

Notes From a Student at the Naval War College on Army Gen. Abizaid's Recent Speech

Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Caveats: FOUO

CSA Sends:

This is as clear as it can be stated - please get these words out to all of the men and women in your organizations. I encourage you to personally carry this message to the American People. As Soldiers, we have the most credible voices in America. We need to lead the way.

Thanks for your leadership and for all you have given. Cindy and I send our very best wishes to each of you and your families as we serve together during another Christmas Season in the Long War.

With Warmest Regards

GEN Schoomaker

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All: Notes from a student at the Naval War College on GEN Abizaid's recent speech:

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General Abizaid (Commander, U. S. Central Command whose responsibilities include Iraq and Afghanistan) spoke to the Naval War College last week. The audience comprised primarily War College students who are mid-grade/senior military officers. The majority of these officers have served in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, so there was a real understanding of the dynamics of the region... BS would not sell to this audience.

Here is a short summary of General Abizaid's comments, from contemporaneous notes:

He is 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 or how we are doing. There are very few members of Congress who have ever worn the uniform (of 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 and Afghanistan. There is no relation between this and the reality on the ground.

As he goes around the region and talks to troops and junior officers he is very impressed by their morale and their achievements. They are confident that they are capable of defeating the enemy. 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. Only the negative things will get coverage in the media. He told the mid-grade/senior officers to go to their local Lions Clubs when they go home and tell the people what they are doing. If they don't get the word out, the American people will not know what is really happening.

The insurgency is in four of 18 provinces in Iraq, not all 18. You do not hear about the 14 provinces where there is no insurgency and where things are going well. The insurgency in Afghanistan is primarily in Kandahar province (home of the Taliban) and in the mountain region on the Pakistani border. The rest of the country is doing well.

Iraq now has over 200,000 soldiers/police under arms and growing. They are starting to eclipse the US/coalition forces. Their casualty rate is more than double that of the US. There are more than 70,000 soldiers under the moderate government in Afghanistan and growing.

He predicted that the insurgencies in the four Sunni provinces in northern/central Iraq and in Southwestern Afghanistan will be there for the foreseeable future, but they will be stabilized and become small enough so the moderate governments will be able to keep them under control.

2006 will be a transition year in Iraq and that will see the Iraqi forces take much more of the mission from the US forces. This is necessary to bring stability to Iraq. We need to be fewer in numbers and less in the midst of the people for the moderate Iraqi government to succeed.

Our primary enemy is not the insurgency in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is al Qaida and their ideology. We are at a period now that is similar to the 1920s where Communism and Nazism had not taken hold in Russia and Germany. The ideology of Al Qaida is out there and it has not taken hold in any country in the Middle East. We need to make sure that it does not and we are doing that, but it will be a long problem with a long commitment.

He said that 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. al Qaida is all over the world. Their goal is to get the US out of the region and come to power in the Islamic countries of the region. From there, their goal is to establish a Caliphate (under a single Islamic ruler) that goes from the Atlantic in North Africa to Indonesia in the Pacific. Fifty years after this happens, their goal is to rule the rest of the world.

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 beliefs 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 keep the casualties in front of the American people in the media for long enough that we become convinced that we cannot win and leave the region. This would be tragic for our country.

The battle against al Qaida will not be primarily military. It will be political, economic, and ideological. It will require the international community to fight too. We must not let al Qaida get hold in any country. It will result in our worst nightmare. Picture life in Afghanistan under the Taliban, that is what Al Qaida's ideology has as a goal.

If you look at the geography (of al Qaida), there is no place to put a military solution. They are networked and they are all over the world. They are a virtual organization connected by the Internet. They use it to proselytize, recruit, raise money, educate and organize. They have many pieces that we must focus on: the propaganda battle in the media, safe houses, front companies, sympathetic members of legitimate governments, human capital, fighters and leaders, technical expertise, weapons suppliers, ideologically sympathetic non-government organizations (charities), financiers, smugglers, and facilitators. A lot of their money comes from drugs.

We are winning but we have got to maintain constant pressure over time with the international community and across the US government agencies. No one is afraid that we can't defeat the enemy. Our troops have the confidence, the courage, and the competence. We need the will of the American people to be sustained for the long haul.

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