

What I Believe: Eight Tenets That Guide My Vision for the 21st Century Navy

By Admiral Mike Mullen, U.S. Navy, Chief of Naval Operations
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...To be effective in this environment, combatant commanders require tools that are not only instruments of war, but implements for stability, security, and reconstruction in our global neighborhood. Consider, for example, the international response to the devastating tsunami in Indonesia. For our part, in the Navy and Marine Corps, that response consisted of a carrier strike group and an expeditionary strike group—dozens of ships and helicopters and thousands of sailors and Marines, all collected and connected for one purpose: to save lives, provide security, and restore a sense of hope.

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 save, we started changing hearts and minds. We started showing them a side of American power that wasn't perceived as frightening, monolithic, or arrogant. We showed them American power—sea power—at its finest, and at its most noble.

I was struck by the results of a nationwide poll conducted two months later. The poll found that, as a direct result of our humanitarian assistance—and for the first time ever in a Muslim nation—more people favored U.S.-led efforts to fight terrorism than opposed them (40% to 36%). Perhaps more critically, the poll also found that those who opposed U.S. efforts in the war on terror declined by half, from 72% in 2003 to just 36% in 2005.



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Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Mullen, left, views maps of New Orleans, as the commanding officer of the USS Tortuga (LSD 46), Commander Mark Scovill, describes his ship's role in Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

According to the group Terror Free Tomorrow, who commissioned the poll, it was a "stunning turnaround of public opinion" and demonstrates that "U.S. actions can make a significant and immediate difference in eroding the support base for global terrorists."

That was, in my view, one of the defining moments of this new century, and shame on us if, even through benign neglect, we allow those same opinions to turn against our best intentions again.



U.S. NAVY (BENJAMIN D. GLASS)

The faces of Indonesian children in a small Sumatran village greeting a helicopter from *USS Abraham Lincoln* (CVN-72) is evidence that U.S. humanitarian relief efforts in the wake of the December 2004 tsunami, spearheaded by the Navy, produced a stunning turnaround in public opinion about the United States.