

**From: Port Hueneme "All Seabees"**

**Subject: CNO's Letter and Donation Addresses**

**To: All Hands**

**A very interesting letter, ADM. Michael G. Mullen is Chief of Naval Operations, he pretty much said it all. He sees a clear picture and knows the Seabees are doing a good job.**

**ED**

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Mullen, Michael G ADM

**Sent:** Monday, September 12, 2005 16:14

**To:** Fallon, William ADM CDRUSPACOM, J00; Willard, Bob F. ADM (VCNO); Nathman, John ADM, COMUSFLTFORCOM, N00; Donald, Kirkland H ADM SEA 08; Roughhead, Gary ADM CPF, N00; Hoewing, Gerald VADM; Brewer, David VADM COMSC 210, NA, 400-6; Cotton, John G VADM; Massenburg, Walter B. VADM AIR-00; McArthur, James D. NETWARCOM VADM;

**Subject:** Gulf Coast Visit

Admirals,

I made a day trip to the Gulf Coast this weekend to visit with and thank our Sailors for the extraordinary work they are doing in the recovery and relief effort. I spent time in at the Seabee base in Gulfport, NSA New Orleans and NAS/JRB New Orleans, as well as aboard HARRY S TRUMAN, BATAAN, TORTUGA and IWO JIMA.

It was at once both a grim and an incredibly uplifting experience. Some of my impressions.

First, the pictures on TV don't even begin to do justice to the scope of the devastation. I saw whole neighborhoods completely obliterated; the only evidence they ever existed at all being the faint outline of cement blocks that once formed the foundations of houses.

I saw massive casino barges in Biloxi thrown hundreds of yards inland, wooded areas so shredded they looked from the air like a spilled box of toothpicks, and much of New Orleans still a tepid, festering lake. There were very few people on the streets that weren't military or emergency workers.

Comparing it to a war zone is not at all a stretch.

Things are starting to turn around. The JTF has really taken shape, becoming more efficient and more organized every day. Communications across the region have improved dramatically. Dewatering efforts are proceeding ahead of the projected pace. And currently rescue teams are finding fewer and fewer people in need of immediate help.

The Navy's contribution to this success has been critical. I don't need to tell you that. We've been there since practically before the storm made landfall -- BATAAN chased it in weathering 12-14 foot seas and began flying SAR missions within hours of the storm's departure -- and we are still there making a difference.

Joe Kilkenny is doing a bang-up job as the JFMCC. He's got a plan, and he is executing it with great effectiveness.

The Seabees are repairing infrastructure and clearing debris at such a pace they have actually inspired local citizens to feel more optimistic about the future.

Sailors from TORTUGA are going door-to-door looking for and rescuing the house-bound.

Helicopter aircrews from TRUMAN and BATAAN are still delivering food and water and other basic necessities.

SHREVEPORT Sailors are cleaning up the St. Bernard Parish Courthouse.

In fact, just about all our ships pierside are housing and feeding and caring for people in need.

Then there's IWO JIMA, who put up POTUS overnight on Sun. Pierside at the Riverwalk, IWO has become a command center, hospital, airport, hotel and restaurant all rolled into one.

I ran into VADM Thad Allen in the p-way. Thad, as you may know, is the senior federal officer on scene, running the whole show. He said, "Mike, you should consider renaming this ship The City of New Orleans." That says it all.

I couldn't help but sneak a smile, having just given a speech up in Newport about the power of naval forces to win hearts and minds by serving as "cities at sea." I used our contributions to the international effort in the wake of last December's tsunami as my prime example in that speech. How little did I realize we'd be doing that sort of work on our own soil so soon.

It just goes to show you how very unpredictable this world really is. But, as I made sure to tell the Sailors I talked to, it also goes to show you how very flexible and adaptable naval forces really are.

If you want a picture of the future of sea basing, consider the image of BATAAN, a Mexican amphibious ship and a Dutch frigate anchored offshore sending boatloads of supplies to the beach ... or HST anchored not far off and the only things flying off her flight deck are helicopters ... or Mexican and U.S. Sailors, side by side, combing the beach and clearing debris ... or a JTF -- with significant civil and non-governmental agencies represented -- headquartered aboard a U.S. Navy ship, led by a two-star Army general reporting to a three-star

admiral in the Coast Guard, who is also headquartered aboard that same ship.

Perhaps the most moving thing I did Saturday was visit with a group of ombudsmen in Gulfport.

Many of them had lost everything. They were hurting, barely getting by on their own, and yet here they were at the FFSC looking for ways to help other Navy families. You could see the desperation and the hope on their faces, hear it in their cracking voices. Tough on the heart, to be sure, and yet somehow good for it at the same time.

I was humbled just to be in the room with them. You want to talk about courage? These ladies had it to spare.

There are, we estimate, about 10,000 Sailors affected by the hurricane in some form or fashion. There may be more. I pledged to those ombudsmen our Navy's full support in getting them and the families they represent back up on their feet. We have a lot of work to do to return their lives to some sense of normalcy, but we need to make it the highest of priorities.

It is most certainly mine I can assure you. And I know I can rely on your support.

Again, truly an unforgettable day. In the face of unspeakable disaster and suffering, our Sailors have stood tall and helped provide relief to thousands. They are not alone, of course. It's a total team effort, involving city, state and other federal agencies, not to mention our sister services, allies and relief organizations. But they have accorded themselves well as part of that team and reflected nothing but the very best back on each and every one of the rest of us.

At NAS New Orleans I came across a bunch of Seabees working feverishly on the wooden platform for what was going to be a temporary dining facility. It was a contract job, but the contractor was having problems rounding up the necessary manpower and resources. The Seabees didn't ask permission, didn't wait for orders. They simply rolled up their sleeves and went to work.

"Hey, they needed help," one said. "And we know how to do this stuff."

We do, indeed, know how to do this stuff, and we are doing it exceptionally well. Standing amongst them, I was never more proud to call myself an American Sailor.

Regards,

Mike

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## Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund for Military Families

### **NMCRS Gulfport**

**Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society  
Naval Construction Battalion Center**

**Bldg. 30, Suite 103**

**5301 CBC Snead Street**

**Gulfport, MS 39501-5000**

**e-mail to:**

**Charles Ingraham, [ingraham@glfprt.nmcrs.org](mailto:ingraham@glfprt.nmcrs.org)**

### **NMCRS Port Hueneme**

**Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society**

**Navy Base Ventura**

**Building 1169, Suite 1**

**2600 Dodson St.**

**Port Hueneme, CA 93043**

**Dave Swanson 1-805-982-4409**

**Mark all checks for Hurricane Katrina Relief**

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