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Salute to Adm. Mike Mullen

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Following is an open letter to Adm. Mike Mullen (photo) marking his Oct. 1 retirement as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The letter's authors, Gerald G. Brown and Wayne P. Hughes, are professors at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif., where Adm. Mullen studied under them and earned his master's degree in operations research in 1985.



Adm. Mullen:

It is our pleasure to congratulate you on your retirement from active military service. We offer the following account of your remarkable career, starting with our personal observations.

As you recount in your INFORMS 2010 interview [1], you requested assignment to our Operations Analysis Master's of Science curriculum, against the advice of your mentors, and arrived in 1983 as a navy commander, unusually senior for military officer students. Accordingly, in addition to all your scholarly duties, you served as section leader (i.e., the senior military officer in charge of and representing all your students and their families). In this role, you demonstrated not only your natural leadership but also your empathy and compassion for your juniors.

We wryly note from your interview that had we known you value optimization so much, "Ensign Jerry" would surely have given you more linear programming homework.

Your choice of master's thesis topic was prescient [2]. The AEGIS phased array radar, interceptor missile, and computers are still the versatile centerpiece of our fleet's defenses.

We deeply admire your keen analysis and straight talk. Your staff informs us that you have made between 180 and 200 speaking appearances each year. We can find no record of any recantation nor of any correction or restatement to address any misunderstanding. What an astonishing policy record this is. In these turbulent times, with unpopular wars at hand and legislators debating strategy and budgets, you have kept your iron hand on the tiller. (Our readers may not know that this iron hand has been trained by decades of weightlifting. Your personal standard for strength is both figurative and literal.)

You have been the senior executive and leader of the largest single organization in the Free World; the Department of Defense employs 1.4 million uniformed personnel and 1.7 million civil service civilians with a budget this year of \$700 billion dollars. Unlike conventional business and other government entities, you have had to plan not just quarters ahead, or even years, but for decades ahead. The importance of such planning to our country and its future is fundamental to preserving our freedom and our way of life. The nation has been well served by having an O.R. professional in charge, and we thank you for your service. You are an inspiring exemplar of what an O.R. can do with good written and spoken exposition and superb people skills. In your case, we have also benefited from a generous heart and caring spirit.

You have commanded three ships at sea, and earned 21 service ribbons representing 38 military awards [3], including three Defense Distinguished Service Medals, the latest presented by Secretary Gates on June 28 [4]. In 1987, you were awarded the Vice Admiral James Bond Stockdale Award for Inspirational Leadership, and in 2009 you were inducted into the Naval Postgraduate School Hall of Fame [5]. You have received awards from humanitarian and charitable organizations; we note with deepest respect and admiration that you accepted these awards in honor of our service members.

In your many visits to NPS it has not been lost on us that you have always been keen to seek out our junior officers and enlisted present, engage them in conversation, listen to their comments and have photographs taken that these young people can brag about for a lifetime.

We are also well aware of your deep personal concern and commitment to our veterans, especially our wounded ones, and, of

course, those lost. We admire your initiatives to change things for the better for these individuals and their families so worthy of our continued concern and care.

In a recent presentation for the Congressional Record, Sen. Lindsay Graham offered a moving recitation of your service to our country [6].

We now thank you for your service and express our admiration for your achievements. In the name of the Operations Research Department, Graduate School for Operational and Information Sciences, Naval Postgraduate School, and more than 10,000 members of the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS) and 900 members of the Military Operations Research Society (MORS), we wish you the full measure of joys in retirement, fair winds and following seas, now and forever. **IORMS**

WITH DEEPEST RESPECT,

Gerald (Jerry) Brown and Wayne Hughes,
Operations Research Department,
Naval Postgraduate School

Gerald Brown is a member of the National Academy of Engineering, an INFORMS Fellow, distinguished professor of operations research at NPS and was Adm. Mullen's linear programming instructor at NPS. Wayne Hughes is a professor of practice of operations research at NPS, a MORS Fellow and was Adm. Mullen's thesis advisor at NPS.

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2. Mullen, M., 1985, "The Stationing of AEGIS in the Battle Group: An AAW Model (U)," master's thesis in operations research, March.
3. www.nps.edu/Academics/Schools/GSOIS/Departments/OR/Documents/MullenTranscriptofService.pdf.
4. Full citation available: <http://militarytimes.com/citations-medals-awards/recipient.php?recipientid=55094>
5. www.nps.edu/Alumni/hof.html.
6. Graham, L., 2011, "Tribute to Admiral Mike Mullen," Congressional Record - Senate, S5768-5769, Sept. 20.