

General's 'Satan' talks lacked clearance: Boykin made speeches while in uniform

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A U.S. Army general broke Pentagon rules by not clearing speeches he made in uniform to conservative Christian audiences in which he referred to the war on terror as a battle against Satan and to America as “a Christian nation,” according to Reuters news agency.

The report, obtained by Reuters August 18, was from the office of the Department of Defense’s inspector general. News stories last fall about Lieutenant General William Boykin’s speeches in 2002 and 2003 disturbed legislators and many religious groups at a time when much of Washington hoped to convince the world that the war on terrorism was not an anti-Islam effort.

Once, in discussing at a Baptist church in Florida efforts to capture a Muslim warlord in Somalia, Boykin reportedly said, “I knew my God was bigger than his. I knew my God was a real God and his was an idol.”

President Bush said last year that the remarks by Boykin, a high-ranking intelligence officer, “didn’t reflect my opinion.” Boykin apologized for any offense he caused, saying that he was not against any religion.

The inspector general report said that Boykin used official data in some of his 23 speeches given after January 2002 that should have been cleared before delivery, in view of “the sensitive nature of his remarks concerning U.S. policy and the likelihood that he would be perceived by his audiences as a DOD spokesman based on his official position and his appearance in uniform.”

The report recommended that “the Acting Secretary of the Army take appropriate corrective action” in Boykin’s case, according to Reuters. The report said Boykin did make “good-faith efforts” to consult legal advisers about his speaking activities.

The Council on American Islamic Relations, through spokesman Ibrahim Hooper, said it welcomed the Pentagon report and urged that action be taken commensurate with the findings. "General Boykin is free to hold whatever views he wishes, no matter how stereotypical or inaccurate," Hooper said. "But he should not use his position of respect in our nation's military to promote these views."