

Eye on Washington by William Jones

Boykin Pleads Ignorance on Guantanamo

Known for his crusade against Muslims, the general wants to strengthen the Pentagon's role in intelligence-gathering.

Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Gen. William G. "Jerry" Boykin is no stranger to controversy. In fact, controversy has been a constant companion to this Christian fundamentalist warrior in U.S. Army green, presently holding one of the most important posts in the military intelligence community. In one of his rare public appearances on Oct. 26, at the annual meeting of the Association of the United States Army, Boykin flatly denied that he had any knowledge of what transpired at the incarceration depot at Guantanamo, Cuba. One expected at any moment that his nose, like Pinocchio's, would start growing, but any such movement was not noticed by this observer, who had posed the question to that zealous crusader.

Boykin was speaking on the issue of "actionable intelligence," on a panel in which Maj. Gen. Barbara Fast was also a speaker. General Fast had been one of those responsible, under former Central Command Commander Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, for the overall intelligence operations in Iraq, including ultimate responsibility for the Abu Ghraib prison, where torture as an "intelligence-gathering" method shocked the world. When this writer raised the issue of whether such "intelligence-gathering" had not been a serious disservice to the nation, Boykin punted, "I don't know a lot about Guantanamo," then adding, "although I do know something about Iraq. The real problem was creating the mechanism by which we could get the intel out of Guantanamo to the analysts. As time went on, we got better at it." He

said nothing at all about Abu Ghraib.

Boykin is the deputy to leading Pentagon neo-con, Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Steve Cambone. As such, he is one of the key people responsible for the establishment of an intelligence-gathering operation. The special operations at Guantanamo had the main aim of keeping all alleged terrorists and possible "fellow travellers" on ice for as long as possible, in order to squeeze out of them as much information as possible before hauling them before the planned military tribunals for summary justice, or releasing them if they proved to be of no value.

In charge of this operation was Maj. Gen. Geoffrey Miller, who would later be sent to Iraq, whether by Cambone or directly by Boykin is not yet clear, in order to bring the treatment given Iraqi political prisoners taken by U.S. forces into line with the draconian measures set up at Guantanamo. Miller's job was to "Gitmo-ize" the Iraq operations, in the Army slang for Guantanamo. As we have seen in Abu Ghraib, Miller succeeded quite well. But, if we are to believe him, Boykin was out of the loop on that one. There are also indications that the rogue prison operations that were run in Afghanistan by former Special Operations Army officer, Jonathan "Jack" Idema, were also coordinating with Boykin's office at the Pentagon.

Jerry Boykin is not your ordinary soldier. He is on a crusade to save Western civilization from the "Muslim hordes." He has said this often enough publicly, and his head was on

the block more than once for his blood-curdling statements. In October 2003, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that Boykin, while giving Sunday morning talks in uniform to church groups, repeatedly equated the Muslim world with Satan, saying that President Bush was "appointed by God," and that the Muslim world hates America "because we are a nation of believers." Boykin had enough support from above—e.g., from Bush and Rumsfeld—to weather the storm that those choice words brought down on him. At the Army Association event, Gen. Richard Codey, the Army Vice Chief of Staff, said that he had taken unspecified action to discipline Boykin for his remarks, but that it was not "significant."

Now, Boykin is aiming much higher. In his comments at the Army Association event, Boykin claimed that since the Department of Defense has more responsibility for intelligence than the CIA (reiterating Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's demand that the field commanders have access to all U.S. intelligence sources), therefore DOD intelligence operations must serve as the "nexus" of all intelligence operations, under whatever reform Congress may decide upon.

"Intelligence is a war-fighting component," Boykin asserted. He stopped short of placing a Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) operative in place as "intelligence czar." He would simply place the uniformed military in the middle of the intelligence network, and transform the DIA into "an operational command." It doesn't look as if Congress will give much attention to Boykin's views. Indeed, Congress should pay more attention to what Boykin does than to what he says. He remains a live wire, waiting to start a religious conflagration at the earliest possible moment.