

Terrorist Hunter Draws Fire for Divisive Religious Views

Terrorists hate America because it is a Christian nation, says a new leader in the war on terror, who is drawing flak for that and similar remarks in speeches at evangelical churches across the country.

The Senate voted in June to approve Lt. Gen. William G. “Jerry” Boykin as deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence, a top post in a new Pentagon unit assigned to hunt down high-profile terrorist targets including Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein.

Boykin views the war on terrorism as a clash between Judeo-Christian forces and Satan and believes Allah is a false god, according to reports Wednesday and Thursday on [NBC News](#) and in the [Los Angeles Times](#).

In a Jan. 28 speech at First Baptist Church in Daytona Beach, Fla., Boykin told the story of a top-ranking lieutenant to a Somalian warlord who boasted on CNN that he would not be captured because Allah would protect him.

“Well, you know what I knew, that my God was bigger than his,” Boykin said on [a tape](#) obtained and broadcast Wednesday on *NBC News*. “I knew that my God was a real God, and his was an idol. But I prayed, Lord let us get that man.”

The man was eventually caught, Boykin said, recounting the following conversation when the two met face to face. “I looked at him and said, ‘Are you Osman Atto?’ And he said ‘Yes.’ And I said, ‘Mr. Atto, you underestimated our God.’”

At a “Celebrate America” event at a church in Sandy, Ore., in June, Boykin queried the audience:

“Why do they hate us? Why do they hate us so much? Ladies and gentlemen, the

answer to that is because we're a Christian nation, because our foundation and our roots are Judeo-Christian."

Boykin also tells audiences that God chose President Bush: "Why is this man in the White House? The majority of Americans did not vote for him. Why is he there? And I tell you this morning that he's in the White House because God put him there for a time such as this."

Baptist ethicist Robert Parham finds such views troubling, both for the message they send to the Muslim world and how they might affect Boykin's decision-making. "Gen. Boykin sounds more like a messianic crusader than a military commander," said Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics.

Parham accused Boykin of "bad theology," which he said "forces the question about the nation's safety in the hands of a wild-eyed Christian fundamentalist."

"Can he be trusted to act in the nation's interest instead of pursuing his own twisted theological agenda?" Parham asked. "The nation can ill afford a commander who sees the war on terrorism as a war between dueling deities."

Boykin seems to disagree with President Bush, who has said the war on terrorism isn't a war on Islam. But some are saying that [images](#) of a highly decorated, uniformed military official making such comments imply that he speaks for the U.S. government.

At his recent speech in Oregon, for example, Boykin emphasized his use of the "Judeo-Christian" term. "Did I say Judeo-Christian?" he continued. "Yes. Judeo-Christian."

An expert on the Middle East told the *L.A. Times* it is a mistake to use that term, because it is the same rhetoric used by allies of Osama Bin Laden to give the impression that Jews and Christians are teaming up to beat up on Muslims.

Boykin told *NBC News* that, given his new assignment, he is curtailing such speeches in the future. "I don't want ... to be misconstrued," he reportedly said. "I

don't want to come across as a right-wing radical."

The *Times*, however, said Boykin has continued to speak since his promotion, citing an engagement as recent as Sept. 27 in Vero Beach, Fla.

Parham said Boykin "misrepresents American culture, bulldozes the U.S. Constitution and threatens to detonate a holy war between our nation and the Islamic world."

"Good foreign policy keeps a healthy distance between the ideology of fundamentalism and core national values," he said.

Among venues he has visited, Boykin spoke the last two years at conferences promoting the FAITH Sunday-school evangelism strategy used by LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

At a FAITH conference in 2002 at First Baptist Church in Daytona Beach, Fla., the church's pastor, Bobby Welch, introduced Boykin as "a strong, dynamic Christian man who loves the Lord," according to [Baptist Press](#).

Welch, who, like Boykin, was a member of Special Forces, is co-developer of the FAITH strategy and is expected to be nominated for SBC president in June.

At last year's FAITH conference in Daytona Beach, Boykin said he prays with his men before each mission. "I always pray for God's blessing on these warriors, for his protective hand around them. Then we sing 'God Bless America.' God has been faithful and has held us in his hands," he said, according to [Baptist Press](#).

"We have seen a godly man in the White House declare war on terrorism," he continued. "We need warriors to fight and win this battle. I'm not just talking about our men and women in uniform. I'm talking about all of you in the sanctuary.

"Bin Laden is not the enemy. No mortal is the enemy. It's the enemy you can't see. It's a war against the forces of darkness. The battle won't be won with guns.

It will be won on our knees.”

Parham criticized the Senate Armed Services Committee for not examining Boykin’s background more fully.

“The U.S. Senate has once again failed the American people with a rubberstamping of the administration’s agenda,” he said.

“The Senate is required to engage in tough minded discernment, not blind loyalty,” Parham said.

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