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CNO Lauds Summer 2007 NPS Grads

Friday, September 28, 2007

by *Barbara Honegger Senior Military Affairs Journalist*

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Mullen gave 327 Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) graduates the experience of a lifetime by handing out the diplomas at Summer 2007 graduation ceremonies, Sept. 21.

NPS President Daniel Oliver introduced Mullen, a distinguished alumnus (Operations Research, 1968), as "the Navy's Senior Sailor, a great friend of the Naval Postgraduate School and a thoughtful, decisive leader. The country is very fortunate to have this man chosen to be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in just ten days."

Mullen returned the accolades, lauding the NPS president as a mentor and "one of the finest leaders I have known in the Navy. I can think of no one better to lead this institution at this critical time in our nation's history than Dan Oliver."

Mullen praised the Naval Postgraduate School faculty and staff for their world-class scholarship "and for making this school a crown jewel, an epicenter of knowledge for the Navy, our sister services, federal agencies and international partners. You are the ones who unleash the powerful shockwaves of creativity and innovation that rock our enemies back on their heels."

The 28th Chief of Naval Operations then turned to the Summer 2007 graduating class, his main reason for flying 3,000 miles across country.

"The spectrum of your uniforms shows it's a great day for all the U.S. services and for officers from every corner of the globe, and almost a hundred of you chose your hues as civilians from many federal agencies and defense industry institutions," he said.

To the 26 international officers among the graduates, Mullen stressed, "It is our sincere pleasure to host you. Your choice to come here highlights that we all have a stake in global security and that it takes all of us, working together, to safeguard what Secretary of Defense Bob Gates calls the tender shoots of freedom . . . Never before has education and cross-cultural understanding been so critical to freedom around the world."

The CNO then rallied all graduates to the great call of the first decade of the 21st century.

"You, the class of 2007, represent our asymmetric advantage in the long war of ideas, the generational battle against radical jihadists," he said. "I need each and every one of you out there developing new strategies, tactics and technologies for this new era . . . In this war of ideas, reason and free inquiry, curiosity and innovation, and willingness to pursue multi-cultural enlightenment will undermine the flawed doctrine of extremists, insurgents and politically malevolent oppressors who, unable or unwilling to contend with change, live shackled to the past and threaten freedom and stability around the world. Whether or not we decide to remain shackled to the past will determine the fate not only of the United States, but of the whole of humanity.

"So go and offer your community, your nation and the world the greatest gift you can give – your ideas, your knowledge, your enlightened perspective and your commitment to peace. Use what you've learned here and the friendships you've made here to find paths to understanding and conflict resolution . . . Our mutual security depends on relationships -- seek them, grow them and treasure them. I am grateful for every day you serve your country in what I believe is this most critical time in our history."

"You should be justly proud of what you've accomplished here, and we will be proud to call you alumni," Oliver agreed.

Once alumni, Mullen assured the graduates that -- like himself -- they will always be welcome at the Naval Postgraduate School. "Rest assured you can always find your way back. There's something about this institution -- you can feel the vibrant energy radiating from this place. I felt it as a student, and I felt it sitting where you sit today."

At the reception in the Barbara McNitt Ballroom following the ceremony, Oliver explained that the CNO's reference to his having been a mentor harkened back to the days when they both worked on the E ring at the Pentagon, when Oliver was Chief of Naval Personnel and Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Manpower and Personnel.

In cutting the class cake, Mullen held the ceremonial sword with Oliver, NPS Provost Leonard Ferrari and top Summer 2007 class graduate, Lt. Cmdr. Andrew Dittmer. Dittmer, who received a master's degree in Space Systems Operations, won both the Monterey Council Navy League Award for Highest Academic Achievement and the Admiral William Adger Moffett Space Systems Award.

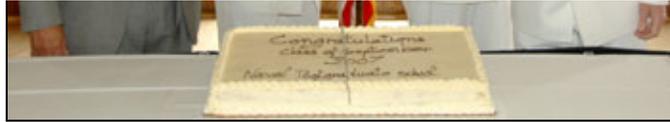
"I can't overestimate the value of the NPS master's program for future professional work and personal growth," Dittmer said at the reception, while holding his young son. As he did, the about-to-be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff reached into his pocket and presented the youngster with his CNO command coin. The boy, obviously already being groomed to be a future CNO, beamed.

Also receiving Mullen's command coins were three lucky new chief petty officers whose pinning ceremony the CNO opened and attended throughout: Chief Special Warfare Operator Kenneth Reeves, Chief Cryptologic Technician Administrative Matthew Kline and Chief Cryptologic Technician Interpretive Brandace Martin ([see fully story](#)).

"This is the only CPO pinning ceremony I get to do for fiscal year 2008 -- of 4,171 for new chief petty officers around the world today -- and it's my last in the Navy as I move on to [become] Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," the outgoing CNO noted.

Graduating in the morning's ceremony were 209 U.S. military officers, including 112 from the Navy, 42 from the Marine Corps, 32 from the Air Force, 15 from the Army, four from the Coast Guard and one from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; 26 international officers; and 91 U.S. government civilians. The degrees awarded were two Ph.D.s, 224 Master of Science, 60 Master of Arts, six Master of Business, 45 Executive Master of Business and ten dual degrees.





Left to right: Naval Postgraduate School Provost Leonard Ferrari, top Summer 2007 class graduate Lt. Cmdr. Andrew Dittmer, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Mullen and NPS President Daniel Oliver share the ceremonial sword at the cake cutting in the Barbara McNitt Ballroom following commencement exercises, Sept. 21.

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