



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on July 12, 2010

Obama Appoints Gen. Mattis for U.S. Central Command

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recommended Marine Corps General James Mattis July 8 to head the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), the joint military command for the Middle East that includes supervision of the Iraq and Afghan wars. The U.S. Central Command combines theater command of the four service branches as well as special operations for the Middle East and Central Asia.



The nomination is controversial because, while attending a San Diego conference in 2005, Mattis [stated](#) of Taliban leaders who slap women around for not wearing burkas over their faces:

“Actually, it’s a lot of fun to fight them. You know, it’s a hell of a hoot. It’s fun to shoot some people. I’ll be right up front with you all. I like brawling.”

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates defended the appointment, [stressing](#): “That was five years ago. Appropriate action was taken at the time. I think that the five subsequent years have demonstrated that the lesson was learned.” Gates also [praised](#) Mattis for his “strategic insight and independent thinking.”

Naturally, Arabic news agencies like [Al Jazeera have already included Mattis’ quote](#) that it’s “fun to shoot some people” in their broadcasts. Since much of the insurgencies in the Iraq and Afghan wars is generated from negative public perception of the U.S. intervention, appointment of Mattis is strategically risky. It could add fuel to the fire of insurgency recruiting efforts.

Mattis currently serves as the commander of the [Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia](#), which is responsible for the defense of the Atlantic coast of the United States, the training of generals, and the “transformation” of forces for greater effectiveness.

Photo: U.S. Marine General James Mattis during a meeting of NATO defense ministers at NATO headquarters in Brussels on June 13, 2008: AP Images



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