The latest proposed victim in our struggle against terrorism is ArmyLt.Gen. William G. "Jerry" Boykin, recently named deputy undersecretary of defense for intelligence. His mission is to reinvigorate the search for Osama bin Laden, Mullah Omar and other leaders of global terrorism. By training and experience, he is marvelously prepared for his new duties — having risen from a Delta Force commando to top-secret Joint Special Operations Command, through the CIA, to command of the Army's Special Forces. For a quarter century, he has been fighting terror with his bare hands, his fine mind and his faith-shaped soul.

It is that last matter — his faith, and his willingness to give politically incorrect witness to that faith in Christian churches — that has drawn furious media and political fire in the last week. The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, Howard Dean, the Egyptian foreign minister and other less lofty entities have all called for his removal from office, because of his expressed religious views. And, of course, these calls for his head are all made on behalf of religious tolerance.

While the full text of the general's comments will not be released by the Los Angeles Times columnist who secretly recorded them during the general's witness in churches in Oklahoma, Oregon and Florida, the purportedly scandalous bits have been selectively published in print and on television.

Gen. Boykin said the terrorists come from "the principalities of darkness," that they are "demonic" and they hate us because "We're a Christian nation, because our foundation and our roots are Judeo-Christian and the enemy is a guy named Satan." The general also recounted the time he was chasing down a Somali warlord who was bragging that the Americans would not capture him because his God, Allah, would protect him. "Well," Gen. Boykin responded, "my God is bigger than his God. I knew my God was a real God and his was an idol."

In short, Gen. Boykin is being accused of calling America a Judeo-Christian country, the war on terrorism a religious war, and of expressing his belief in the truth of the New Testament of the Bible. While his critics concede that he has a right to express his religious views, they argue that his expressed opinions of the Islamic and Christian religions make him unfit to perform his duties of helping to lead in the war on terrorism. I am inclined to believe that he is splendidly fit for such combat, and I thank God that we have such a man as Gen. Boykin in our midst.

The purported fear is that the general's comments may have ruffled the feathers of our esteemed enemy — the millions and millions of fanatical Islamists, or that his statement may so inflame the passions of the millions of good Muslims that they will discard their peaceable ways and pick up the bloody sword of jihad. What utter balderdash.

Whether or not American officials chose to call this a religious war, it is unambiguously clear that our enemy, bin Laden and the other terrorists, are motivated by Islamic religious fanaticism. They say so in their founding documents and every day, in every way, around the world. However peaceably we may interpret the Koran or assess the history of Islam, at this time and in these places one would have to be swayed by a spirit of detachment from the facts not to see that a sizeable percentage of Muslims believe they are in a religious war with non-Muslims. They are consciously at religious war with the Jews in the Middle East, with Hindus in the subcontinent and with Christians everywhere. It shouldn't be a firing offense for the occasional American general to return the compliment. Indeed, I am heartened by Gen. Boykin's fighting spirit.

Nor is it factually wrong or religiously insensitive to point out that the United States is a Judeo-Christian country. We are. It is an uncontestable historic and cultural fact. We are also a country that strives in both law and habit to be impeccably tolerant and respectful to all other religions and to those who believe in no religion at all. But in rallying our countrymen to the defense of our lives and property at this time of peril, we are entitled to invoke — as Lincoln once did with such dignity and passion — the mystic chords of our memory.

It is well to recall that when Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill met in Placentia Bay off Newfoundland on the heavy cruiser Augusta on Aug. 9, 1941, to rally our nations to our common defense, they sang three songs with the assembled sailors: "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" and "Onward, Christian Soldiers."

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