are tractable. To be in his presence was to experience the wholesome infection of a reviving spirit.

“This was especially remarkable because he, more than any other contemporary, looked unblinkingly at the terrors of our time. He taught less clear-sighted, less brave persons how to combine realism and serenity.”

Let’s examine those words for a moment.

For when I speak them aloud, I think of a generation of leaders today, a group of young Captains and Sergeants who have been forged by more than eight years of conflict.

They have learned much and adapted, sacrificed much and succeeded. They have stared unblinkingly at the terror of our time, and they have taught us all how to be better than we were before – how to use our genius against a common foe.

I’m reminded of a great story that Mike Hagee, a good friend and former Commandant of the Marine Corps, once told about a small unit of Marines, about four or five out on patrol in Iraq.

The Marines soon spotted a couple of insurgents who were trying to plant an IED near the road. They had all of the equipment: the shovels, the bomb, the wires, all in a wooden cart pulled by a donkey. As the Marines approached, the insurgents ran away, leaving the cart, donkey, and the evidence behind.

But one Marine in the group decided not to chase them. Instead, he went over to the cart and simply unhitched the donkey.

The donkey trots off, the Marines follow the donkey, and the donkey led them straight to a hideout about two kilometers away, where they secured the area and captured the insurgents.

When an officer asked this Marine, “Whatever made you think to unhitch and follow that donkey?” The young Marine replied, “Sir, I grew up on a farm. I’ve been following jackasses my whole life.”

True story and one I think that speaks to the freedom we give to our junior leaders to create and solve, although it is also about whom they will they follow and why.

We’ve learned a lot in these last seven years of war, much of it at great cost, and we would be foolish to toss that wisdom aside.

We now have the most combat-experienced military in our history, and we must preserve the lessons these experiences have taught us, for in fact, they guarantee our future.

These young leaders are wise beyond their years; war has a way of doing that. We owe them our attention and our time; we owe them the opportunity to think and to speak.

We must inspire them to and reward them for speaking out. And, for our part, we must ensure that we truly listen.

We must learn to bring these lessons to the forefront of a system that is still too mired in peacetime procedures, and instead inspire a promotion and selection process that puts these young people and their ideas at the center of our universe.

I've said before that the ideas of this generation have helped to make our Army and Marine Corps the world's finest counterinsurgency force and, actually, that's supported by all of our services. But how did that happen?

Genius, creativity, and passion.

The opportunity to learn, to excel and to prosper.

And by the means of the same values of self-reliance and the resilience that created our nation.

I believe our future is tied, as it always must be, to the young people who are in the fight right now.

Our attention, then, must be driven to provide what really matters:

Driving hard for final success in Iraq;

Turning it around in Afghanistan;

All the while, continuing to care for the families of those who have borne the battle;

Providing more time at home in between deployments;

As well as providing a lifetime of care to the wounded, and the families of the fallen.

And lest we forget, the wounded and lost were their buddies, and the impact of their loss remains forever with those who stood beside them in the field of battle.

Most of all, this generation wants to offer their ideas to leaders who will listen.

They want challenging assignments of value, learning and building on the satisfaction that they've achieved by doing an exceptionally hard job exceptionally well.

And this generation wants the opportunity to lead.

It is clear to me that today's young leaders want to be rewarded for achievement through a system of promotion that recognizes true talent and real sacrifice.

Through seven tough years of war, these young leaders have already bought a piece of the rock. It's time we let them move it.

And, believe me, these young people are watching not our words, but our actions.

I think often of who will be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 2028, or 2038.

I think of that battle-tested Captain or Major who has at least two tours in Iraq, and maybe two tours in Afghanistan on top of that.

That person will be shaped by experiences far different than I or most others of my generation.

I well remember what shaped my views as a young officer serving during the Vietnam War:

The vast detachment of America from her military; the drastic military budget cuts of the '70s; the long after effects on our national confidence from an unpopular war.

And then I think of what will shape and inform our next Chairman 20 to 30 years from now:

Success, despite a challenging and unpopular war in Iraq; a military that is truly appreciated by the American public; and the prospect of long, tough duty ahead as we turn our full attention to the hills of Afghanistan, as we must.

But I believe that future Chairman will be among the most prepared for national leadership this nation has ever seen, as well as our military will be.

Because these young leaders understand the importance of their service.

They, too, have inherited the Senator's wise approach to defending freedom from the evils of his day:

Hopeful but pragmatic, visionary but without illusion, staring straight into terrors of our time.

It is up to us, looking into the eyes of today's young leaders, shaped by war; not merely to teach and to nurture – but to listen and learn, to consult and to cherish, as equals in a grand journey.

It is time to praise and raise those who have offered the best days of their young lives.

It is time to prepare them for their turn at the tiller of history. Because they have earned it. And you have seen some of them tonight.

I thank you for honoring them, for it is institutions like JINSA which brings our military and our society closer together, and unites us in common purpose, thought, and deed.

And I believe your future Chairman, 20, 30 years from now, shaped by the society you have influenced, will again thank you.

Thank you for your support of all of our men and women who serve and their families, and may God continue to bless America.

Thank you.