

Mullen, Michael US Navy

[00:00:18.77] MICHAEL MULLEN: I was born in Hollywood in 1946-- October, 1946.

[00:00:24.29] JOE GALLOWAY: Who were your family members?

[00:00:26.58] MICHAEL MULLEN: My mom and dad were both in the movie and entertainment business. Jack Mullen was my dad, Jane Mullen my mother, both of them Depression-era kids. My dad, first to put himself through college. He grew up in South Side of Chicago, went to University of Illinois, and then went West to find his dreams, wanted to be an actor. That didn't work out very well, but he got into publicity. And his first job actually was on the road with Gene Autry--

[00:00:57.38] JOE GALLOWAY: Wow.

[00:00:57.95] MICHAEL MULLEN: --in the early '40s. And then that progressed over time. And my mother, who lost the farm in Iowa, three of her five siblings went to California with my grandparents. And she ended up working in Jimmy Durante's office at Republic Studios, and that's where my parents met.

[00:01:19.49] They got married. My mother didn't stay at work anymore, she raised five kids. I was the oldest of five, and my dad became a very successful public relations guy in the business, '50s, '60s, '70s. And he handled the biggest shows, some of the biggest shows at the time. He handled the entire Gunsmoke show, for example. He brought-- he was Steve McQueen's PR guy, when McQueen came west. Richard Boone, Ann-Margaret.

[00:01:49.71] JOE GALLOWAY: He was with the heavy hitters.

[00:01:51.95] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. No, he worked with-- he had an A-list of clients. He ran the campaign for Cliff Robertson, when Robertson won the Oscar for Charly as Best Actor. So it was kind of fun, although I grew up in a small town, Studio City. And Dad never brought the business home. And as it turns out, it's a pretty rough business.

[00:02:11.58] JOE GALLOWAY: It is a rough business.

[00:02:13.03] MICHAEL MULLEN: So I grew up in that area. I call it Ozzie and Harriet's neighborhood, nice little middle class neighborhood. And I was very fortunate. Catholic education and good discipline. I love sports, and I was smart enough to get decent grades in school.

[00:02:39.66] JOE GALLOWAY: Do you consider Hollywood your hometown? I--

[00:02:43.24] MICHAEL MULLEN: Really North Hollywood--

[00:02:44.96] JOE GALLOWAY: North Hollywood.

[00:02:45.11] MICHAEL MULLEN: --was where I grew up. Actually, if you're from that area, there is a difference. But yeah, that's really my hometown. That's where I grew up.

[00:02:53.65] JOE GALLOWAY: How did you come to enter the military?

[00:02:56.96] MICHAEL MULLEN: I was a senior in high school. A good friend of mine had gone to Annapolis the year before. I didn't know anything about it. My dad did not serve in World War II, he was medically not qualified. All of my uncles all did, and every man in the neighborhood, every father in my neighborhood and my coaches, they all had. So I certainly knew about it,

[00:03:20.65] But I had no intention of doing that. Except my dad, because we didn't have a lot of money, he said to me-- he knew the value of education, and he said, if you're going to go to college-- if you're going to get a good education, you better get somebody to pay for it.

[00:03:35.32] And the Naval Academy came around and recruited me. I was a basketball player. In fact, I was on my way under a scholarship to go to the University of California, Santa Barbara, which would have been a disaster for me. Because it would have been on the beach, too many parties, not enough study, all those things.

[00:03:53.38] JOE GALLOWAY: All the bad stuff.

[00:03:54.31] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. I'd have been back home in about a year, I think. And so the Naval Academy recruited me to play basketball, and I had a hankering to go East. There was a guy named Bill Bradley that was the best basketball player in the country at the time. It's one of the things I couldn't tell you why I wanted to go East, I just did.

[00:04:11.05] And so 1964, I left home at 17. I went to the Naval Academy. My mother would say, I had the worst year of my life, but I met great kids-- and back then it was all men, young men-- from all over the country. And that foundation, if you will, or that principle is something that has stuck with me to this day.

[00:04:36.39] The people that I met in the military were extraordinary young men then, and young men and women certainly in the last several decades. And it was a pretty special group. So--

[00:04:47.99] JOE GALLOWAY: You graduated with the class of '68?

[00:04:51.56] MICHAEL MULLEN: 1968, right.

[00:04:53.64] JOE GALLOWAY: Dear Lord.

[00:04:54.53] MICHAEL MULLEN: Tough year.

[00:04:55.63] JOE GALLOWAY: How many did you lose out of that class.

[00:04:59.03] MICHAEL MULLEN: I think we lost seven or eight. I mean, we were-- I had Marines, initially classmates, that went right away.

[00:05:10.16] JOE GALLOWAY: Aviators.

[00:05:11.28] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, no, ground guys. John, a guy named Johnny McKay, who was a good friend of mine, Ollie North, you know, and a handful-- in fact, one of my best friends from high school, my high school time, went to a rival high school. Ted Bevilacqua. And Ted was one that got over there right away, and was tragically killed at the end of '69, almost as he got to Vietnam. I mean, it was very early in the tour.

[00:05:39.39] And there were others that graduated a year ahead of me, two years ahead of me from the Naval Academy, that we lost pretty quickly as well, and in larger numbers.

[00:05:48.01] JOE GALLOWAY: So-- but Vietnam had to be on your mind early on, I would think.

[00:05:55.32] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, it was. Although when you're in Annapolis, when you're in one of these academies, you're very much in a cocoon. One of the really signature moments for me was spring leave of my junior year. I went up to Cornell, and-- because a good friend of mine was in college there, a good friend from LA.

[00:06:16.32] And I went up there just to spend four or five days with he and his wife. And there was a session there that he invited me to that night, because-- and Secretary Rusk was going to speak there. And Rusk's son was a student at Cornell, and he's a member of a fraternity that invited his dad to come and speak.

[00:06:40.14] And we got there early, and it was pretty tense-- intense-- this was 1967, this was summer of '67. It was pretty intense out in front on the steps before they opened up. And it was a couple of thousand people. So we go into this. And you could tell that the president who introduced the secretary, president of Cornell, was obviously opposed to the war. He reluctantly introduced him.

[00:07:04.95] And as soon as Rusk got introduced, half the students in the audience leaned under their chairs and picked up skeleton masks, and put them up. In addition, they walked 13 women in full black mourning gear to sit them down in the front row. And the place exploded. I mean, it wasn't violent, but it exploded. And that was sort of the moment for me something is going on here. Ironically, that was the same weekend that McGeorge Bundy got kicked off the campus at a speech, I think, at Berkeley.

[00:07:42.96] So that was sort of the awakening for me, that there's something going on here that I don't understand. And so it was really from that moment on, it was very much on my mind or on our minds, as we would commission in a little over a year. And then be deployed around the world, depending on obviously what our choice was in aviation, submarines, or ships. And that's what happened to me.

[00:08:11.32] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, in your senior year at Annapolis, you get to choose a branch?

[00:08:17.83] MICHAEL MULLEN: Right. Yeah.

[00:08:19.04] JOE GALLOWAY: Like they do at West Point.

[00:08:20.47] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah

[00:08:20.75] JOE GALLOWAY: What was your choice?

[00:08:21.81] MICHAEL MULLEN: So my choice was ships. And to some degree, it was by default. Young men go to that-- at least we did back then, and everybody wanted to be a jet pilot. Well, there are certain limitations that are physical. Turns out my eyesight, I had bad depth perception, so I couldn't become an aviator.

[00:08:44.06] And I chose to go to sea, and I chose a ship on the West Coast because I grew up out there. I was in Long Beach-- a destroyer. And it's one of those things, sort of like the Naval Academy opened up the country because I met kids from all over the country.

[00:08:58.85] When I got to my first ship, it just started to open up the world. And it had been a ship that had been stationed for two years in Yokosuka, Japan. So it had spent a lot of time on the gunline. It was a gun ship, basically, artillery. It was a 5 inch, 120 millimeter gun ship.

[00:09:15.72] It had six guns, and it had spent a lot of time on the gunline in Vietnam--

[00:09:20.71] JOE GALLOWAY: In Vietnam.

[00:09:21.56] MICHAEL MULLEN: --when it was stationed in Japan and then came back to the United States. But a year later, in the fall of '69, we went back to Vietnam.

[00:09:35.98] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell me about any additional training that you got before you deployed.

[00:09:43.18] MICHAEL MULLEN: So this was my first job.

[00:09:44.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Or just on the job?

[00:09:45.17] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. No. Well, no, I had some training. In fact, ironically, in-- this being 2019, I flew my first drone back in 1968. Out off San Clemente, we had drones in the Navy. And they were antisubmarine warfare drones to basically drop torpedoes on submarines.

[00:10:08.96] JOE GALLOWAY: These were helicopter drones?

[00:10:10.98] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah, they were helicopter drones. Could carry--

[00:10:12.81] JOE GALLOWAY: Could hover, find a sub, and blow it up?

[00:10:16.62] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, you found a sub by other means, other detection means on the ship. And that would vector then the drone over the target, and you'd drop a torpedo on the target.

[00:10:27.32] JOE GALLOWAY: I didn't know they had that back then.

[00:10:29.42] MICHAEL MULLEN: They were called DASH, D-A-S-H, Drone Antisubmarine Helicopter. And that was my principal job--

[00:10:35.42]

[00:10:35.89] JOE GALLOWAY: Did it work?

[00:10:36.36] MICHAEL MULLEN: --my first job. Yeah, it did really well. Now, it was a program that had pretty significant problems. We lost quite a few of them. But ironically, and we can come back to this, we adapted them to various needs. And eventually when I ended up on the gunline, we were flying drones over the beach, transferring the control to the Army or the Marine Corps, so they could do nighttime surveillance--

[00:11:03.44] this is with an IR sensor now-- about what was going on. They had expanded gas tanks, so they could stay up longer. So that was my first experience with drones. And so we had, I think it was 16 weeks of training out in San Clemente Island. They paid me, I think it was 16 bucks a day per diem. I thought I was-- had struck it rich.

[00:11:24.35] JOE GALLOWAY: You were rolling in dough

[00:11:25.85] MICHAEL MULLEN: Exactly. And it was great training, but that was most of the training. I also had training in antisubmarine warfare for 8 or 10 weeks, as well. But that was the training I got before I got to my ship.

[00:11:37.67] JOE GALLOWAY: Now did the training that you received prepare you for your job once you arrived off Vietnam?

[00:11:44.36] MICHAEL MULLEN: I think Annapolis really-- the four year-course at Annapolis was what really prepared me for that.

[00:11:51.47] JOE GALLOWAY: That was better than--

[00:11:53.18] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. I mean, in the end so much of who we become as officers is tied to leadership. And in the end I had more of that than I knew as a young officer. The technical side of that, I was enough of an engineer to be able to pick up on a lot of it. But probably, that four years at the Naval Academy had a lot more to do with what I needed to do and learn as a young officer than the training I got once I graduated.

[00:12:21.02] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, the name of your ship that you were assigned to?

[00:12:23.93] MICHAEL MULLEN: USS Collett DD. It was a World War II destroyer, commissioned in 1944. We called them FRAM destroyers. This was what we called a FRAM II because it had this helicopter mod. And it had these 5 inch-- it had-- but it had these three batteries, six 5"/38 guns, which were mechanical, basically mechanical guns.

[00:12:49.96] JOE GALLOWAY: But they could lay some--

[00:12:51.47]

[00:12:51.74] MICHAEL MULLEN: They could--

[00:12:52.51] JOE GALLOWAY: --iron on target.

[00:12:53.54] MICHAEL MULLEN: And we certainly did train in that, what we call gunfire support, before we went overseas as well. And back to your question, that part of it certainly helped me.

[00:13:04.58] JOE GALLOWAY: And your rank at that time? Lieutenant JG?

[00:13:08.23] MICHAEL MULLEN: Ensign.

[00:13:09.25] JOE GALLOWAY: Ensign?

[00:13:09.92] MICHAEL MULLEN: Ensign.

[00:13:10.72] JOE GALLOWAY: You got to work your way up to lieutenant.

[00:13:12.34] MICHAEL MULLEN: That's true. That's true. MICHAEL MULLEN: We left in September '69. It took about a month to get there, maybe three weeks. You go through Hawaii, you make a stop in the Philippines, in Subic Bay. And then within 24 to 36 hours, you're on the gunline.

[00:13:35.01] JOE GALLOWAY: You're on the gunline.

[00:13:36.09] MICHAEL MULLEN: And the gunline then, went from the DMZ, all the way down to the Mekong Delta. Principally, for the months that I was there, we were up north, right at the DMZ. There were operations-- I'll think of this. There were also operations up north, LINEBACKER operations, we used to call them.

[00:13:58.60] And I didn't get involved in that. I knew of those operations. But I can still also remember the first morning, coming into the Tonkin Gulf, into Yankee Station, and looking up and seeing three carriers. And it was a relatively calm day weather-wise, and just the really awesome sight of this naval capability, that started launching airplanes.

[00:14:30.29] I can't remember which ship, but literally that morning, as we were pulling in relatively close to the carriers, there was a helicopter that went down. And so our first welcome is to pick up, I think 8 or 10 or 12 Sailors, who had gone down in that helicopter, near one of the carriers.

[00:14:51.12] I can't remember if it was the Wasp or the-- but it was a support carrier, but that was sort of a wake up. And I can remember being on the bridge that morning. That was the 4:00 AM watch.

[00:15:03.32] JOE GALLOWAY: You got them all?

[00:15:04.62] MICHAEL MULLEN: We did, we got them. And that was back to training. I mean, we'd actually trained pretty hard to be able to get that boat in the water, and get people out quickly, and we succeeded.

[00:15:19.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Now your duties as an antisubmarine warfare guy on that ship were-- can you describe them for people who don't know this stuff?

[00:15:30.80] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, I had a division of about 20 people. And the principal responsibility was to prepare for hunting and killing submarines. Now, this is '69, '70. The Soviet Union was still public enemy number one, and their actually biggest threat were the submarines that they had. So we had a very--

[00:15:56.39] JOE GALLOWAY: And they were messing with us some?

[00:15:58.01] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, I don't remember them-- they were globally, for sure--

[00:16:01.88] JOE GALLOWAY: Guam, and-- with the B-52s.

[00:16:04.67] MICHAEL MULLEN: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah. Well, and the Russians-- or the Soviets, at the time had a big fleet in Vladivostok, their Pacific fleet. And so, absolutely. I don't remember them doing much while we were in close, when I was on the gunline or anything like that. But we knew the threat was out there. And that's principally what we trained for.

[00:16:24.15] And again, it was-- for a destroyer, you're designed to protect the-- you have several missions, but one of them is to protect the carrier.

[00:16:31.70] JOE GALLOWAY: To protect the carrier

[00:16:32.30] MICHAEL MULLEN: And the submarines would be coming after the aircraft carrier, and our goal was to keep anybody coming at us away from us, in terms of the submarine threat. Not just the submarine threat, but in the submarine warfare area, certainly that.

[00:16:47.03] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you perform the same duties your entire cruise?

[00:16:51.96] MICHAEL MULLEN: No. So I had the drone duty, that was part of the antisubmarine duty, and then the antisubmarine warfare duty, and-- through about half the cruise. And then I became the navigator. The CO moved me up, and I think I'd been promoted to JG.

[00:17:13.03] Now back then, I thought this was great. I didn't really understand it. But in reality, we were so short of people, that we promoted from 01 ensign to 02 lieutenant JG in 12 months.

[00:17:28.21] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. One year. The Army was doing the same thing.

[00:17:31.54] MICHAEL MULLEN: Everybody was doing that, which of course, as I say, we all thought that was terrific, but I didn't understand the big picture as to why that was going on. So about the time I became a JG in the second half of the cruise, I moved up to navigator. And that was then the responsibility for obviously getting the ship from point A to point B, all the time.

[00:17:55.77] But in addition to that, I stood watches in the Combat Information Center, and I became what was called the GLO, which was the Gunnery Liaison Officer. And essentially, that was the liaison that-- the communications with the beach, the Marines and the Army-- where do you want the lead to land, where do you want the artillery, the rounds to land?

[00:18:18.61] JOE GALLOWAY: And your ship was firing regular missions?

[00:18:21.32] MICHAEL MULLEN: Thousands. Thousands of rounds. In fact-- and then as soon as-- I was thinking about this getting ready for this interview. I think we had three magazines, probably, I think 500 or 600 rounds you could put in a magazine. We'd fire those magazines out in 3 days, and then we would go out and completely replenish--

[00:18:41.69] JOE GALLOWAY: And then do it again.

[00:18:41.87] MICHAEL MULLEN: --with ammunition ships. And then we come back and do it again. And time and time-- and those 5 inch guns got-- at various times would be glowing red. That's how fast we were firing them. And--

[00:18:58.07] JOE GALLOWAY: This was support for the US Marines--

[00:19:01.16] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yes.

[00:19:01.55] JOE GALLOWAY: --the US Army?

[00:19:02.09] MICHAEL MULLEN: And the Army, basically at the DMZ. And there was what we called-- we called it the H&I fire, harassment and interdiction. And again, this is '69 to '70. So there was great emphasis, particularly out west, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, et cetera. But we had an awful lot of troops on the ground in that area--

[00:19:24.57] JOE GALLOWAY: A Shau Valley and all of that. Khe Sanh.

[00:19:26.51] MICHAEL MULLEN: Correct. Yeah. But I was so young, and I had a job, and I was just trying to figure out my job. I knew where I was on the planet, but I didn't know anything about Vietnam, even at this time frame

[00:19:43.71] JOE GALLOWAY: Even-- you're shooting it up--

[00:19:45.68] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, I didn't have time to do that. Basically we were standing what I would call 6 and 6, we were on six hours, off six hours, around the clock. And my principal responsibility, as a young officer, was making the mission work, as the Gunnery Liaison Officer. And there was a lot of technical tactical issues that you had to take into consideration.

[00:20:10.88] And back in these days, it wasn't highly electronic. I mean, we had radars and stuff like that. But an awful lot of it was mechanical. It was navigation where you--

[00:20:20.53] JOE GALLOWAY: Navigation. You're using a sextant and things like that?

[00:20:24.47] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, I'm not using that for-- I'm not using the sextant for the close in navigation. I mean, we really are using radars, soundings, if you will, how deep is the water, to figure out where we are because-- and I'm moving. So, in order for me to get the round on target, I have to take all that relative motion into effect, and then fire obviously at the target. And actually, we got very good at it. If we weren't on target on the first round, the adjustment was pretty quick to get where we needed.

[00:21:00.32] Now, I mentioned harassment and Interdiction, that's one. There's also direct fire. I've got a direct target, I can see the target. This is where I need you to shoot. And then I also mentioned this drone capability that we evolved, and actually these were big, black drones, that we would--

[00:21:19.82] JOE GALLOWAY: Did you launch them off the destroyer?

[00:21:21.23] MICHAEL MULLEN: We launched them-- we had two of them, that basically-- we had a hangar. We had two of them, and we would launch them and transfer them to somebody ashore, who had a control box.

[00:21:32.22] JOE GALLOWAY: And then recover them to ship?

[00:21:33.92] MICHAEL MULLEN: Exactly, exactly. Now, they all didn't work that way. One of the-- anybody-- if you talk to anybody in the Navy that was in the DASH business, the helicopter, the drone helicopter business, we probably lost half of those drones over time. And anybody that operated them, the first question anybody's going to ask them is how many did you lose?

[00:21:55.07] And fortunately at the time, I was there for 17 or 18 months, I didn't lose any. Although I did have one whose skids went all the way in the water, and I was dialing up as fast as I could to get elevation going. And fortunately it came out of the water

[00:22:08.84] JOE GALLOWAY: It came out of the water.

[00:22:09.83] MICHAEL MULLEN: But yeah, I was flying those drones. So we were pretty adaptive, pretty innovative in that time.

[00:22:16.73] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, did you ever set foot on the ground in Vietnam during your cruise?

[00:22:22.42] MICHAEL MULLEN: One day.

[00:22:23.39] JOE GALLOWAY: One day.

[00:22:24.26] MICHAEL MULLEN: We actually-- because we also-- another way, another spotter group that we had were the aviation GLOs. So these were Army aviators or Marine Corps aviators, who were flying around-- my recollection was in Hueys. I mean, back then little bitty ones, that would guide us day and night, as to where we should be firing.

[00:22:54.48] And because I was one of the gunnery liaison officers, I went ashore one day, just to kind of look at where they were. And actually--

[00:23:02.64] JOE GALLOWAY: To see what they were doing.

[00:23:03.30] MICHAEL MULLEN: --and then flew with them. And watched us fire the missions that we were firing. But that was-- and obviously we were up near the DMZ. I can't even remember the name of the place that we went. But it was this base. I mean, obviously created-- a FOB, or that kind of place, inland-- a few miles inland.

[00:23:25.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Was it impressive watching the firing?

[00:23:28.14] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah, it sure was, because we went up during the day to see it. Yeah, it really was. And the other thing that I got an appreciation for was it was a pretty-- it was a gunned up Huey. And as soon as they saw anything moving, that they-- and they knew where we were, where our troops were. They went after him.

[00:23:48.31] And so they-- and my recollection were .50 cal that were in this--

[00:23:54.09] JOE GALLOWAY: Huey.

[00:23:54.93] MICHAEL MULLEN: --Huey, that they went after the bad guys on the ground. So in a relatively short period of time gave me some feel for what was going on.

[00:24:07.25] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell us what your living conditions were like on ship, as a young junior officer.

[00:24:14.12] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, there was a story in that time frame that you'll probably recall, a major collision between the Australian carrier, Melbourne and the USS Evans.

And it turns out I had a classmate named Scott Pattee who lived in the same bunk room I did, in the forward part of the ship, and basically it split the ship.

[00:24:38.15] JOE GALLOWAY: It cut it in half, as I recall.

[00:24:39.64] MICHAEL MULLEN: Cut it in half. And we lived down and forward. That's where the ensigns lived. And he was in that compartment, and it was a three or four-person bunk room. The ladder, which I know very well, or the steps, broke off and jammed that door. So it became a coffin for him, immediately. They never got out.

[00:25:03.55] JOE GALLOWAY: Never got out.

[00:25:04.03] MICHAEL MULLEN: But that-- and I had in my division, the helicopter division, I had three or four of the young enlisted, who were on the Evans in the same division. But obviously they transferred them, and put them back to work. And they happened to be sleeping aft. And the two parts of the ship that-- one sunk, it was the forward, the after part stayed afloat.

[00:25:32.35] JOE GALLOWAY: Stayed afloat

[00:25:32.68] MICHAEL MULLEN: So anyway, I had three or four of these young kids, who were in my division as well. So I knew-- and going to sea is-- and I'll overstate it-- but it's dangerous business.

[00:25:43.33] JOE GALLOWAY: Dangerous business.

[00:25:43.92] MICHAEL MULLEN: You've got to be very careful. So I lived down in the front. It was a ship-- a wardroom-- and the ship size was about 300 total, wardroom of 15 to 20 officers. The junior officers--

[00:26:05.69] JOE GALLOWAY: Tell me about the atmosphere in the wardroom out on the gunline.

[00:26:10.21] MICHAEL MULLEN: What I remember-- I mean, there are a lot of things that flood back. But what I do remember is how many-- officers in particular-- had joined the Navy to not be in the Army. Now, this is not an unfamiliar story. These were not Academy graduates, they were officers that had low draft numbers-- individuals, sorry-- who had low draft numbers and they didn't want to go ashore, so they joined the Navy.

[00:26:37.06] And we didn't spend a lot of time debating what we were doing. They were just happy to be there. And they were highly competent people, and great friends at the time. The focus though-- I mean this was back to what I said sort of six on and six off, for days, and weeks, and months at a time.

[00:27:00.95] So everybody was so focused on what they were doing, and what they had to do. And this was an old ship. So this is 1968. The ship was commissioned--

[00:27:08.41] JOE GALLOWAY: You've got to keep the thing working.

[00:27:08.59]

[00:27:10.93] MICHAEL MULLEN: We did. And so there was an awful lot of work that went into that, as well. But it was obviously very serious. We knew we were supporting the war effort, at war. There were other parts of this mission. There was a mission that you may recall MARKET TIME, which was the North bringing weapons, and people down the coast as well.

[00:27:35.41] JOE GALLOWAY: By coastal shipping, yeah.

[00:27:36.79] MICHAEL MULLEN: Correct. We were in and out of that area as well. I talked about the LINEBACKER operations, where ships like mine, not mine, but ships like mine would go very close to the shore up north.

[00:27:51.80] JOE GALLOWAY: Tickle their radar.

[00:27:53.11] MICHAEL MULLEN: And they would, but they'd also be launching a lot of firepower at specific targets, and then turn out. And they would typically get fired at or get shot at, and there were North Korean batteries up there that knew they were coming.

[00:28:08.83] So there were carrier operations. We spent a little time with the carriers, and they obviously were launching strikes in the North and in the South. And so it was a variety of things that we were involved in. But the most dominant mission that we had the whole time we were there, was the fire support mission.

[00:28:30.07] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. And nobody goes through a whole cruise without some light-hearted moments. I assume you had a few of those in the wardroom.

[00:28:42.62] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, I can say that we did. I mean, as you say that, I'm trying to recall what they may have been. I mean, we did get breaks. So the first place I ever visited in my life was Sasebo, Japan, which is this wonderful Japanese port.

[00:29:03.37] And actually I was-- we also visited Yokosuka, Japan. And those were pretty hysterical liberty ports. We were in Yokosuka with the carrier, Kitty Hawk. And the aviators who were flying-- it was a life and death mission.

[00:29:20.51]

[00:29:20.66] JOE GALLOWAY: They partied hardy.

[00:29:21.80] MICHAEL MULLEN: They did because-- this is my own opinion that they didn't know if they'd have another time on liberty. And they partied and spent it like they had it. And all of that was kind of an awakening-- and for any young officer-- an awakening for me. That was great fun at the time. But Sasebo to this day, is one of my favorite cities in the world.

[00:29:46.19] But-- and I'll use Sasebo as an example-- we also had a great visit to Hong Kong. Not unlike when I went to Annapolis and sort of met kids, 1,000 kids from all over the country. This deployment-- going into Hong Kong, going to Sasebo, going to the Philippines-- it gave me-- it just opened up the world to me. And it opened up part of the world in Asia and the Asia-Pacific region-- back then we called it the Orient-- that was fascinating to me.

[00:30:19.30] So in my off hours, I would hide and read books, and particularly, I was reading-- I can remember devouring Shogun at the time--

[00:30:30.14] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, yeah

[00:30:31.87] MICHAEL MULLEN: --and his books about that part of the world, which have a fascinating history to this day obviously, but relevant at the time. And I loved-- I did then and I do now-- I love the ethos of the people. I love the family focus. I love the totality of the family experience from birth to death, where they lived together, took care of each other.

[00:30:59.79] I love the courtesy and the respect, all those things that are so evident in that part of the world. And I wasn't thinking a lot about that, I was experiencing it, but I took away from that. That was a huge six months for me for so many reasons, not least of which was that, even in the difficulty of wartime.

[00:31:20.96] So we did get breaks. They could be pretty hysterical. We'd go to Hong Kong, and we'd buy more stereo gear than you would need--

[00:31:29.40] JOE GALLOWAY: Oh, yeah.

[00:31:29.63]

[00:31:29.71] MICHAEL MULLEN: --the rest of your life.

[00:31:30.56] JOE GALLOWAY: Exactly.

[00:31:32.16] MICHAEL MULLEN: And then, but it was, a day later, you're back on the gunline, and it was serious work.

[00:31:36.98] JOE GALLOWAY: Back on the gunline. JOE GALLOWAY: Describe for us your friendships with, and your impressions of your fellow officers, junior, senior?

[00:31:54.50] MICHAEL MULLEN: I had an immediate boss, who was all of two years older than I was, who was a lieutenant-- Danny Leroy, who was just a wonderful mentor. I mean, really he was a young guy, and the weapons part of this obviously was important on this ship.

[00:32:11.60] And he was a guy that also loved the bridge. And I love driving, I love handling a ship. I learned it early, I had some decent skill set in that regard. And it was one of these things-- I mean, there's nothing I love more than the 4:00 to 8:00 watch in the morning, and watching the

sun come up, or the evening watch, and the sun going down in the west. I didn't know about it before I went to sea, but there's just no place in the world like it, then and now.

[00:32:45.74] Actually, a guy it became a great friend of mine, Bill Kelly, who was the operations officer. Again, he was like five years senior to me. But he was also somebody that took me on liberty. He loved Japan, we would go on liberty, and he loved jazz music. And so I can remember doing that in various liberty ports with him. But he took me under his wing and was a great friend.

[00:33:13.91] Most importantly, one of the things I learned was how good my initial commanding officer was. And that became a metric for me my whole career. That a young man or woman's experience, or likelihood of retention in whatever service we're talking about-- and this isn't just the Navy-- was so geared to who their first battalion commander was, squadron commander was, commanding officer was. And I had a great-- I had a terrific commanding officer that made it fun.

[00:33:47.57] It was hard, but-- loved the mission, and he took care of us. His name was Ray Beck, and he just recently passed away. He was out of the Class of '53 at the Naval Academy. And just was one of those guys that you wanted to be like, and loved going to sea, and knew how to take care of troops, and knew how to drive, and enjoyed himself, and worked hard.

[00:34:08.71] And then that became-- I did that one more time, in my next ship with my principal mentor in the Navy, and that sort of sewed up that I was going to do this a whole lot longer than expected.

[00:34:19.07] JOE GALLOWAY: So, you had a second cruise to Vietnam, to the gunline?

[00:34:22.12] MICHAEL MULLEN: I did, and that was in '72.

[00:34:25.56] JOE GALLOWAY: And what ship?

[00:34:27.25] MICHAEL MULLEN: USS Blandy, which was stationed in Norfolk, Virginia. And what was happening at the time-- now I've got a little more-- you don't have a lot of wisdom at 24, 25 years old, but I had a little more than when I was younger. And what was going on is, the war was still raging. They needed 5 inch gun ships, and they were running out on the West Coast, in the Pacific. So a number of East Coast ships--

[00:34:55.40] JOE GALLOWAY: Just wearing the available ships.

[00:34:56.62] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah, they were wearing out the guns-- when you fire enough rounds, you run the bore down to a point where they ain't working anymore. So you have to re-gun them, put new barrels on. We would do that. I think we did that once while we were actually out there on my first cruise. We'd do that in Subic Bay. But they needed more gun ships, and they-- so they started bringing them from the East Coast.

[00:35:25.36] So I deployed on relatively short notice out of Norfolk back to Vietnam, through the canal, et cetera. So, once you got through there, you go to Hawaii, you go to Subic, and you're off. And it was towards the end of my tour, and I was the operations officer now, and then-- now, Seventh--

[00:35:43.93] JOE GALLOWAY: What was different about that job, from navigator and antisubmarine--

[00:35:48.61] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, the ops boss is in the ground world, the three that takes care of all-- what I would call internal and outside, and external connectivity in terms of operations. What are you going to do, how are you going to do them, when are you going to do them, how you schedule them, literally the training through the operations.

[00:36:08.77] So you have the full spectrum of-- you've got communications, you've got electronics, you've got all the -- an awful lot of the classified stuff, classified communications--

[00:36:19.49] JOE GALLOWAY: You're laying of this stuff down for the commanding officer.

[00:36:23.62] MICHAEL MULLEN: Correct. And for the deployment, if you will, to make sure-- and it's the training across the board on the ship of who's ready to do these jobs. And focus on what the mission is going to be. So we get called to go back, and just timing-wise, I was due to be relieved.

[00:36:46.21] And I had been on this ship-- this was USS Blandy-- Initially, I'd been the weapons officer for about a year, and for the last seven or eight months, I was the ops boss. And it's only a year and a half tour.

[00:37:03.10] So myself, and my CO, my commanding officer, who was-- became a great, great friend of mine. We actually got plucked off the ship the night before it went to Vietnam. So we got back to Subic, made all the preparations. I turned over, so did the CO. 24 hours later, that ship is on the gunline.

[00:37:21.85] JOE GALLOWAY: Wow.

[00:37:22.66] MICHAEL MULLEN: The other thing about that, Joe, that's important is my perspective on the war at that point-- this is '72 now-- had changed dramatically, in terms of, like so many-- What are we doing here? How long are we going to stay? What's success look like? We'd lost tens of thousands at that point. We had elected a president in '68, the year that I graduated, whose commitment was to get out of the war, and we seemed to just be in deeper, and deeper, and deeper.

[00:37:58.82] From my own perspective, it was more difficult understanding what we were doing-- I wasn't questioning it in terms of what I was going to do. But I certainly wondered at the more strategic level, what the hell is going on here? How long are-- how long are we going to do this? How many more lives is it going to take?

[00:38:19.56] Now, I mentioned-- I'll go back just briefly to this time when I was-- in '66, when I went to Cornell and I had this-- we had this really significant speech given by Rusk, who was booed off the stage.

[00:38:37.47] JOE GALLOWAY: Booed off the stage.

[00:38:38.55] MICHAEL MULLEN: 100 years later, it wasn't. But so now I am-- in 2005, I'm the CNO. And President Bush has a dinner every year in the White House for the four stars and their spouses, and-- President and Mrs. Bush. And it was great. My wife ends up sitting at a separate table with Steve Hadley. Steve Hadley is Bush's National Security Advisor at the time.

[00:39:04.71] Deb didn't really understand who he was, and we were sort of relatively new at this level. Anyway, so they start who are you and where you been? Long story short, Steve Hadley who was a student at Cornell was in that same room that I was in--

[00:39:19.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Was in that audience.

[00:39:19.66] MICHAEL MULLEN: --in 1966, in that audience, which was really, really something. And we've become good friends. We've shared that. We remember it very much the same way.

[00:39:32.10]

[00:39:34.25] JOE GALLOWAY: I remember reading about it at the time.

[00:39:37.25] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. It was a powerful moment.

[00:39:39.21] JOE GALLOWAY: It was a significant moment.

[00:39:39.68] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yes, it was. It was.

[00:39:41.37] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, did you form friendships with men from different racial and social backgrounds in your naval service, that you might never have seen in civilian life?

[00:39:53.99] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. Yeah. One of the things that the military, the Navy in my case, gave me-- and I mentioned I love going to sea. I love Sailors. And you're on a ship that's 350, 400 feet. And I love the leadership aspect of-- you're living with them. I mean, I'm not sleeping with them, I'm not in the same bunk room, but I'm in the next bunk room. And I'm in their working spaces all the time.

[00:40:25.03] And troops, to this day, love sports. I love sports. So when we're halfway around the world, in a war we really don't understand, in a mission that's really intense, my engagement with them would oftentimes start-- and this was true in Vietnam, it was true in Iraq and Afghanistan, when I was a four star--

[00:40:49.13] my engagement with them would start with where are you from? And as soon as I knew they were from Pittsburgh, we'd start talking about the Steelers. Or you pick the city in the country, or the Pirates. And I'm from LA, and I'm an LA homer, Dodger, Ram, Laker guy. The point is I love learning about them and their backgrounds. I was also, back then, a decent athlete, and I was a basketball player.

[00:41:18.96] So because I played a lot of basketball, and we did on the ships, and we did-- it was intramural. We did between ships, and in tournaments, whether we were in Long Beach or in Subic. So there was common ground there, and in particular because of that, I met a lot of young African-Americans, that were on my ship, who were pretty competitive.

[00:41:45.65] And therefore, I could learn a lot about their lives. And I was very comfortable with them, because we had this sort of common ground of basketball, and then I could pick it up from there. And it was always pretty easy for me to get into a conversation about what they cared about, what their lives were, why they were, their futures, their families, which was something that I did from when I was an ensign to when I was the chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

[00:42:14.00] JOE GALLOWAY: Now, back home, there were antiwar demonstrations, there was racial and social tension, and turmoil and assassinations, and the impeachment of a president. And does any of that translate to your ship on the gunline?

[00:42:33.74] MICHAEL MULLEN: We had huge-- in that same time frame, we had huge racial issues in the Navy. The military had them, but my life in particular. And there was a guy that I'm sure you know, Bud Zumwalt, who was-- at the time as a Navy one and two star, I think, he was the head Navy guy on the ground in Vietnam.

[00:42:59.18] And he became the chief of naval operations in 1970. And he jumped-- I'm told, and somebody can do the research. But he jumped like 42 flag officers.

[00:43:12.44]

[00:43:12.65] JOE GALLOWAY: 40 something. 43.

[00:43:14.24] MICHAEL MULLEN: That made a lot of unhappy--

[00:43:15.68] JOE GALLOWAY: It made a lot of unhappy admirals.

[00:43:17.69] MICHAEL MULLEN: --senior admirals. His ascendancy was so important to my staying in the Navy, because he in many ways turned lots upside down. I mean, we could grow our hair longer, you could have mustaches. He had sideburns down to here.

[00:43:35.66] The second ship I was on was something called the Mod Squad, which was ironic for me with my father's background in public relations. Because one of the shows my dad handled was a show called The Mod Squad, which was a big show in the late '60s and early '70s.

[00:43:56.82] And what Zumwalt did was put us in at a-- for whatever job you were in, you were in one pay grade junior than normal. So the commanding officer normally would be an 05, and he made him an 04. And this guy became my mentor. So each of us was in at a more responsibility, at a more junior level.

[00:44:21.09] We were together for a year and a half. And this was the ship that at the end went back to Vietnam, but we had-- in the meantime, we deployed to the Mediterranean. And we had a great, great time, but Zumwalt was an exciting guy. That said, he attacked the whole race discrimination and race relations issue head on. And he put us through training, which was really rough training.

[00:44:45.96] I can remember sitting in a training session with this African-American trainer who's got an afro out to here, telling me how screwed up I was as a young officer in my views, et cetera. I didn't necessarily agree with him. But Zumwalt recognized the need to deal with that. Now we were having race riots on carriers as an example.

[00:45:09.13] In a way-- and I've always found this to be true in the military-- in a way, we were a reflection of what was going on in the country. And you had to be careful on some of those bigger ships where you walked on the ship at night, or you could get jumped and beat up pretty badly. So I was very much aware of all that.

[00:45:32.46] Now, I deployed in '69, I deployed in '72, I deployed in '73, I deployed in '74. So I wasn't here a lot, but I was-- and back then, the news didn't get to you as quickly as it does now. But certainly I was aware. I mean, I know-- and I was paying attention because my dad was from Chicago, but the '68 Convention was a nightmare.

[00:46:01.14] Martin Luther King was killed in April, just before I graduated. Bobby Kennedy was assassinated the night before I graduated in '68. I was in my senior in high school when Kennedy-- when the president got killed. And then obviously, what was going on with Nixon.

[00:46:17.40] I can remember getting my Sports Illustrated, because I always subscribed to that, deployed to the Mediterranean in August of '74. And on the cover-- I think I have this right, was Gerald Ford who was an athlete who'd become the president. I think it was SI, it may have been Time, one of the two.

[00:46:39.17] But I can remember initialing it. I think it was August 8, 1974 the day Nixon walked. And I couldn't have been happier quite frankly, because he had put the country through an unbelievable time as president. And he was also an LA guy, a Whittier guy.

[00:46:59.63] So there was a little bit of a-- not a-- but he was a local guy out of a place where I grew up as well. Needless to say, there was a lot I didn't understand back then. But I followed that as close as I could. Tough times. Those were really tough times.

[00:47:20.34] JOE GALLOWAY: I think we've covered most of this, but I'm going to run this question by you. Describe the quality of the leadership on each of your ships that you served during that period?

[00:47:37.24] MICHAEL MULLEN: So the first ship was this FRAM II World War II destroyer, and that was Ray Beck who was extraordinary. And I still believe to this day that your first commanding officer has a huge impact on you, whatever service, and whatever you're doing.

[00:47:53.48] The second ship was USS Blandy which was a destroyer, but it was newer and upgraded. And the guns on my first ship were mechanical. I used to say, you could shoot this gun from 100 feet under the water, it would shoot fine. But it's all as you know, it's all your hand loading this stuff hand-- it's a real physical effort.

[00:48:19.55] The second ship, Blandy, had the first automatic guns. 500 round magazines, a single barrel rather than two. But you could get out 30, 35 rounds a minute. And on a good day for the first ship you-- I'm trying to remember-- but it was like 15 max. And that's with guys humping them.

[00:48:42.80] JOE GALLOWAY: Really--

[00:48:43.49] MICHAEL MULLEN: And these rounds, these 5 inch rounds, they weighed 100 pounds. I mean, they were not small rounds. And that got-- George Sullivan was his name, and sadly he just passed away last year. He's the guy that really kept me in the Navy. He made it more fun than I thought I could ever have. He was a magnificent-- and I never saw anybody handle a ship better than he, and he taught me how to do that.

[00:49:09.42] The other thing is he let me do it. He would take the risk. I can remember driving his ship alongside another ship, up in, I think it was in Newport. And I was too close and I clipped off like a half a dozen stanchions of the ship that I was landing on. And all we did back then was-- we sent our welders over to weld the stanchions back on, did little damage. But George was the guy that really kept me in the Navy.

[00:49:40.83] My next ship was a few years later. Now, I mentioned I'd been an operator, I'd been ops. I take it back. After that my third ship was-- I was the CO, commanding officer. So I was a 26-year-old lieutenant. And I commanded a ship which was a World War II gasoline tanker, that used to-- that was originally designed to give one shot to the small carriers. And it carried about 800,000 gallons of gas, and then go back in, and keep doing that.

[00:50:16.62] JOE GALLOWAY: Captain Queeg.

[00:50:18.82] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, this was an un-- this was an oiler. And then they kept a handful of them for Vietnam because they were shallow draft. This was USS Noxubee AOG, and they'd put avgas on them and they'd run them up the river--

[00:50:35.52] JOE GALLOWAY: Run them up the river.

[00:50:36.24]

[00:50:36.90] MICHAEL MULLEN: --because they were shallow enough to take gas up to the Air Force base. And they kept three after the Vietnam War, and we used to-- they were on the

East Coast. And they would support contingency operations for the Marines because we carried 50,000 gallons of mogas for the Marines when they'd go ashore.

[00:50:55.00] So I commanded that ship, deployed twice. But initially, back to my ship handling skill, I managed to famously hit a buoy on my first time at sea. That ended my career. I got an evaluation out of that, which I've called F, failure, no future, find something else to do.

[00:51:15.58] JOE GALLOWAY: Find a new job.

[00:51:15.87] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah, but it was a risky-- it was taking a risk to go to this job, because you're the CO. And like all COs, you own the whole thing. I loved that job. I wanted to-- but I had a very rough-- I was there 2 and 1/2 years. I had a very rough 2 and 1/2 years professionally. It took me 11 years to come back from that, to screen for command again, which is what I wanted to do.

[00:51:41.54] And in that 11-year time frame, I took a job as a chief engineer on a cruiser, which was a bigger ship. I'd been ops. I'd been weaps. If I wanted to command a ship, I needed to know what made it work. And so I was an engineer for 2 and 1/2 years, with the exception of the chairman's job, hardest job I've ever had in my life.

[00:52:05.29] A guided missile cruiser. This is still Soviet Union, air defense, protect the carriers. That was also a very formative tour. Two great commanding officers. Now my COs are what we call major commanders, so they're 06s, Navy captain, lieutenant-- or Army, Air Force colonel level officers.

[00:52:28.12] And again, they were absolutely spectacular individuals, both COs that I had on-- that was USS Fox, which was a ship built in the '60s. Then I went on as XO of a similar ship, home port in the Philippines. And being home ported in Subic Bay is a whole lot different being home ported in San Diego, and being the XO. And I watched my career flash in front of my eyes, more than once there as well. And I--

[00:53:01.87] JOE GALLOWAY: What years?

[00:53:02.68] MICHAEL MULLEN: This is '80, '81. So we're still in the Philippines. We hadn't gotten kicked out yet. The U.S. forces did out of Clark and Subic, I think it was '84, but I mean, a few years later. So we lived in the Philippines for 17 months. And that ship was also basically the carrier and anti-- take care of the carrier kind of air defense ship.

[00:53:36.40] And the COs there, one for a short period of time, were really terrific. But my second CO was the same CO I had when I was a young officer, what I would call my best friend. A lot of people thought we plotted that and that didn't happen. It really was coincidence, but it was great to be back with this guy George Sullivan.

[00:53:57.55] And I loved being back in the Pacific. After that, I went to command. My next ship was to be the commander myself of a guided missile destroyer out of Hawaii. First deployment to the-- I take it back, second deployment to the Persian Gulf. First one was when I

was a chief engineer on USS Fox, 1979 to 1981. And I can remember being there in Bahrain in 1981, '80, '81 for Christmas.

[00:54:35.05] I'd never been to the Gulf, never been in the Middle East, and thinking I was having-- we were ashore for Christmas. I had dinner with a great friend of mine, my roommate and classmate, one of the other officers on the ship. And I said, well, this has really been nice. I know I'm glad I'll never be back here, or I'll never be in this area.

[00:54:52.66] And it just goes to show you how much you know when you're young, which is nothing because I've been back there 100 or 200 times since, in that part of the world. Then I commanded a ship and my ship deployed to the Gulf, right after the USS Stark incident, where the Stark had gotten hit by the Iraqis, in '85 to '87.

[00:55:16.72] So I've been blessed with great bosses. I mean, I've also had a couple of bosses who were idiots, but by and large, I've had great bosses the whole time that I've been there.

[00:55:28.24] JOE GALLOWAY: Average is pretty high.

[00:55:30.23] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah, it was. It was. And I've used-- back to what I said earlier, I've used that metric for young people that I wanted to keep in the military. And inevitably, when I got to a young JO, or a young sergeant, or a staff sergeant, why are you leaving? When I really picked at it, it's because they had a jerk for their first boss, and they just never recovered from it. So I've always tried to focus on that in terms of making sure young ones were taken care of in their first tour.

[00:56:04.60] JOE GALLOWAY: Could you describe for us the cutting edge technology and science that you saw come of age during your career? From a naval standpoint?

[00:56:21.81] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, I mentioned the-- I didn't know it at the time, but we've talked a little bit about the whole drone issue. I mean, when you think about-- we're talking in 2019 right now. And one of the really significant moments for me in recent times was-- I think it was 2003, when I saw reported that a drone had launched a weapon and killed a bad guy, I think it was in Yemen.

[00:56:51.46] And I can remember that report, and go, wow, warfare just changed dramatically. And yet 1968, 1969, I'm using drones to drop weapons on Soviet submarines, or potentially do that. And the other thing that we shouldn't forget is we also had-- I had nuclear torpedoes on that ship. Those were the years where nuclear weapons were proliferated, if you will, throughout our military, including the Navy. And the potential of those is just almost beyond description.

[00:57:30.11] So the drone piece, it didn't really strike me till later and how advanced that was, and it was a troubled program. I mean, that was one. A second one was what I would call the network piece, the connectivity piece, that we had something called the Navy Tactical Data System, NTDS. But that was the first link that we had.

[00:57:51.68] So if you had 10 ships in a group with an aircraft carrier, they're all exchanging tactical information all the time.

[00:58:00.32] JOE GALLOWAY: They all--

[00:58:01.10] MICHAEL MULLEN: Where's the enemy? I detect the enemy over here. And then as soon as I do it, I can relay to you 100 miles away, where that enemy is. And so that was the first time we started to really connect, if you will.

[00:58:19.58] On the weapon side, the most revolutionary system-- and I think it's in the military, of my life, was the AEGIS Weapon System, which was put on air defense cruisers, destroyers and cruisers. I commanded USS Yorktown, which was one of these ships in the early '90s.

[00:58:42.77] But that was revolutionary in terms of the speed of the connectivity, the precision of the information where the enemy is. And I watched that proliferate throughout the services. Air defense in the Army would be another example. Same thing with the Marine Corps.

[00:59:00.98] As the time started-- your time to respond to a threat was reduced dramatically. In that same time frame was connectivity with space, because we're now in the satellite world. Mostly communications are global. I can remember in the-- and I've always tried to pay attention to the media side of this. I mean, I grew up in the public relations world more than I knew. I was messaging, paying attention to messages.

[00:59:35.88] But I can remember being in the Persian Gulf and-- deployed in 1986 with a Time magazine guy, who was doing a story on us. And again, it was right after Stark. The operations were really intense. This was right in the middle of the Iraq-Iran War, among other things. And I remember him taking a picture of me, or my troops on the bridge, linking that up. And two days later or a day later, it was in Time magazine, which was in 1986, a mind blower to me. And that was a signal that things were getting closer, the world--

[01:00:17.82]

[01:00:18.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Closer, faster, deadlier.

[01:00:20.58] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah, yeah. And then, not that I had anticipated, but then when I get to be the CNO-- and where we are there, this is post-Cold War stuff, and into the war in Iraq, the war in Afghanistan. Even before that actually, I had a four star job, the Navy four star job in Europe.

[01:00:47.78] Part of my responsibility-- I had a NATO hat. And I was a commander for a training mission in Iraq. So my first trip into Iraq was 2004, when Dave Petraeus as a three star was putting together the training for the Iraqi forces. That's-- he became responsible for this mission in Iraq, and he worked for me. He had a NATO hat then, and came up through me because NATO had committed to this mission.

[01:01:15.98] On the ground in Iraq, first time, I got Seabees out there that are using old gear, trying to take care of the Marines in a very hazardous environment. But then the whole issue of technology and what was happening then was, we were way behind the enemy in what I call the speed of war. This is 2004, 2005. Because the Army and the Marine Corps after the wall came down in '89, gave up their signal corps.

[01:01:48.80] And so now we're on the ground, facing these IEDs, and we can't detect them. I saw what was going on, and the Air Force and the Navy live in the electronic world. And so I came back-- actually this is when I had come back, now I'm the head of the Navy. And I talked to Pete Schoomaker, who was the head of the Army. And I said, Pete, I got thousands of kids that know how to live in the electronic environment. You're getting killed because you have no way to counter what's going on. And the enemy is moving faster than we are.

[01:02:26.00] So we put together, actually, a battalion of several 100 Sailors and Airmen to go in and then embed into the ground units to fight this and counter it. For me, this was truly the first joint warfare that we'd had. I mean, we've been a joint force since the '80s, but-- and I can't tell you the number of Soldiers that I've talked to over the years that just said, thanks. Because lieutenant, whoever he or she was, or second class petty officer, electronic warfare type, whoever he or she was saved a ton of lives in battalion X, Y or Z, in Iraq.

[01:03:10.49] As the ground forces then started to rebuild their signal corps--

[01:03:14.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Took us a long time to get there.

[01:03:16.07] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah, it did.

[01:03:17.06] JOE GALLOWAY: A lot of dead American boys and girls.

[01:03:18.23] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, I couldn't agree more. And then I credit McChrystal. I credit McChrystal and McRaven on the SOF side. Back to the speed of war issue, and the technology to support it, we were way behind.

[01:03:32.21] And we injected technology and tactics, which reduced that time. So when you hit a bad guy, you would get what we called the pocket litter, plug it back into the system, get Intel about what the next strike was going to be. And eventually, in the course of two or three years, we got ahead of them.

[01:03:52.02] So that whole intelligence support, the technology to support, all that stuff was revolutionary, not just for the forces. Because I watched on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan what the SOF forces did, spread to the conventional forces. Because we got battalion commanders out there, trying to do the same thing in their battle space, deconflicting with the Special Forces, which I could spend a lot of time on and won't. That's a challenge.

[01:04:21.05] But the tactics and the leadership had a huge impact on us, getting ahead of the enemy as opposed to being behind them. So those are some of the thoughts. I mean, there are other technologies, I'm sure. But in my life, those were all the major impact.

[01:04:35.90] JOE GALLOWAY: Those are the biggies.

[01:04:36.83] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. Joe, one other thing I'd say about that is I was amazed in my world in systems that were developed to fight the Soviets. So the AEGIS Weapon System, I mentioned that. The Tomahawk Weapon System was another. I was amazed at how we, after the Cold War ended, adapted those capabilities to the current environment. They just didn't become relics. We'd upgrade them.

[01:05:08.84] We did that with the F-14, which was basically a fighter, and it became a fighter bomber, as an example. Mostly because young people figured out how to do that. And that was true I think in many ways across all the services in that adaptation because these systems get built for 25, 30, 35 years, and we've invested a lot.

[01:05:33.78] So being able to adapt them to the current environment was also--

[01:05:37.50] JOE GALLOWAY: I saw a picture online a couple of days ago of the first test flight in 1952 of the B-52 bomber. Still flying.

[01:05:49.48] MICHAEL MULLEN: I got to fly in one. And what was-- I flew it out of Barksdale--

[01:05:54.92] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, been there, done that.

[01:05:57.05] MICHAEL MULLEN: --when I was a three star. And I was just stunned that-- I mean, it is nothing but weapons and gas.

[01:06:02.27] JOE GALLOWAY: That's it.

[01:06:03.29] MICHAEL MULLEN: And we went up for a short hop around America, I think it was eight hours.

[01:06:08.48] JOE GALLOWAY: How'd you like to do 16 hours?

[01:06:11.47] MICHAEL MULLEN: I know. No, I know, I know, I know.

[01:06:16.29] JOE GALLOWAY: The Navy today, what's going on with ship collisions?

[01:06:24.06] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, I could spend a lot of time on this. It's tragic. One of the seminal moments for me-- and you may remember this-- was a collision in the Mediterranean in 1976, between the Kennedy and the Belknap And we killed eight Sailors. Obviously, did millions and millions of dollars worth of damage. And that commanding officer who is-- in my view, should have been held perfectly accountable for that loss of life. Went to a court martial and was found not guilty, which I, to this day-- I get the legal side of this-- to this day I'll never understand.

[01:07:04.82] So in recent times, we've had two ship collisions, where we've killed 17 Sailors. I have an expectation that we will not kill a Sailor on a ship. Now, I tragically over the course of my career lost three Sailors in various situations. One was murdered in St. Thomas, one was murdered in downtown Richmond when he was on liberty,

[01:07:31.22] when he went home. And a third one committed suicide on the ship. But for a commanding officer to put himself-- in these cases, the McCain and the Fitzgerald-- into a position where we lose, I think it's 7 on one, and 10 on another, is not just tragic, it's inexcusable.

[01:07:58.55] JOE GALLOWAY: It's inexcusable.

[01:07:59.47] MICHAEL MULLEN: Completely inexcusable. Mom and dads all over this country have an expectation that when their kids go off to serve, that we're going to lead them well and take care of them.

[01:08:10.28] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, you said you loved driving the ship. Is that gone out of the Navy?

[01:08:15.59] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, no, no. I don't think so. And of course, I'm a little bit-- I mean, part of my challenge-- although that's how I grew up, so I understand that environment-- when I became chairman in 2007 I left the Navy. I was two ground wars, big fight against terrorists. I had plenty to, do do. Plus I also I had somebody that took the Navy over, and that was going to be his challenge.

[01:08:41.48] That said what this is so basic to who we are, going to sea, keeping them safe. It's a hazardous environment, I get that. And all of us who've been to sea, to some degree can say, there but for the grace of God go I. I've been saved--0 I was saved by junior officer one night.

[01:09:01.61] In the dark of night that we were getting closed on by a big ship, and he decided-- he called me late to get to the bridge. And as I got up there, he had turned the ship to the left, to port, as we would say. And if he'd gone the other way, we'd have been cut in half. So it speaks to the danger. That said, that was the training of that young officer that instinctively had him make the right decision.

[01:09:29.40] So I couldn't be more appalled. Now, I was involved in this community, the ship community. When I was a two star in the Navy, I led it. I'm not unfamiliar with everything about it. And what happened is we lost track of what I would call the training mission in the Western Pacific, because operations out there are at a very high tempo. Recently, it's obviously been North Korea, it's been China, et cetera without leaders figuring that out these things--

[01:10:00.83] we create a situation where possibilities exist, or the probabilities are higher. But I've read the detailed investigations here and each one of those COs is perfectly responsible, and should be held fully accountable. Back to when my career ended when I hit that buoy, I loved being fully accountable for that.

[01:10:23.03] In fact, accountability I think is missing generally speaking in the country these days. We are, get a good lawyer, get a good spokesman, and get me out of this kind of thing. And it drives me crazy. But I--

[01:10:36.92] JOE GALLOWAY: When was last time you heard the buck stops here?

[01:10:40.79] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. I take-- it does happen occasionally, when somebody says, hey it's all my fault. I take full responsibility. I mean, I almost stand up and cheer when I read that or see that, but it's pretty rare. And even accountability, it's personal accountability. It's I know I'm the CO. I know I am responsible for these 300 troops, on ship, off ship, their lives, their safety, all their-- you know, supporting their families.

[01:11:12.33] And if it goes south, I'm the one that has to walk off the brow and say that was it, even if I was dead asleep at 2:00 in the morning. We've lost that-- I don't mean, we haven't lost that in the Navy, but even recently, it took the Navy far too long to remove these two commanders from the job.

[01:11:35.45] Now, I suspect there are lawyers involved in that. I don't care. I mean, those two COs killed 17 kids who were serving their country. And in my view, I'd have had them off that ship within 24 hours. Period.

[01:11:54.01] JOE GALLOWAY: It wouldn't have taken 24 minutes.

[01:11:56.46] MICHAEL MULLEN: No.

[01:12:01.44] JOE GALLOWAY: You stayed in the Navy for a full career, to four star Admiral. And when I talk to career military officers, the answers are always different from guys who pulled a two-year draft tour and landed at Travis Air Force Base and got spit on in San Francisco airport. In you're coming home from all of these various cruises during the Vietnam era, did you experience any negativity from your fellow Americans?

[01:12:44.39] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, but I knew about it. And I'm a West Coast guy, so the first cruise was back to the West Coast. It's a little more intense there. I will say in 19-- I think it was 1972, before we went-- sorry, I've moved to the East Coast, my ship's in Norfolk, Virginia. And my CO is from Fall River, Mass. And he wanted to go up north, to take the ship up north.

[01:13:07.64] So we went to-- shoot-- New Bedford, Mass on a port visit. And there's this little canal up there, and this guy was a Merchant Marine Academy graduate. I mean, he really knew how to go to sea. He sailed like crazy. He knew the environment at sea. He wanted to take his ship through this little canal up there.

[01:13:27.54] So, anyway, we scheduled-- and I think-- I want to say summer of '72, maybe. We scheduled a visit up there, and we're aware that you're not-- nobody's wearing their uniform on liberty. We were stunned. We went out in town and you couldn't buy a drink, you couldn't buy a meal in the Northeast, which was a pretty loud place in terms of opposing the war, to the point

where we told the Sailors, don't wear a uniform. They came back, put their uniform on, and went out in town.

[01:14:07.79] JOE GALLOWAY: It wasn't-- ?

[01:14:08.36] MICHAEL MULLEN: So actually-- which was surprising, and it was heartwarming that they would put their arms around us. I mean, not for me, but for the troops at a time when everybody was wondering whether they'd be accepted or not.

[01:14:24.17] JOE GALLOWAY: But New Bedford ain't Harvard.

[01:14:25.81] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, it isn't Harvard, but it's Northeast. No, I got that. I understand that. And I had friends because I'm from LA. I mean, I had friends at Berkeley, and friends at Stanford, and friends who were very much against the war. It never became personal. So I didn't lose friends over that, even though we were in dramatically different places with respect to what we were doing with our lives at the time.

[01:14:53.19] So I was aware of that, although I never really saw it. I have to say that when we started to see protests in DC against the Iraq war, I lived-- my wife and I lived in a set of quarters there right on M Street. And these protests would occur and-- or marches. And in comparison to what I knew happened back in the '60s and the '70s, these were pretty mild protests. They were more akin to fun events, than the kind of protests--

[01:15:33.41] JOE GALLOWAY: Than 100,000 people surrounding the Pentagon.

[01:15:36.70] MICHAEL MULLEN: --yeah, that we saw back then.

[01:15:40.68] JOE GALLOWAY: Have you maintained contact with people that you sailed with during the Vietnam era, up to today? You ever make a ship reunion, or anything like that?

[01:15:56.15] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, Joe for me, and it's not just ships. I'm just not a reunion guy. And so-- and as you can imagine, as I became more senior, even much to my surprise, of course, everybody-- every ship I was ever on wants me to come to their reunion. I just haven't done that. The contact I've made was to my mentor, who I indicated just passed away, George Sullivan.

[01:16:23.66] There was my first weapons officer on my first ship, Danny Leroy. He and I will connect almost indirectly, every few years. That commanding officer also--

[01:16:35.87] JOE GALLOWAY: But for you, it's been personal with--

[01:16:37.68] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah, it's not been reliving, if you will. And part of that for me is I'm just moving on. And it doesn't mean-- they are great people and I'm sure we would have a great time. It's just for me, it's never been a priority.

[01:17:00.57] JOE GALLOWAY: Did your experience on these Vietnam cruises change you, affect your life, for good or ill?

[01:17:10.02] MICHAEL MULLEN: I think anybody in the Vietnam time frame, and-- well, not in particular, but certainly those of us that served in the theater, I call it we're scarred for life in totality. And what I've learned is-- because I'm now-- I mean, as we sit here and speak I'm 72.

[01:17:32.74] But my kids who are now in their late 30s, have their own scars from this, just because I went through that, or we went through those times. They've heard the stories, and to some degree, their kids are going to be at one point in time.

[01:17:47.15] In fact, my older son in high school, in the mid-'90s, I came home one night. And he was studying. And I said, what are you what are you studying? He said, history. I said, what are you studying? He said, Vietnam. And I go, history? You know, Vietnam? And I get that 20 years later, 30 years later, it is history. That makes me frame a war, in sort of 100 years at a crack.

[01:18:16.36] What hasn't happened, even in Iraq and in the tragic loss of those who served and sacrificed so much, the American people are sort of checked out of whether we go to war or not. And in being checked out, they're not dealing with--0 other than a few families, and the tragedy they go through-- they're not dealing with the real effects of what happens when you make a decision about going to war.

[01:18:46.21] And I've come to believe that every time you go, you don't really get through that for about a century. And I haven't-- I believe that now for the last 20 plus years. I'm mindful of that-- I talked about my first time to Iraq in 2004. When you think about Iraq-- in that time frame I read a book called The Peace to End All Peace, and-- which is about the Ottoman Empire-- you know, about the war of 100 years ago.

[01:19:20.67] And I think about decisions that were made 100 years ago that I'm now standing in Baghdad, or in Basra, or those places that are--

[01:19:31.35] JOE GALLOWAY: Dealing with it.

[01:19:32.47] MICHAEL MULLEN: --with the decisions. And-- that were made 100 years ago. And I try to use that to feed to myself how critical these decisions are we're making now, so we get them right, as right as we can, 100 years later.

[01:19:49.12] So because I ended up being in the positions I was in as a very senior officer, I was very mindful of that, more than anything else. And how, not just difficult, how tragic the price that gets paid for these decisions, political decisions, that I think the American people have to be in on.

[01:20:15.76] And in recent times, they've not been in on, and the price has been dramatic and tragic, and something that I don't think we think about enough, as we make the decision to go to war.

[01:20:30.87] JOE GALLOWAY: Nowadays, how do you end a war? We sit here 17 and 1/2 years later on Afghanistan.

[01:20:39.41] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah.

[01:20:40.64] JOE GALLOWAY: We're still involved in Iraq.

[01:20:43.90] MICHAEL MULLEN: I actually sign up to Colin Powell's view with all that, if you break it, you own it, and you need to figure out how it should properly end. Hopefully--

[01:20:57.08] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah, how do you get out of it?

[01:20:59.19] MICHAEL MULLEN: Well, that's what I mean. And you can't-- I'm not naive enough to think you can figure that out at the beginning, but we can do a lot better job discussing that before we go than we do. I've taught at Princeton for the last six years, and they let me put together a course.

[01:21:17.30] And basically, the title of it is the balance between US military and diplomatic power. The underlying thesis is that we've been using the military just a little bit too much, and could we put the rest of our government to work? It's too easy-- the weapons are too lethal. They're too easy to use. The power of the presidency has just increased--

[01:21:42.04] JOE GALLOWAY: It's incredibly expanded, and we have gutted the State Department of our experienced diplomats.

[01:21:49.51] MICHAEL MULLEN: And so, it's just too easy to say OK, let's use the weapons, see what happens, then we'll figure out our strategy. Well, the weapons in the end-- they may be remote at the beginning-- but in the end, and I've come to believe this, we're on the ground.

[01:22:07.34] JOE GALLOWAY: Some mama's boy and girl are going to die.

[01:22:11.31] MICHAEL MULLEN: Exactly. I don't know how to get to this right now, but what I learned on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, certainly as chairman is I want the president, and as many leaders in our country-- political leaders-- as possible, to have the experience of standing in that village, watching a weapon wipe out maybe the enemy, but maybe the enemy's entire-- all their family.

[01:22:40.29] And seeing that damage that those weapons do--

[01:22:45.21] JOE GALLOWAY: That are remotely controlled from Nevada.

[01:22:48.81] MICHAEL MULLEN: In some cases. But I want somebody there, I want the human part of that. And I want that understanding, when a president makes a decision, I'm going to go do that. I'm going to send young men and women to go do that. And we're a far cry from that right now.

[01:23:04.74] JOE GALLOWAY: Are there lessons you have taken from your, not just Vietnam, but your entire career, that you would like to pass on to future generations?

[01:23:17.20] MICHAEL MULLEN: I think that it's critically important when we go to war, that we understand a lot more about that. We also don't do culture very well. So when we went to Vietnam, we didn't understand the culture there.

[01:23:36.50] JOE GALLOWAY: Don't do history very well.

[01:23:38.70] MICHAEL MULLEN: We don't do history well. We need to understand that. When I commanded 17,000 troops in my NATO job, in 2004, we had 17,000 ground troops in Kosovo. And when you go into Kosovo and start talking to the O-3s from Germany, who are the company commanders. And you talk to the Kosovars, and you talk to the Albanians, you talk to the Serbs, and you start to just listen to what they want to talk about; they want to talk about 1300.

[01:24:14.17] JOE GALLOWAY: Yeah. 1300 to 1700, the Ottoman Empire.

[01:24:19.49] MICHAEL MULLEN: Right. When I go to Seoul and meet my South Korean friends, and I ask about the difficulty between them and Japan, and the current relationship--

[01:24:29.14] JOE GALLOWAY: It's 100 years old.

[01:24:30.92] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, they see-- what year do you want to see? You want to start about 1600, which is where they first came here and killed all my relatives? We have so little understanding of history. So--

[01:24:43.40] JOE GALLOWAY: And Afghanistan.

[01:24:44.14] MICHAEL MULLEN: It's the same thing. I mean, I read the book-- and I'm a-- I won't say typical American, but when we start going in there, I read *The Graveyard of Empires*, OK. But we ignore history at our peril in all these areas. I mean, that isn't just anecdotal stuff that happened in Afghanistan, over the course of the years.

[01:25:07.41] In fact, when I became the chairman and I started going to Pakistan, I befriended the Pakistani ambassador, who was-- to the US, who was a retired two star, Army two star. I went over and had breakfast with him at the embassy. He gives me this book as I'm leaving, which is this long thin book that is a report on the border, from the Brits, 1949. He says, read-- I think was 1949-- he said, read this. I said, why should I do that? He says, because nothing has changed.

[01:25:40.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Nothing has changed.

[01:25:42.04] MICHAEL MULLEN: So culture, history, the politics of it. It's less about the technology, it's why are we there, and to your point-- question-- earlier is how does this end? I want to have that discussion up front. I don't expect a perfect answer, but I did this-- Bob Gates

and I did this in Libya. I mean, what we-- and Gates has written about this is when we were debating at the National Security Council level, about what-- going in, et cetera. Gates and I would say, OK, tell me not just why we're doing this. Tell me where this goes. Give me some sense of endgame here.

[01:26:29.45] And it was-- we were hard pressed to do it, and there are other issues associated with that. Petraeus-- others have written, tell me how this ends.

[01:26:38.74] JOE GALLOWAY: When we were talking in 2002 about going into Iraq, and preparing the invasion force, Colin Powell had all of his Arab speaking experts at State, compile a report of what happens next, and how do we withdraw, and offered it up.

[01:27:14.08] And Dick Cheney and Rumsfeld ordered that no one will-- in the Pentagon-- put any reliance on this whatsoever. And when Powell offered the Arab speakers to them, we don't want them.

[01:27:35.87] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. Yeah.

[01:27:36.74] JOE GALLOWAY: This is willful, bloody ignorance.

[01:27:40.25] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. Yeah. No, I would agree with that.

[01:27:43.33] JOE GALLOWAY: And you saw it happen.

[01:27:44.82] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, I did. And I-- in that time frame. I mean, the signature moment for me, and I was the budget officer for the Navy, so I wasn't on the operations side. But I can remember being in the tank-- no, being in a meeting with Rumsfeld with Eric Shinseki, who was the Army chief at the time. And who that previous I think week had been now famously asked in testimony what is it going to take once we go in?

[01:28:16.34] And he said 200,000 people, and long time. And he was excoriated--

[01:28:24.76] JOE GALLOWAY: Excoriated.

[01:28:25.54] MICHAEL MULLEN: --by Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, and essentially fired from the position.

[01:28:33.53] JOE GALLOWAY: He was a walking dead man.

[01:28:36.11] MICHAEL MULLEN: Here was a guy with combat experience, knew what he was talking about, and was in the end right as rain, and we couldn't have gotten it more incorrect at the time, in terms of what we should do. And actually there's plenty to go around on that. My own view, on the uniform side here, in terms of not whether we'd go or not,

[01:29:07.68] but once we went, once the decision was made, how we would do it, who would lead it, how long we'd stay. Our four star leader left, basically, General Franks.

[01:29:20.36] JOE GALLOWAY: Right in the middle of the fight.

[01:29:23.52] MICHAEL MULLEN: And it was a mess out of which we still some 16 years later haven't wrapped up.

[01:29:31.22] JOE GALLOWAY: Haven't wrapped up. God help us.

[01:29:34.52] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah.

[01:29:35.72] JOE GALLOWAY: Well, sir, how do you think the Vietnam War is remembered in our society today?

[01:29:46.08] MICHAEL MULLEN: I have to mention this. One of the-- my wife and I spend a lot of time in the Iraq/Afghanistan War with families of the fallen, the wounded, those who sacrifice the most. And as both of us so would say, it's too many funerals, too many visits to Dover, too many tragedies--

[01:30:10.06] JOE GALLOWAY: Too many beds full at the VA.

[01:30:12.91] MICHAEL MULLEN: Yeah. And one of the highlights, if there is any highlight in war. I use that guardedly, that term guardedly. But to see the number of Vietnam vets who would show up at these funerals, to the Patriot Riders, who are riddled with Vietnam vets on there, to make sure that these funerals were done well and uninterrupted, and-- out of respect for those who had sacrificed so much.

[01:30:52.25] And to see the Vietnam vets at the Wall, and to see a time back to when I was young, and you talked about getting spit on when you got back to Travis, to see the Vietnam vets, my contemporaries welcomed home for the first time.

[01:31:14.35] When the war started in Iraq, I was really concerned about who was going to get the blame. We got it in Vietnam. And I needed to know where that was going to go. By 2004, 2005, I understood it was not going to be the military. The American people made the decision this time to differentiate the politics from the troops.

[01:31:41.38] So then part of that for years, for a decade for me, was to watch Vietnam vets who pitched in, who felt welcomed home for the first time. And I'm telling you the numbers I saw with tears in their eyes when somebody just said welcome home was extraordinary. It was-- I say highlight-- it was such a joy to see America put their arms around these extraordinary men and women, who had sacrificed so much during a time that I remember that was incredibly difficult for our country, was pretty special.

[01:32:20.65] And I'll always remember that. The other is, and you mentioned these vets, these wounded in particular, that-- whether visible or invisible-- go into the VA system. One of the tragedies of our system here is the Pentagon and the VA don't talk. So I would--

[01:32:43.15] JOE GALLOWAY: Their computers can't talk.

[01:32:45.27] MICHAEL MULLEN: No. And never have. I mean, it's designed this way and it's embedded. And so I would have a young troop, sergeant, that on Friday I'd take a bullet for. On Monday he was getting there, she was getting out of the Army or the Air Force or the Navy, and I turn them over to the VA and say, have a nice life. And I don't have any idea what's going to happen-- I know, I expect it's not necessarily going to go well, but I don't know anything about the VA.

[01:33:19.54] We need, in my view, to make it seamless from the day a young man or woman at 18 raises their hand to the day they are no longer on Earth, that between the Pentagon and the Veterans Administration, and the communities throughout the country support them in whatever they're doing. That may be a lot, it may be nothing, it may be something in between. But we shouldn't just drop them off at a weigh station about which we know nothing.

[01:33:56.38] So I've even now spent, try to spend a fair amount of time trying to stitch all that up. But this divide between the Pentagon and the VA is-- it's almost perfect. And we can do a lot better than that.

[01:34:10.59] JOE GALLOWAY: Is there anything I haven't asked you about, that you would like to get on the record with?

[01:34:21.57] MICHAEL MULLEN: No, I think you've actually covered it. You've covered it pretty well. Maybe I'd leave you with this thought, Joe. We're going through a tough time right now in the country. And I get asked about it all the time when I speak publicly, people at the end of it say, you got any good news?

[01:34:40.60] And I have such faith in this country, and such faith in the American people. And in my life we've been through harder times, that I have great confidence we'll get through this.

[01:34:55.65] JOE GALLOWAY: Somehow.

[01:34:56.20] MICHAEL MULLEN: We have left too many people behind. We have lost the American dream. We have had too many Americans whose wages haven't gone up since the '70s. And we have a political class now that's as bad as I've ever seen it. And I mean bad, polarized, I mean bad-- they're in it for the power.

[01:35:24.00] I've dealt with corruption in countries all over the world. We've got more money in politics than we've ever had, and our system is as corrupt because of that, as any in the world.