

General John P. Abizaid, USA (Ret.)-January 22, 2008

“Diplomacy, The Military and the Future of the Middle East”

General John Abizaid made every minute count during his short stay in Jacksonville on January 22d as a guest of UNF and the World Affairs Council. The leading authority on the Middle East during his years on active duty and as former Commander of the Central Command, he shared his views of the situation throughout the Region and his take on the problems which must be overcome in order for stability to come to that important part of the world. His meeting with an upper level class in International Trade at UNF was an open free-flowing dialogue, with thoughtful and timely questions, and equally thoughtful and informative responses by General Abizaid.

Before a full house of over 800 that evening at UNF, he highlighted the four principal problems which must be addressed if stability is to come to the Middle East. Those are: (1) the ascending influence of Sunni extremists; (2) the Shiite extremism in Iran; (3) the Arab - Israeli conflict; and (4) the world's dependence on the region's oil. Stability in Iraq and Afghanistan is critical to United States interests, as it is in Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. He stated, without equivocation, that while there are no easy solutions to the problems of the region, it is vital to our interests that we remain engaged there. He stressed that while good military progress is being made in Iraq, it is crucial that political, diplomatic, and economic progress be made also. He ended his comments by stating that to give up in Iraq and walk away would be disastrous to our interests.

-General Maury Edmonds, USA (Ret.)

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