

TAILPIECE

ADMIRAL'S ENGLISH MISSES ... BOATWISE

After Haigspeak, when the former US Secretary of State, General Alexander Haig, delivered words more likely to confuse his listeners than to inform them, a new style of rewritten English has arrived on the scene here. It is called 'Admiralsspeak'.

Admiralsspeak owes its origin to this statement by Admiral Wesley L. McDonald, a Pentagon-based admiral, reporting on the extent of US spy activities in Grenada:

'We were not micromanaging Grenada intelligencewise until about that time frame.'

What the admiral was trying to say, a Pentagon official told reporters was, simply:

'Up to then, we hadn't paid much attention to spying on Grenada.'

The admiral's liberties with the English language have since led to the rewriting of several historical incidents. Some of them go like this:

Captain John Paul Jones, rejecting surrender while commanding a US ship off the English coast in September 1779: 'I have not yet begun to fight.' As expressed by Admiral McDonald, he would have said, 'Combatwise the time frame is upcoming.'

Admiral Oliver Perry: 'We have met the enemy, and they are ours.' What he meant was, 'Area addressed in combatmode - mission finished.'

Admiral David Farragut, in Mobile Bay in August 1964: 'Damn the torpedoes. Go (full speed) ahead!' Obviously, what he meant was, 'Disregard anticipated structural damage. Continue as programmed.'

And when Admiral George Dewey, in Manila Bay in 1898, said, 'You may fire when you are ready, Grindley' clearly what he meant was, 'Implementation of aggressive action approved - time frame to be selected by fire control officer.'

As Admiral McDonald has reminded American newspaper readers: 'It's all in the mind, sortofwise.'

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