

Who is This 'Mad Dog' Guy?

Thursday evening, several mainstream media outlets began reporting that President-elect Donald Trump has selected Marine Corps Gen. (ret.) James "Mad Dog" Mattis to be his Secretary of Defense.

And then, despite a notice earlier in the week from the Presidential Transition Team that no additional appointments would be announced until next week, the president-elect confirmed those media reports. The official announcement will come on Monday.

"We are going to appoint 'Mad Dog' Mattis as our secretary of defense, but we are not announcing it until Monday, so don't tell anybody," he told the crowd at his first "USA Thank-You Tour" event in Cincinnati on Thursday night. "They say he is the closest thing to General George Patton we have, and it is about time; it is about time."

That description is very apt for the oftentimes-salty retired four-star general. His personal motto is: "Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet."

Mattis is one of a few "empty sleeve to full shoulder board" generals to have ever risen from an enlisted private to the Marine Corps' highest officer rank. He enlisted in 1969 during the height of the Vietnam War and later completed a bachelor's degree from Central Washington University. He was commissioned as a 2nd lieutenant in 1972 through the Reserve Officer Training Corps.

He is considered one of the most brilliant military tacticians of the 20th and 21st centuries, possessing a personal library with more than 7,000 volumes and having read every single one. He was known to carry a copy of *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius* with him on every deployment.

Later in his distinguished career, he served as a battlefield commander in the 1991 Persian Gulf War, the War in Afghanistan following 9/11 and the 2003 Iraq War. The personal message he penned on the eve of the invasion of Iraq has endeared him to an entire generation of American veterans:

For decades, Saddam Hussein has tortured, imprisoned, raped and murdered the Iraqi people; invaded neighboring countries without provocation; and threatened the world with weapons of mass destruction. The time has come to end his reign of terror. On your young shoulders rest the hopes of mankind.

When I give you the word, together we will cross the Line of Departure, close with those forces that choose to fight and destroy them. Our fight is not with the Iraqi people, nor is it with the members of the Iraqi army who choose to surrender. While we will move swiftly and aggressively against those who resist, we will treat all others with decency, demonstrating chivalry and soldierly compassion for people who have endured a lifetime under Saddam's oppression.

Chemical attack, treachery and use of the innocent as human shields can be expected, as can other unethical tactics. Take it all in stride. Be the hunter, not the hunted: never allow your unit to be caught with its guard down. Use good judgment and act in [the] best interests of our nation.

You are part of the world's most feared and trusted force. Engage your brain before you engage your weapon. Share your courage with each other as we enter the uncertain terrain north of the Line of Departure. Keep faith in your comrades on your left and right and Marine Air overhead. Fight with a happy heart and strong spirit.

For the mission's sake, our country's sake and the sake of the men who carried the division's colors in past battles—who fought for life and never lost their nerve—carry

out your mission and keep your honor clean. Demonstrate to the world that there is “No Better Friend, No Worse Enemy” than a U.S. Marine.

Like Patton, however, Mattis often said things that ran afoul of his superior officers and the civilian leadership of the Department of Defense. But he also was responsible for developing the U.S. military’s counter-insurgency tactics while Commander of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and Commander of the U.S. Joint Forces Command/Supreme Allied Commander of NATO.

Mattis’ final billet was a Commander of U.S. Central Command, replacing Gen. David Petraeus, who had been made director of central intelligence. He retired in 2013, which also creates a small problem for the general’s nomination as secretary of defense.

Federal law prohibits anyone who served in active duty within the past seven years from holding that position. Congress, however, can grant a waiver—which is highly likely given the esteem with which he is held among Republican leaders on Capitol Hill.

Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) responded to the announcement with the following statement:

“General Mattis is exactly the right choice to lead the Pentagon after eight years of fecklessness under President Obama. With this selection, it’s clear President-elect Trump is serious about rebuilding our military, defeating ISIS and keeping Americans safe. I applaud this decision and look forward to working with General Mattis and the Trump Administration to restore American leadership at home and abroad.” {eo}