

KNIGHTS OF MALTA DEMONIZED

Investigative journalist Seymour Hersh spoke yesterday in Qatar. In his speech, he indicted the Knights of Malta for being anti-Muslim. Hersh 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 alleges that “many within the JSOC” are also Knights.

Hersh claims 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 mentions 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.”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue speaks to Hersh’s remarks today:

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.”

So this is the group that Seymour Hersh seeks to demonize. His long-running feud with every American administration—he now condemns 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. I know many members of the Knights and Dames and they are walking embodiments of kindness. Hersh has much to learn from them.