

KNIGHTS OF MALTA DEMONIZED

At a recent speech in Qatar, investigative journalist Seymour Hersh indicted the Knights of Malta for being anti-Muslim. Hersh also alleged that Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the U.S. commander in Afghanistan who previously headed the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), and the man who succeeded him at JSOC, Vice Adm. William McRaven, are “members of, or at least supporters of, Knights of Malta.” Hersh also alleged that “many within the JSOC” are also Knights.

Hersh claimed that these men “see what they are doing—and this is not an atypical attitude among some military—it’s a crusade, literally. They see themselves as the protectors of the Christians. They’re protecting them from the Muslims [as in] the 13th century.” He also mentioned that “They have insignia that reflect the whole notion that this is a culture war....Right now, there’s a tremendous, tremendous amount of anti-Muslim feeling in the military community.”

We were quick to note that the Knights of Malta is a charitable organization that dates back to the 11th century, a time when Muslim aggression brought about a Christian response. It is a sovereign entity that has diplomatic relations with more than 80 nations, and has no track record of being against any demographic group. Indeed, they are “devoted to the exercise of Christian virtue and charity,” and have a commitment “to reaching their spiritual perfection within the Church and to expending their energies serving the poor and the sick.”

When Hersh was asked by the *Washington Post* to explain his comments, he simply said, “I’m comfortable with the idea that there is a great deal of fundamentalism in JSOC. It’s growing and it’s empirical....There is an incredible strain of Christian fundamentalism, not just Catholic, that’s part of the military.” The *Post* then asked his editor at the *New Yorker* for a comment and he could only say, “Sy is one of the greatest reporters the country has ever known, and that is all I need to know about him.”

Hersh sought to demonize the Knights of Malta and had nothing to back it up. His long-running feud with every American administration—he recently condemned President Obama for failing to be “an angry black man”—has disoriented his

perspective so badly that what he said about the Knights of Malta is not shocking to those familiar with his penchant for demagoguery.

When asked to address this issue, Bill Donohue told the media, "I know many members of the Knights and Dames and they are walking embodiments of kindness. Hersh has much to learn from them."