

## High-ranking members of US military part of 'Knights of Malta,' 'Opus Dei,' reporter claims

By [Stephen C. Webster](#)  
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Veteran investigative reporter Seymour Hersh has broken some massive stories in his day, but uncovering secret societies within the highest echelons of America's military would probably be the biggest of his career.



Well, get ready for the media storm, because that's essentially what Hersh told an audience in Doha, Qatar recently, according to [a report published earlier this week by Foreign Policy](#).

Speaking at a campus operated by Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, Hersh said he was working on a new book that details "how eight or nine neoconservative, radicals if you will, overthrew the American government."

"It's not only that the neocons took it over but how easily they did it -- how Congress disappeared, how the press became part of it, how the public acquiesced," he continued, according to the published quotes.

Hersh also lamented President Obama's continuance of the Bush administration's worst abuses.

"Just when we needed an angry black man, we didn't get one," he reportedly said.

The *Foreign Policy* report added that in 2003, those "in the Cheney shop" were not concerned about the havoc the invasion of Iraq was destined to cause.

"[The] attitude was, 'What's this? What are they all worried about, the politicians and the press, they're all worried about some looting?'" Hersh was quoted as saying. "Don't they get it? We're gonna change moseques into cathedrals. And when we get all the oil, nobody's gonna give a damn.' That's the attitude. We're gonna change mosques into cathedrals. That's an attitude that pervades, I'm here to say, a large percentage of the Joint Special Operations Command [JSOC]."

He further claimed that Gen. Stanley McChrystal, Vice Admiral William McRaven and others in the JSOC were members of the "Knights of Malta" and "Opus Dei," two little known Catholic orders.

"They do see what they're doing -- and this is not an atypical attitude among some military -- it's a crusade, literally," Hersh reportedly continued. "They see themselves as the protectors of the Christians. They're protecting them from the Muslims [as in] the 13th century. And this is their function."

He added that members of these societies have developed a secret set of insignias that represent "the whole notion that this is a culture war" between religions.

It was President George W. Bush who first [invoked images of a holy war](#) in the Middle East, when he suggested soon after Sept. 11, 2001 that the US was on a "crusade" in the region.

The "Knights of Malta" were a Catholic order founded in 1085 as a group of monks who cared for the wounded. It evolved into a military order that safeguarded Christian pilgrims from Muslims during the nine "Crusades," where Europe's Christian states [laid siege to Muslims](#) for control of Jerusalem.

"Opus Dei," popularly depicted in the Hollywood film "[The DaVinci Code](#)," was founded in 1928 and officially accepted as part of the Catholic church in 1947. [The group's website claimed](#) their principle calling was to bring about a "Christian renewal" around the world.

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Raw Story reached out to Hersh and *The New Yorker* to confirm the accuracy of his quotes, placing this report on hold until they responded. Both declined to make any further statement, neither confirming nor denying the quotes.

However, one source close to Hersh who spoke to Raw Story off the record, suggested that *Foreign Policy's* report was indeed correct.

Raw Story followed-up on the quotes due to a widely-reported **false claim attributed to Hersh in May 2009**, where he'd allegedly said former Vice President Dick Cheney ordered the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

The report, which appeared to have originated in Pakistan, was picked up by *The Wall Street Journal* and the conservative-leaning *American Spectator*, but both removed the links after Raw Story published a denial from Hersh. A link to Raw Story's original report was unavailable due to a database malfunction.

Hersh, a Pulitzer-winning author and reporter, has previously reported that the JSOC was set up by former Vice President Cheney as something of an "executive assassination squad" that operated outside of congressional authority.

Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who resigned after *Rolling Stone* reporter Michael Hastings **quoted him mocking the US civilian command**, led JSOC before taking command of America's war effort in Afghanistan.

In an email to the military's *Stars and Stripes* publication, McChrystal's spokesman, David Bolger, **panned Hersh's claim**.

"The allegations recently made by Seymour Hersh relating to General McChrystal's involvement with an organization called The Knights of Malta are completely false and without basis in fact," he reportedly wrote. "General McChrystal is not and has never been a member of that organization."

The religious indoctrination of US soldiers has been in headlines in recent weeks as soldiers who "failed" the "spiritual fitness" portion of the "comprehensive soldier fitness" test claimed they were forced to attend Christian ceremonies and become "born again" by professing love for the Christian deity.

Similarly, *GQ* magazine uncovered last year a series of top-secret military briefings prepared by former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that **included passages from the Bible**.

Trijicon Inc., a defense contractor, was also discovered last January to have been for years placing scriptural references on gun sights used by the US military in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Their actions revealed Trijicon was forced to **provide the Pentagon** with kits to remove the codes.

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