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Retired Gen. McCaffrey critical of early war efforts in speech at Rotary Club

By CHUCK WILLIAMS



Retired Maj. Gen. Jerry White listens to Retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey's presentation on national security challenges facing the United States at a Rotary Club of Columbus meeting.

Despite the fact that the U.S. military is engaged in two wars, the nation's most critical means of protection is our values, retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey told the Rotary Club of Columbus Wednesday afternoon.

"Our values have protected us," McCaffrey said to a crowd of more than 350 people. "And I don't think that will change. That is our biggest protection."

McCaffrey, an adjunct faculty member at the U.S. Military Academy and a television commentator, talked about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and homeland security in a 25-minute speech.

The retired four-star general, who also served as the nation's director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy under former President Bill Clinton, abandoned his PowerPoint presentation and spoke candidly to an audience that included many active duty and retired military personnel.

He was critical of the early efforts in Iraq, calling them "badly flawed," but pointed out that Iraq was "likely to end up a stable nation."

Afghanistan is a little more tricky, McCaffrey said.

"It is the toughest challenge in many ways that we have ever faced," he said. "It violates rule No. 1 of a military operation — don't go any place you can't walk down to the sea."

The U.S. has now put "the first team" in Afghanistan, McCaffrey said. He offered high praise for Gen. David Petraeus, commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan.

"He is probably the most talented person I have met in my life — bar none," McCaffrey said.

Read more: <http://www.ledger-enquirer.com/2010/10/14/1305847/rotary-club-of-columbus-retired.html#ixzz12okhjlLt>