

Nov 04, 2016 by *Alvin Snyder*

General Abizaid Spoke at the Naval War College: True or False? ^[1]

Did the commander of the U.S. military's Central Command (CENTCOM) really say those things about the media, and the war in Iraq? If so, why the big secret?

The remarks attributed to General John Abizaid that mysteriously surfaced on the Internet and were sent anonymously to media outlets were said to have been from the General's recent address at the Naval War College, date unknown.

The speech was not (and is not) mentioned on the web sites of either CENTCOM or the Naval War College. It was one of the great mysteries of the holiday season in the blogosphere as to whether reports of the speech were bogus. <http://www.karmalised.com/archives/001233.html>

In the purported speech, General Abizaid set forth clearly and succinctly how the U.S. military assesses the present situation in Iraq, and where things are headed.

There are at least two major versions on the Internet of General Abizaid's remarks, one from "a student at the Naval War College," another from "CAPT Chuck Mull, USN (Ret.), USNA '50, who was in attendance at the address." They are word-for-word the same ("BS would not sell to this audience"). The version signed by the student, which pre-dated CAPT Mull's, was posted on numerous blogs, including the West Point Old Grad Network. <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1527192/posts>

Both the anonymous student and the CAPT Mull versions report that General Abizaid told the audience of "mid-grade/senior military officers" that he was "amazed as he goes around the country and testifies before the Congress how many of our countrymen do not know or understand what we are doing and how we are doing. There are very few members of Congress who have ever worn the uniform (or our armed forces). He said that the questions he gets from some in Congress convince him that they have the idea that we are about to be pushed out of Iraq...where the insurgency is in only 4 of 18 provinces."

General Abizaid reportedly stressed that "you will never see a headline in this country about a school opening or a power station being built and coming on line, or a community doing well...We are focused on the things that we (Americans) have done wrong, like Abu Ghraib, and not talking about this enemy. We need to talk about this enemy.

"Since Desert Storm in 1991, US forces have not lost any combat engagement in the region at the platoon-level or above. Al Qaida has no belief that they can defeat us militarily. They see our center of gravity as being the will of the American people. That is influenced by the media and they are playing to that. They don't need to win any battles. Their plan is to keep the casualties in front of the American people in the media for long enough that we will become

convinced that we cannot win and leave the region. That would be tragic for our country.”

On its web site, C-SPAN also carried the student’s summary, with a notation of support submitted by the Army Chief of Staff, General Peter Schoomaker, http://www.c-span.org/pdf/abizaid_comments120905_3.pdf. In addition, C-SPAN’s Washington Journal quoted General Abizaid and carried comments by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld from a Public TV interview, where Mr. Rumsfeld was critical of the media’s reportage on Iraq. General Abizaid’s remarks also became fodder on radio talk shows.

But did General Abizaid really utter those words at the Naval War College? Or was it someone trying to fool us, like the anonymous sender of bogus documents faxed to CBS’s 60 Minutes from Kinko’s in Abilene Texas, which disparaged President Bush’s National Guard Service? <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rathergate>

In the holiday crease between Christmas/Chanukah and January 1, when knowledgeable public affairs aides became available, Worldcasting confirmed with both U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and the Naval War College that General Abizaid did indeed speak at the College on November 10. He spoke from notes, the speech was not recorded, and there is no official transcript of it. LT. Tawney Dotson at CENTCOM public affairs says reports on the Internet “accurately reflect the spirit” of General Abizaid’s remarks.

It remains unclear why the definitive report on General Abizaid’s remarks had to come from an anonymous student, or whoever it really was, with the inevitable questions raised of its authenticity, which surely diminished its impact. An official transcript of General Abizaid’s off-the-cuff remarks could have easily been supplied to the press to avoid the confusion, and to promote a fuller understanding of U.S. military operations in Iraq.
