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## COMMENTARY

### **Let us launch our mission for peace**

By Kenneth Ballen

Almost 100 years ago, President Theodore Roosevelt sent 16 battleships on a historic mission around the globe: to impress the world with U.S. naval power and the nation's coming of age.

In the beginning of the 21st century, it is time that the United States launched a similar mission, only this time to impress the world not with our power to wage war, but our power to bring peace.

The model for this new mission is the American armed forces' humanitarian assistance to the tsunami victims in Indonesia and those of the earthquake in Pakistan.

As Adm. Michael Mullen, chief of naval operations, said in the Navy journal Proceedings: "We literally built a city at sea for no other purpose than to serve the needs of other people. Aside from the lives we - along with our international partners - helped to save, we started changing hearts and minds. We started showing a side of American power that wasn't perceived as frightening, monolithic or arrogant."

According to Mullen, the change of Muslim public opinion that resulted from American aid is nothing less than "one of the defining moments of this new century." He concludes, "Shame on us if, even through benign neglect, we allow those same opinions to turn against our best intentions again."

Marine Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has recognized no less. Citing the "lessons learned from tsunami relief," Pace recently announced the Navy's launch of the hospital ship USNS Mercy to the Philippines, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Mercy will operate as a free medical clinic, helping to sustain the favorable impression that resulted from tsunami aid more than a year ago. In fact, a recent poll by my group, Terror Free Tomorrow, earlier this year shows that 63 percent of Indonesians are favorable to the United States because of the aid. That same aid has turned all but a handful of diehards away from support for Osama bin Laden and terrorist attacks.

The military's leadership points to concrete actions the United States can take to erode popular support of global terrorists. Consistent with security and national sovereignty, modest and relatively inexpensive steps to earn vital goodwill in the war on terror could include:

- The Navy launching additional humanitarian missions throughout the world, such as the current mission of the Mercy, and commissioning other hospital ships to provide medical care, training and supplies in ports such as Beirut, Alexandria and Karachi,
- The Army complementing the Navy's sea-based program by establishing mobile hospitals and medical clinics in land-locked regions of the West Bank, Egypt, northern Nigeria, etc.
- Congress, through the Peace Corps and the Department of Education, funding 10,000 English-language teachers in the madrassahs of Indonesia (as called for by the leader of the majority of those madrassahs), and establishing similar programs in other Muslim countries.
- Congress, through America's universities, creating an Institute of English Teacher Education, to train local teachers from Muslim countries in the United States in English-language instruction.
- America's technology companies beginning an "Internet Empowerment Program" to deliver sorely lacking Internet access to large stretches of the Muslim world.

There are certainly many other practical measures the United States can take. The point is that after a century of launching our military might, the changed circumstances of the latest conflict against terror requires, as our military leaders recognize, a different and imaginative use of our military and civilian resources to prevail.

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