



MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
*f o u n d a t i o n*

**Written Statement for the  
United States Congressional Record**

**Religion in the United States Military:  
Balancing Personal Freedom with Professional Neutrality**

**By  
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Founder and President  
Military Religious Freedom Foundation**

**For  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Armed Services  
Military Personnel Subcommittee**

**Re:  
Religious Accommodations in the Armed Services**

**Submitted  
Friday, September 19, 2014**

*“...to support and defend the **Constitution** of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic.”*

All members of the US military swear (or affirm) a commitment to this all-important, sacred mission. It is why our singular Department of Defense exists and the fundamental reason why our tremendous Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and civilians in the DoD choose to serve this great nation. However, while our military is quite diverse – representing the citizenry it protects – we do not speak of “one black Army and one white Army, a male Navy and a female Navy, one gay Marine Corps and one straight, the Democratic Air Force and the Republican version.” Our military is one as an institution, with a mission that transcends discriminators not germane to that mission. We do not have an Army of Christ, a Jewish Navy, a Catholic Marine Corps, nor a Muslim or Atheist Air Force; Hence the sacred mission of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF; [www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org](http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org)), which is to support and defend the religious rights of **all** those who support and defend our Constitution and us, and to ensure that the American citizen can depend upon **their** military to protect our great nation without bias or partisanship. Today, the MRFF represents well over 38,000 active duty United States Sailors, Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, Cadets, Midshipmen, National Guard and Reserve personnel, Coast Guard men and women and Veterans. Approximately 96% of our MRFF clients are practicing Christians. About 3/4 of that 96% are Protestants from a plethora of denominations, while the remaining 1/4 are Roman Catholic. MRFF also represents a little over 13.5% of all Muslim Americans in the U.S. Armed Forces, as well as 863 LGBTQ clients. Of the approximate 4% of the 38,000-plus MRFF clients who are not Christians, the foundation represents many American military members who are Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Native American spiritualist, Agnostic, Atheist, Humanist, Secularist, and numerous other minority faith traditions.

Morale, unit cohesion, and good order and discipline are critical in every military unit, from a rifle squad through companies, squadrons, fleets, and entire services. The proper function of these units depends upon each individual valuing, respecting, and depending upon the excellence of their comrade standing beside them (literally and figuratively). Muslim must serve with Christian, Atheist with Jew, and Hindu with Sikh, if we are to be successful. Such distinctions **must** be irrelevant, lest we descend into a miasma of preferential treatment, unit segregation, animosity, and (fatal) doubt among comrades and between cooperating units. If a leader overtly declares to their unit, during the assumption of command, that they will lead their unit based upon Christian principles, does that not alienate those who don't self-identify as Christian? Might they question their place in the unit and their fair and equitable treatment? If, prior to a mission, the commander were to ask all troops to lay down their prayer rug and request Allah's blessing—in accordance with the commander's particular beliefs—would this bind and motivate the unit's soldiers towards success or sow seeds of division? How welcome can the Atheist or Hindu sailor feel at the commander's Christmas or Hanukkah party, or while dining in a unit facility decorated with specific monotheistic holiday decorations?

We at the MRFF fight these battles every day for the same reasons that Congress has so wisely restricted the political activities of military members (and other government

employees) – to maintain and support the religious neutrality of our military and civil service. The MRFF knows that this committee would be aghast upon learning of (for example) a “Democratic Marines for Hillary in 2016” rally held in uniform, during the duty day, attended by senior officers and NCOs, or an “Air Force Republicans Against Obamacare Breakfast Rally” under the same circumstances—these actions would clearly be beyond the pale of reasonable conduct. We strongly support the restrictions on the Constitutional rights of free speech and assembly for military and civil service members that make hypotheticals like this seem preposterous to all of us here today. We also strongly support equitable application of the same standard of neutrality to the religious sphere—an area that for too long, and in too many units, has been rife with blatant sectarian proselytizing. Commanders blithely kick-off staff meetings with prayers, asking all to stand and bow their heads for a monotheistic invocation to a patriarchal deity (generally “God” or “Jesus”) at mandatory military events. Senior NCOs send base-wide emails announcing the annual prayer breakfast — with tickets sold NOT by chaplains but by unit first sergeants and with the attendance of observant commanders guaranteed. Superiors inform their subordinates suffering from PTSD or domestic issues that all would be solved if only they “find God” or “accept Jesus.” Supervisors review the personnel records of his or her subordinates to find each member’s stated religious preference clearly indicated within. The U.S. armed forces may have mandatory events or religious events but, clearly, NOT mandatory religious events.

The MRFF realizes that religious belief is an important part of many lives — in fact, it’s an important part of the lives of an overwhelming number of our clients — and, to that extent, we are a decidedly and actively **pro-Christian** organization that wishes to promote respect for **all** religious perspectives and does not ask for any restrictions at all in the free practice of religion for all service members—*in their private, off-duty lives, and outside of the possibility of poisoning the cohesion, morale, and good order and discipline of their units. It’s ALL about the time, place and manner of desired religious expression.*

Fortunately, there is an actual U.S. Supreme Court case right on point here. The Supreme Court in Parker v. Levy, 417 U.S. 733 (1974), concluded that Capt. Levy's First Amendment right of free speech did not allow him to encourage soldiers to refuse to deploy to Vietnam because he and they believed the War in Vietnam was immoral. In a 6-2 decision written by noted ultra-conservative Chief Justice Rehnquist, the Supreme Court said,

*"This Court has long recognized that the military is, by necessity, a specialized society separate from civilian society. We have also recognized that the military has, again by necessity, developed laws and traditions of its own during its long history. The differences between the military and civilian communities result from the fact that it is the primary business of armies and navies to fight or be ready to fight wars should the occasion arise... An army is not a deliberative body. It is the executive arm. Its law is that of obedience. No*

*question can be left open as to the right to command in the officer or the duty of obedience in the soldier... While the members of the military are not excluded from the protection granted by the First Amendment, the different character of the military community and of the military mission requires a different application of those protections. **The fundamental necessity for obedience, and the consequent necessity for imposition of discipline, may render permissible within the military that which would be constitutionally impermissible outside it...** In the armed forces, some restrictions exist for reasons that have no counterpart in the civilian community. Disrespectful and contemptuous speech, even advocacy of violent change, is tolerable in the civilian community, for it does not directly affect the capacity of the Government to discharge its responsibilities unless it both is directed to inciting imminent lawless action and is likely to produce such action... **In military life, however, other considerations must be weighed.** The armed forces depend on a command structure that, at times, must commit men to combat, not only hazarding their lives but also ultimately involving the security of the Nation itself. **Speech that is protected in the civil population may nonetheless undermine the effectiveness of response to command. If it does, it is constitutionally unprotected.**"*

Let me give you an example of our work that may surprise you: We recently received a complaint from a devout Christian service member who claimed that one of the senior officers in his unit had a bumper sticker on the car that they drove to work every day that not only declared their Atheist stance, but was decidedly derogatory and disrespectful of Christian views. The Christian service member, who was of a much lower rank, did not feel comfortable (given the command climate on base) going to his supervisor to register a complaint or even to discuss the situation. Instead, he reached out to us, and we immediately contacted the higher military command leadership. Within a few days time, our MRFF client's senior leadership did the right thing — the offending driver was told that his vehicle was banned from the base so long as the sticker remained on the bumper.

We've had myriads of cases similar to this among Christians who felt their respective commanders had expressed views of one Christian perspective equally disrespectful toward other Christian denominations, particularly the subordinates' own, or were pressuring said subordinates to become "more Christian" or "real Christians" like those commanders. Indeed, this is why 96% of MRFF's clients are Christians. The pressures placed upon non-Christians are on an even higher plane.

I've asked a MRFF supporter and volunteer – who came to support MRFF from a somewhat unique direction – to share his story. His name is Mike Challman – a 1985 graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA), a decorated Air Force officer and a lifelong, ardent Christian. Today, he is a senior business executive and community leader. He first learned of MRFF through news reports about its challenge to the phrase "so help me God" in the USAFA honor oath. By his own admission, his initial response was critical of MRFF's actions and highly suspicious of its intentions, because the media reports he read

consistently depicted MRFF as having an anti-religion (specifically anti-Christian), probably atheistic, agenda.

In his own words:

*“Everything I’d read in news reports and conservative commentaries suggested that MRFF was dangerous to the religious freedom of my fellow Christians in the military, and was an organization to which I should stand opposed.”*

Mike reached out to MRFF directly to express his concerns, and was surprised by the gracious responses he received and the willingness of the organization to discuss his questions. He relates that he was also surprised to learn that most of MRFF’s volunteers, supporters, and clients are people of faith. This led him to do his own research into the issue of Constitutional protections, particularly how the courts have interpreted the Establishment clause and the ‘no religious test’ requirement, and how those protections are being manifested in today’s military.

By the conclusion of his research effort, he says:

*“It was a slam dunk. The media reports and conservative commentators were not telling the whole story, and in many cases were not telling a true story. The position of MRFF is not anti-religion; it is pro-Constitution. My research also revealed that the abuse of the Constitutional rights of military members is a legitimate problem today, and one that demands a response. Even more importantly, I was shocked to discover that there is a very real, very serious threat from a small but active segment of conservative, Evangelical Christians who believe that the US government should be an explicitly Christian institution, and that the U.S. military should be an explicitly Christian force. More so, they believe it is their God-given right to promote their particular dogma anytime, anywhere, to anyone. As a Christian myself, I can appreciate the passion of their beliefs, but I strongly disagree with the notion that any single sectarian belief, even Christianity, should be given preference or prominence in our government and our military. ”*

It is this particular threat from Dominionist Christians that has led Mike to become an active MRFF supporter, assisting with responses to emails from Christians and working to help educate his fellow Christians about the threat posed by these extremists. Again, in his own words:

*“Some of the correspondence that MRFF receives from individuals who claim to be my fellow Christians is stunning in its hostility, nastiness, and often threatening content. It grieves me to know that there are people who harbor such hatred toward their fellow citizens, yet who believe they are acting at God’s behest. But it also strengthens my resolve to resist these extremists who would sacrifice the Constitutional rights of others on the altar of their own*

*sectarian beliefs.”*

Mike also asked me to relate how he balanced his personal faith with his professional obligations when he was an Air Force Officer. Recounting his experiences, he explains:

*“During my time in the Air Force, I still remained an active and devout Christian and I retained all of my Constitutional rights to my religious beliefs. But as a leader with authority over other service members, I also had a responsibility not to use my position to promote my personal beliefs to my subordinates, because they too had a constitutional right to their own beliefs (including non-belief). More importantly, they had a right to live and work in an environment where my sectarian religious beliefs were not conflated with the mission of our unit.”*

Finally, Mike asked that I let you know how proud he is to stand with MRFF and support the rights of all military members, both believers and non-believers, who deserve nothing less than the full protection of the Constitution that they have sworn to protect and defend with their very lives. He hopes that you will be as fervent in your own defense of their rights.

I’ve asked another MRFF supporter and unpaid advisory board member, who also came to support MRFF from a somewhat unique direction, to share his story as well. His name is Lawrence Wilkerson – a United States Army soldier for 31 years (retired colonel) during which he was special assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, and later, after retirement from the US Army, Secretary of State Colin Powell’s chief of staff at the State Department. Now, he is a professor of government and public policy at the College of William and Mary. He first learned of MRFF through former U.S. Ambassador Joe Wilson, who is a full board member of the MRFF.

We had just lost former U.S. Navy SEAL, Glen Doherty, who was killed in the attack on our consulate in Benghazi, Libya as an MRFF advisory board member and Joe Wilson was helping us find a replacement. Wilkerson was very skeptical at first, telling Ambassador Wilson that he knew first-hand how important spiritual counsel was to soldiers, particularly on the battlefield. Joe pressed on nonetheless. Yes, yes, Wilkerson countered, he knew how the Constitution read about religion—indeed he taught such aspects in his seminars—but he also knows how important religion is, and in addition to being a Baptist himself, his wife and children are Catholic.

In his own words:

*“When the bullets are whining in your ears and the mortar rounds exploding in your face, God can be a great comfort. Endangering that comfort would be utter stupidity.”*

Ambassador Wilson persisted, explaining MRFF's mission was not to destroy that comfort but to secure and enhance it for all soldiers, of all religions, or of no religious faith whatsoever. Joe also spoke of the vital importance of government's showing absolutely no predilection for, support of, or association with a particular religion.

Wilkerson said he would consider MRFF's request and study what it was doing and get back to Ambassador Wilson. Meanwhile, Joe provided Wilkerson with information on MRFF, including sharing with him some of the more obscene, profane and disturbing e-mails that poured into MRFF from so-called "Christians" across the United States (with most of the senders using anonymity of some sort to mask their actual origins). Some of these Christians, however, readily identified as Dominionists. Several were actually serving U.S. military members—a fact that truly disturbed Colonel Wilkerson.

Wilkerson re-read James Madison's work on religious freedom in Virginia and reacquainted himself with the firm concept that we've come to know as separation of church and state. He noted that Madison was even opposed to chaplains serving in the armed forces. He also took time to acquaint himself thoroughly with MRFF's work, its vast clientele of active members of the armed forces, and its various fights over the past few years. As a result, Wilkerson became a believer in our cause and joined the advisory board. He told MRFF:

*"I never realized how much my Army had changed since I retired in 1997. I recall a few problems with one or two die-hard evangelical chaplains, but I was always able to counsel them and restrain their activities to what a chaplain's role should be—counseling all troops with no reference to a particular faith, other than the soldier's own, if that were applicable. Never should a chaplain advocate a particular religion in front of several troops or a formation or body of troops. A Baptist preacher, a rabbi, a priest, an imam all should be able to give spiritual counsel in times of stress or difficulty—but not proselytize, never proselytize."*

When Wilkerson became fully apprised of what was happening in his Army, he was appalled. He discovered, for example, that a Lieutenant General (retired) had made statements implying that when Christ descended for the Rapture, it would not be with a flaming sword but with an AR-15 automatic assault rifle. He found active duty USAF officers running blog sites advocating Christianity and chaplains who proselytized the ranks regularly. He discovered prayer events that were command-directed, including in the Pentagon. He found men and women, numbering in the thousands, who complained about discrimination against them by superior ranking officers and NCOs because they were insufficiently ardent as "Christians". And, perhaps most dangerous of all, he found members of Congress who did not understand why the Constitution is correct in its separation of church and state. He found leaders who simply did not comprehend the enormous danger of a government's sponsorship of a specific religion. And, in his words, he found:

*“These radical, so-called Christians have turned the Constitution on its head—and they have done so in order to protect their version of Christianity and not religious freedom, as the Founders intended. They have done it to protect themselves—not the nation, not religious freedom, but exclusively themselves. They are the American equivalent of the Islamic Taliban.”*

Moreover, Wilkerson said:

*“These people are dangerous, very dangerous. They want a nation founded on religious freedom to be a nation of only Christians—and only their narrow and perverse version of Christians. Nothing could be further from our Founders’ wishes, the most eloquent of whom, like Madison, knew that state sponsorship of any religion is the first step to the tyranny of that religion. It is not about God at all; it is about men lusty for power over other men and women. And that is contrary to every fiber of a free nation, a free America.”*

We are also appalled when a letter from an attendee (retired colonel) at a promotion ceremony arrives on a senior commander’s desk, demanding the immediate dismissal of the promotee. The offense? In the ceremonial retaking of the oath of office that is traditional at these events, the new office-holder omitted the final four words of the oath “so help me God”—his right as a non-believer. This particular officer chose to omit the words, though, not as a statement of non-belief, but to demonstrate neutrality. But, in our strange, current world of accepted proselytization and overt religious declaration, simply NOT mentioning “God” as a condition or prerequisite for honorable service is seen as an event worthy of such significance that it could choke off all future promotions and divide a unit’s loyalties. We wish we could say that, in this case, the senior commander simply “round-filed” this letter into the trash, but instead it was sent down through the promotee’s chain of command for all to review with a request of the target officer to craft a response for the commander and send it back up the chain.

Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen, cadets and Midshipmen in basic military training and other structured training environments are derided for not attending “optional” church services during their duty time and cadets and midshipmen at our academies are afforded special privileges for “chaplain’s programs” not available to non-believing cadets—again eroding the common experience and equitable standards so important to their training experience.

What choice does a new Marine **really** have when, at their basic training graduation ceremony, in front of drill sergeants and thousands of guests, they are **ordered** to bow their heads, clasp hands, and receive the chaplain’s benediction—equivalent to the non-believer of mandatory consumption of bacon at breakfast for a Muslim Marine because “it’s good for him or her” and not participating would make you stand out as not a true member of the unit.

There are positives and progress out there, but they’ve come at a steep price—in many cases the sacrificed careers of those that have raised the issues ignored by their



commanders. These “trouble makers” are usually not immediately cashiered, but all with military experience know that there are myriad subtle, realistically untraceable methods of stalling a once-promising career through faint praise and feeble recommendation—and this is especially true in a time of personnel and budget cuts when only the “water walkers” are allowed on the escalator of promotion to senior ranks.

Air Force Instruction 1-1, paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12 provide appropriate guidance for commanders and equally comforting assurance to subordinates that, if enforced, the conditions for good order, morale, discipline and cohesion within a unit will be in place. AFI 1-1 recognizes the rights of free practice. Furthermore, it parallels the balance, in paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12, of undue influence and free practice in religion with the balance, in paragraph 2.13, of political rights and restrictions.

Specifically, paragraphs 2.11 and 2.12 state that:

*“[Leaders] must avoid the actual or apparent use of their position to promote their personal religious beliefs to their subordinates or to extend preferential treatment for any religion. Commanders or supervisors who engage in such behavior may cause members to doubt their impartiality and objectivity. The potential result is a degradation of the unit’s morale, good order, and discipline. Airmen, especially commanders and supervisors, must ensure that in exercising their right of religious free expression, they do not degrade morale, good order, and discipline in the Air Force or degrade the trust and confidence that the public has in the United States Air Force.”*

In terms of free practice, paragraph 2.12 states: “All Airmen are able to choose to practice their particular religion, or subscribe to no religious belief at all. You should confidently practice your own beliefs while respecting others whose viewpoints differ from your own.” And, “Your right to practice your religious beliefs does not excuse you from complying with directives, instructions, and lawful orders; however, you may request religious accommodation.”

And yet, pressure has been brought to bear by sectarian factions within and without the DoD to change this instruction, to allow commanders to proselytize and openly express their religious views (and biases) up to and until the subordinate can **prove** damage has been done to unit cohesion, morale, *and* good order and discipline within the unit. Not only does this place the burden of proof upon the injured party or parties, but the astonishing use of the inclusive conjunction (“and”) would demand a still higher (if not impossible) bar of proof.

In this time of grave and justified concern for the victims of sexual assault and harassment in our military, would we demand the same ridiculously shameful burden of proof (or injury) of these victims? Hierarchical pressures and the internal politics of the “Good Ol’ Boy” system are already tremendous, if not insuperable, barriers to reporting in this arena. Will

the open practice of proselytization and “witnessing” in the military workplace have the same repressive impact on those that would report malfeasance? More often than not, I am so sad to have to report to you that these members are instead choosing to vote with their feet, depriving our military of great (and often unique) combat and related skills and diversity in areas beyond race and religion — eliminating sources of imagination and self-evaluation that make our military the flexible, inclusive, and deadly effective force that it is.

With over 38,000 MRFF clients and more examples that I could take hours to cover, let me conclude by reiterating that the MRFF is a pro-Christian organization in both word and deed. We are pro-Muslim, pro-Jewish, pro-Hindu, pro-Freethinker, pro-Atheist, and pro-Wicca—but we are primarily and fundamentally pro-Constitution, as are all of our clients. We are as aspirational as that most aspirational of documents, which is 227 years old as of this very week (17 Sept), by the way. We support a strong U.S. military in which all service members are free to practice their religion within the lawful time, place and manner restrictions placed by proper authorities pursuant to the Constitution, its construing federal and state case law and DoD directives, instructions and regulations. We seek a military in which every Soldier, Sailor, Airman, Marine and Coast Guard member is confident that no single *religious* perspective is a necessary or sufficient condition for honorable service—where they are all respected as individuals committed to the mission of defending this nation.

Our military is a different type of society than what most Americans have experienced or are capable of understanding. It is hyper-tribal, adversarial, communal, and ritualistic. Honorable members of the United States Congress, I beseech you all to please carefully and dutifully internalize this -- that, in the U.S. military, when you are told by your command leadership that you lack courage, integrity, intelligence, character, trustworthiness, competence and honor, solely because of your religious faith or lack thereof, there is NO difference between THAT abject bigotry and the searing prejudice of denigrating someone in the very same terms just because of the color of their skin or because they were born female.

As George Washington stated when he wrote to Edward Newenham on October 20, 1792:

*“Of all the animosities which have existed among mankind, those which are caused by difference of sentiments in religion appear to be the most inveterate and distressing, and ought most to be deprecated.”*

**DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES  
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION**

**INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES:** Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Committee on Armed Services in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee.

**Witness name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Capacity in which appearing:** (check one)

Individual

Representative

**If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented:**

**FISCAL YEAR 2013**

<b>federal grant(s) / contracts</b>	<b>federal agency</b>	<b>dollar value</b>	<b>subject(s) of contract or grant</b>

**FISCAL YEAR 2012**

<b>federal grant(s) / contracts</b>	<b>federal agency</b>	<b>dollar value</b>	<b>subject(s) of contract or grant</b>

**FISCAL YEAR 2011**

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

**Federal Contract Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2013): \_\_\_\_\_;  
 Fiscal year 2012: \_\_\_\_\_;  
 Fiscal year 2011: \_\_\_\_\_.

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2013): \_\_\_\_\_;  
 Fiscal year 2012: \_\_\_\_\_;  
 Fiscal year 2011: \_\_\_\_\_.

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2013): \_\_\_\_\_;  
 Fiscal year 2012: \_\_\_\_\_;  
 Fiscal year 2011: \_\_\_\_\_.

Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2013): \_\_\_\_\_;  
 Fiscal year 2012: \_\_\_\_\_;  
 Fiscal year 2011: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Federal Grant Information:** If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2013): \_\_\_\_\_;  
Fiscal year 2012: \_\_\_\_\_;  
Fiscal year 2011: \_\_\_\_\_.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2013): \_\_\_\_\_;  
Fiscal year 2012: \_\_\_\_\_;  
Fiscal year 2011: \_\_\_\_\_.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2013): \_\_\_\_\_;  
Fiscal year 2012: \_\_\_\_\_;  
Fiscal year 2011: \_\_\_\_\_.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2013): \_\_\_\_\_;  
Fiscal year 2012: \_\_\_\_\_;  
Fiscal year 2011: \_\_\_\_\_.

## Michael L. “Mikey” Weinstein

Mikey Weinstein is a leader in the national movement to restore the obliterated wall separating church and state in the most technologically lethal organization ever created by humankind: the United States armed forces. Described by Harper’s magazine as “the constitutional conscience of the U.S. military, a man determined to force accountability”, Mikey’s family has a long and distinguished U.S. military history spanning three consecutive generations of military academy graduates and over 130 years of combined active duty military service in every major combat engagement our country has been in from World War I to the current Global War on Terror.

Mikey is a 1977 Honor Graduate of the United States Air Force Academy. Mikey has been married for over 37 years to his wife, Bonnie. He is the proud parent of two sons, one daughter and one granddaughter. His oldest son and daughter-in-law are 2004 Graduates, Mikey’s youngest son graduated in the Class of 2007, and his son-in-law is a 2010 graduate from the Air Force Academy. Seven total members of Mikey’s family have attended the Academy. His father is a distinguished graduate of the United States Naval Academy. Mikey served for more than 10 years with the Judge Advocate General (“JAG”) Corps.

A registered Republican, he also spent over three years in the West Wing of the Reagan Administration as legal counsel in the White House. In his final position there, Mikey was named the Committee Management Officer of the much-publicized Iran-Contra Investigation in his capacity as Assistant General Counsel of The White House Office of Administration, Executive Office of the President of the United States. Mikey has held numerous positions in corporate America as a senior executive businessman and attorney.

After stints at prominent law firms in both New York City and Washington D.C., Mikey served as the first General Counsel to Texas billionaire and two-time Presidential candidate H. Ross Perot and Perot Systems Corporation. He left Mr. Perot’s employ in 2006 to focus his fulltime attention on the nonprofit charitable foundation he founded to directly battle the far-right militant radical evangelical religious fundamentalists: the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. (<http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org>)

Mikey has appeared innumerable times on all of the major cable and terrestrial TV news networks and is a frequent guest on national radio networks as well. His constitutional activism has been covered and profiled extensively in the print media including the Associated Press, The New York Times, the Washington Post, the L.A. Times, the Denver Post, The Guardian, and many other national and international newspapers and periodicals including Time magazine.

St. Martins Press in New York released Mikey’s book, “With God On Our Side: One Man’s War Against an Evangelical Coup in America’s Military” in October 2006. The paperback version was released in February 2008 with the Foreword being written by Ambassador Joseph Wilson IV. The book is an expose on the systemic problem of religious intolerance throughout the United States armed forces. At this time, Mikey also made his international film debut in the Hollywood adaptation of James Carroll’s New York Times best selling book detailing the 2,000

year bloody history between the Church and the Jews, entitled “Constantine’s Sword”, and directed by Oscar nominee Oren Jacoby.

In January, 2012, Mikey’s latest book “No Snowflake in an Avalanche: The Military Religious Freedom Foundation, its Battle to Defend the Constitution, and One Family’s Courageous War Against Religious Extremism in High Places” was released. It details MRFF’s prominent case studies, struggles, and the violent reactions to MRFF advocacy.

Mikey was named one of the 50 most influential Jews in America by the Forward, one of the nation’s preeminent Jewish publications. He also has received a nomination for the JFK’s Profile in Courage Award and received the Buzzflash Wings of Justice Award. In addition Mikey was honored by a distinguished civil rights organization, Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, with the Rabbi Marshall T. Meyer Risk-Taker Award for those who have taken risks in the pursuit of justice.

In December 2012, Defense News named Mikey one of the 100 Most Influential People in U.S. Defense. As a distinguished “Opinion shaper” exercising a hard-fought influence over the U.S. Armed Forces, Mikey’s influence has been recognized as exceeding that of former General David Petraeus himself by a publication that represents “the world’s biggest military newsroom.” Defense News is a Gannett publication – as are USA Today, The Arizona Republic, Detroit Free Press, The Indianapolis Star, The Cincinnati Enquirer, and many other prominent newspapers across the nation. Gannett Government Media consists of Defense News, Army Times, Air Force Times, Navy Times, Marine Corps Times, Armed Forces Journal and Federal Times.

On November 7, 2011, Americans United for the Separation of Church and State presented Mikey Weinstein with AU’s first ever Person of the Year Award. In their press release, AU describes MRFF as “the leading voice protecting church-state separation in the military.”

On November 1, 2013, for the fifth consecutive year, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation was officially nominated again for the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize (its sixth total nomination).

## coerce

verb

to compel by force, intimidation, or authority, especially without regard for individual desire or volition

## voluntary

adjective

done, made, brought about, undertaken, etc., of one's own accord or by free choice

Much of what follows in the attached enclosures is presented to make clear the distinction between these two concepts – *coerced* participation in religious activities and *voluntary* participation in religious activities – as they apply in the U.S. military.

The military is, by its very nature, an institution that, for the necessary purpose of maintaining good order and discipline, embodies a culture of “force, intimidation, or authority” that does not exist in the civilian world. When, however, this same culture of “force, intimidation, or authority” is used to compel service members to participate in religious practices “without regard for individual desire or volition,” the line between the necessary and proper use of power and an abuse of power has been crossed. That line has been, and repeatedly continues to be, crossed on a daily basis by those in authority across our Armed Forces in a way that is best described by another dictionary definition of the word *coerce* – “to dominate or control, especially by exploiting fear, anxiety, etc.”

When a service member unwillingly participates in any religious activity out of fear or anxiety over what might happen if they don't participate, their participation is *not voluntary*.

There is no better way to convey the effect of the efforts by fundamentalist Christians within our military “to dominate or control, especially by exploiting fear, anxiety, etc.” on our service members than to let the service members speak for themselves. For this reason, a number of emails written by service members to MRFF are included as the first of the three enclosures in this package.

Most of these emails are from service members who have come to MRFF for the simple reason that they are afraid that speaking out, approaching their chain of command, or filing an official complaint will make them a target for retaliation – retaliation that could come in the form of anything from being ostracized within their unit to literally ending their career.

Among the most disturbing of these emails are the ones in which service members are apologizing and beating themselves up, calling themselves cowards for not speaking up and trying to stop a situation while it was happening. Should any service member be writing to MRFF saying “I hate myself” because he remained silent as his superior “encouraged” his unit to applaud for a religious speaker? Should any service member with multiple combat tours under his belt be telling MRFF that he is more afraid to speak up about an unconstitutional religious activity than he is of facing combat? Should any parent of a young service member fear for their son's or daughter's well being, not at the hands of an enemy in a foreign land but at the hands of religious fundamentalists in our own military?

These are just some of the kinds of emails regularly received by MRFF. They are not stories that



typically make headlines. Headlines are reserved for battles over nativity scenes and crosses, leading the majority of Americans to believe that this is all the fight for religious freedom in the military is about. We therefore urge you to read the emails enclosed in this package, which will provide a much better sense of the real situations and dilemmas faced by our men and women in uniform who don't subscribe to what has become the military's preferred religious belief system.

The second enclosure is MRFF's response to a report put out last year by the Family Research Council (FRC). As the FRC's report, titled "A Clear and Present Danger: The Threat to Religious Liberty in the Military," has been cited and referred to by members of Congress on a number of occasions, including in prior Armed Services Committee hearings, we anticipate that it will also be submitted and/or referred to in this present hearing.

Employing a tactic often referred to as the "Gish Gallop" – presenting such a lengthy list of claims as to overwhelm anyone who might attempt to refute any of them – the current edition of the FRC's report lists sixty-three separate claims of alleged "Christian persecution" in the military.

These alleged incidents of Christian persecution listed in the FRC's report are cited by our opponents as the justification for the changes to military regulations that they are seeking – changes that would not only open the door to all manner of government-sanctioned religious discrimination and harassment in our military, but strip military commanders of their ability to do anything to stop religious discrimination and harassment within their ranks.

The enclosed report from MRFF focuses on three examples picked from the sixty-three claims listed in the FRC's report. These particular claims were chosen as examples because they are among the most frequently cited by members of Congress, on the House floor, in committee hearings, and elsewhere.

After reading the real stories behind these three claims of alleged Christian persecution, and judging for yourself how far apart the FRC's "A Clear and Present Danger" report versions of these stories are from the facts, please give some thought to how truthful you think the other sixty claims in the FRC's report are likely to be.

The third enclosure in this package is a chapter from the book *Attitudes Aren't Free: Thinking Deeply About Diversity in the US Armed Forces*, published by Air University Press at Maxwell Air Force Base in 2010. The chapter, titled "Against All Enemies, Foreign and Domestic," covers a broad variety of issues. Although written four years ago, the particular examples and incidents contained in this chapter, or others of a very similar nature, continue to plague our military.

As its title indicates, this chapter includes incidents and examples related to both our military's religious activities overseas in combat zones and on our military installations here at home. It is the examples in the second (or "domestic") section of this chapter (beginning on page 78 of the book; page 10 of the enclosed chapter) that best explain the types of coerced, and sometimes mandatory, religious activities that our opponents see no problem with, and would like not only to see continue but to increase.

When submitting this chapter for the book, MRFF was asked by the book's editors to include our recommendations for remedying the problems described in the chapter. At that time, MRFF's position, as stated in the "Recommendations" section of the chapter, was that: "there are very few situations in which the existing regulations are the problem. The problem is that these existing regulations are not being followed or enforced."

MRFF still holds this position, at least for now. Should our opponents succeed in obtaining their desired changes to our military's regulations, however, it then *will be* the regulations that are the problem.

## **Emails from Service Members to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF)**

**If you read nothing else in this package, please just read this first email.**

This email was written in 2009 by a decorated combat officer, a man with the courage to repeatedly put his life on the line on the battlefield, being wounded twice, but who could not muster the courage to resist the pressure of his “serious and committed born again Christian” commanding officer.

To Mikey Weinstein and MRFF:

My name is (name withheld) and I am a (officer rank withheld) in the U.S. Army currently stationed stateside at Fort (military installation name withheld). I, my spouse and my children are Methodists attending church regularly on both Wednesdays and Sundays. I will always remember today as the low-point of my long (number of years withheld) year career in the Army. I have only myself to blame. Today I firmly established myself as a shameful person. Mikey, I write about 3 things; Rick Warren, my cowardice and your bravery. Today, I watched President Obama’s inauguration on the television set up in our Brigade staff conference room. I attended as a member of (unit level designation withheld) staff along with over 40 other senior officers, senior enlisted and a few senior Army civilian staffers. There had been much talk here about Pres. Obama’s selection of the evangelical pastor Rick Warren to give the invocation at the ceremonies.

Our current Commander is a very intolerant and “serious and committed born again Christian” as he always describes himself to all his subordinates. At every military assignment I’ve ever been to it’s always the same thing; if you are not a born again “serious” Christian you are branded as pretty much worthless. My current Commander is bad but not the worst I have seen. I have served 2 combat tours; one in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. I have seen those under my command killed and grievously wounded. I was wounded twice. I have been awarded many combat medals and decorations. I have also stood by silently while my combat superiors have openly and repeatedly proselytized me and my troops. I did nothing. I have stood by and watched them continuously proselytize the Iraqis and Afghans. I did nothing.

Today, after Pastor Warren ended his invocation by praying in the name of his personal Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Commander jumped to his feet clapping and yelled “God Bless him for having the courage to pray for all of the lost souls in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ!” About a third of those attending also clapped. I did not. That was until our Commander turned around to survey everyone’s reaction to his statement. When that happened, the officer next to me started to clap and the one to my left clapped too. I felt like I was in a spotlight as the Commander looked at me and the female officer in front of me who had also not clapped. Then she clapped. And then I clapped too. I tried not to but could not muster up the strength to be the only one in the room not clapping in support of our Commander and Warren. I know what I should have done but I just couldn’t. Despite the many fierce combat situations I have been in, including hand-to-hand, I just couldn’t. I hate myself for this failure. I hate myself for my cowardice. I hate myself.

I have heard and read about all of the death and other threats being made against you, your wife and children. I listened to the voice recording of the death threat that you released made against MRFF client Spc. Jeremy Hall. I heard about that church being burned down when you spoke in that town. All of you show bravery especially when the chips are down. I

had my chance today and I showed fear and cowardice. I can't stand what I did today. I have been a client of MRFF for over three years now but no one knows it other than my spouse. We are both afraid of anyone finding out. I have heard other Army personnel talk of being MRFF clients but they usually try to keep it very quiet. Everything you are fighting for, Mikey, is the right fight. I'm not guessing and not assuming; I have lived it. I am living it. I will continue to live it. Trying to complain up the chain of command is as useless as filing an IG complaint or other administrative action. No, it's far worse than just useless. It can and will brand the complainer as a target for revenge.

I have seen it happen and fear it could happen to me if I stood up to it. I have a family and am not that far from being able to retire in peace and quiet. MRFF is the only outlet for military people like me. I hope this e-mail message can help other people (there are so many of us) be willing to contact MRFF and allow you to fight on our behalf against the multitudes of "serious and committed born again Christians" who control all of our careers and lives. Your lawsuit is important to us all. Please don't stop your fight and please don't hate me for not fighting. I hate myself enough for everyone.

(name, rank, and military installation withheld)

MRFF receives emails like the one you just read on a regular basis – emails from service members of all ranks with varied histories. That particular one, although from 2009, was chosen for inclusion as an example here because the officer who wrote it expressed so well, and in such detail, what so many others who have experienced the same self-loathing have told MRFF. That any member of our military should ever be put in so much distress over conforming to the religious preference of a superior that they are at the point of saying "I hate myself" is nothing short of sickening. And yet that is exactly how so many service members are made to feel about themselves by their "serious and committed born again Christian" superiors.

A more recent example, which also shows the effect of the misinformation and outright lies being spread about MRFF by certain organizations and media outlets, is this one, written by an Air Force fighter pilot.

**Subject: Dart Board Incident Tonight and Apology**

Date: May 30, 2014

Good Evening Mr. Weinstein,

Sir, I am a (officer's rank withheld) and (aircraft type withheld) pilot in the U.S. Air Force. Before tonight I would have said the word "proud" before the words "(aircraft type withheld) pilot" but I don't feel that proud right now.

Before I begin I would ask a favor. Please do not release any of my personal information at all. I am sending this to you from an email that is supposed to be untraceable but just the same am asking that you do not reveal it just in case sir. I have a family and don't need the burden of being tied into this email. Other than my name and rank, my aircraft and the name of my squadron our club and my base all the rest of what I say is fair game. In a way now I almost hope they confront me about what I will tell you.

Sir, I fly the (aircraft nomenclature withheld) and am stationed at (name withheld) AFB in (U.S. state withheld). Late this afternoon and evening my squadron, the (squadron name and nomenclature withheld), held a pretty typical end of the week social gathering on base at the (name of club withheld) Club. It's supposed to be about comraderie and there is alot of drinking, drinking "events" and "story telling". Sometimes kind of a controlled riot. It's general pilot bonding. One of these events is playing darts. Sometimes a picture of "an

enemy of the State” is hung up on the dart board in the bar area. We’ve had pictures of the likes of Osama Bin Ladin, Vladimir Putin whoever is the President of Iran and Saddam Hussein and many others bad guys. Today was the first time they ever hung up a picture of an American on the dart board. It was you sir. At the bottom of the picture of you they wrote “Shylock Shyster for Satan”. Most of the squadron attendees laughed and the dart throwing started. In a short time your picture was shredded with dart hits. The cheering was loud and proud. The last person to throw darts at your picture was one our Flight Commanders (name and rank withheld). He is also pretty much the most respected pilot in the squadron.

Sir, I didn’t laugh and few others did not either. We were pretty shocked. And confused. Not just that your picture was put up on the enemies of the State dart board. But also by the ugly caption. Describing you that way was just awful. Among other things maybe even antisemitic? Pretty mean and sketchy. Unfair and cowardly too. Also considering all the threats you guys get all the time. I don’t know whose idea it was and I guess it doesn’t matter now.

Sir, I wish I could tell you that I stood up and tore that photo of you with that messed up caption down. I did not. Noone else did either. I am ashamed that I did nothing and I’m still struggling to understand why? I decided to at least inform you of this so I got your email address off of the MRF website.

Mr. Weinstein, I did not graduate from the Air Force Academy. I am a ROTC graduate from (University name withheld). But I know and respect your hard work at the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. My wife kids and I attend a local (Christian church denomination name withheld) church. We have always considered ourselves to be solid citizen Christians. I have been in the Air Force long enough though to have not only seen but experienced the things you fight against. Alot. I just never thought something as shady like this would happen right in front of me. I should have done something I know. And now I know how it feels and I hate it.

I told my wife about it and she encouraged me to send this email. She is very upset as well. She is as worried as I am that somehow my squadron leadership will find out that I told you what happened tonight. My OPR is due soon. So is my promotion board and I’m competing with many others for (Air Force professional education school name withheld) in residence. Sir I am disappointed in myself. In a way I have not felt before. Please forgive me. I feel terrible and deserve to.

Sir, I would like to apologize personally to you and all the workers at the MRFF for my total failure to act. I would like to apologize on behalf of my fellow pilots in the (squadron name and nomenclature withheld). I will do everything I can to try to make sure that this never happens again. I am ashamed and embarrassed that it even happened this one time.

V/R

(USAF Pilot’s name and rank withheld)

MRFF also receives quite a few emails from parents of service members. Some of these emails are to express concern about the religious climate and pressures that their sons or daughters have written home about. Others are about specific incidents.

The following email was written by the parents of a female Air Force Academy cadet who decided to take a stand during the fallout from the now infamous white board incident – the recent incident at the Academy in which a cadet wrote and then removed a Bible verse he had written on the white board outside his dorm room. What these parents wrote is not in the story that you will hear from those who are claiming that the cadet who wrote the Bible verse was being persecuted for his Christian faith.

**Subject: Our Air Force Academy Cadet Daughter's Physical Altercation**

Date: March 12, 2014

Dear Mr. Mikey Weinstein and the MRFF,

Our daughter (cadet name and rank withheld) is a cadet at the Air Force Academy in Squadron Number (cadet Squadron No. withheld). Earlier today she experienced a fightful situation that left her terrified and we as her parents, furious.

Thank you, Mikey, for taking our several calls for help. Thank you too for taking the time to talk to our daughter several times today.

Here's briefly what happened. As you know the word got out around the Air Force Academy very fast about the one cadet who had their white board message of a New Testament biblical verse taken down. It seems that the news stories on the matter got out on Facebook and Twitter and other social media to the point that it flooded the Air Force Academy cadets. Apparently there was a protest movement initiated by certain very Christian cadets to put many more religious messages up on many white boards around the cadet campus in the Squadron outside hallway areas. This became very disconcerting and troubling to our daughter and many of her fellow cadets. She decided to do something about it. Her way.

Our daughter wanted to make a point as to how she felt the placing of Christian religious messages in the official Squadron hallways outside of the cadet rooms was a direct violation of the regulations.

We are a (Protestant denomination withheld) family and raised our daughter in the same (Protestant denomination withheld) faith. Despite the way we raised her in only our faith our daughter respects all faiths and also those who are not religious at all. To make a point about how terrible the white board religious postings are she wrote on her white board the following message "There is no evidence that any God has ever existed". Almost immediately she was shouted down by 2 larger male cadets. Both of who out ranked her in seniority. They yelled at her and shouted that her message was "anti-faith" and that it was "an insult to all people of faith" and that she was targeting only "Christians". They yelled that merely putting a biblical verse on a white board "did not insult anyone else". They said that it did "not insult atheists and that it "only proclaimed the Christian faith" and that it "did not tear down those nonbelievers". They were very, very mad at our daughter. They started to wipe off our daughter's message. She felt she had every right to put it up there if all of the other Christian messages were allowed. She tried to stop them but they overpowered her. They pushed her and forcibly held her back from stopping them. The whole thing took less than a minute to happen. Our daughter ran away and called us. She was beside herself and crying. We were more afraid than we've ever been.

We called you Mikey and were surprised you answered your own phone. After speaking with you we called our daughter back so she could talk to you. She also called and you answered right there and then. Thank you for speaking with us all.

We were trying to determine the best way to proceed. Our daughter is adamant that she wants to drop it and we support her. We do not want to disappoint you by not "going public" but we all feel that the resulting pressure will be too much. For our daughter and our family to bear. None of us trust that the Air Force Academy internal agencies would properly handle any follow-on investigation. She has 2 bruises from the shoving that occurred. As she tried to prevent her white board message from being removed by the 2 other male cadets.

You asked us to send you this email to at least go on the record with the MRFF as to what happened. We are all still very confused and shaken by it all. The Academy chiefs have blundered and created a monster now.



Mikey and the MRFF, please respect our privacy and our decision to remain anonymous. We know that is not what you wanted us to do but it is what we want to do. You may use this email any way you wish to. As long as our identities are not shown. Thank you, Mikey and the MRFF for being there for us and our cadet daughter and for all the others you speak for.

(Parents' names withheld)

This next one is from an Air Force Academy faculty member, and is included here to make a specific point: If even a faculty member at the Academy is afraid to report an issue to their superior, how can anybody expect a cadet to feel comfortable reporting an issue or incident?

**Subject: Dosschwitz**

Date: September 3, 2013

Dear Mikey Weinstein and MRFF,

I'm writing to you as a field grade faculty member in one of the departments in USAFA/DF. I was appalled and disgusted when I recently heard one of our casual second lieutenants refer to having to go to the Pueblo airport for his initial flight screening (IFS) as going to "Dosschwitz." Doss Aviation, so you know, is the company that the Air Force has contracted to provide IFS. It boggles the mind that after four years of an Academy education, this young officer thinks that getting paid to go to Pueblo to take IFS is the equivalent experience of the victims who the Nazis sent to Auschwitz. I would approach my O-6 Permanent Professor Department Head, but I know that he will do nothing about this 2nd Lt and instead will file away the information and retaliate against me at a later date. I therefore have withheld my name, and the specifics of my rank and organization. I hope that you and MRFF can do something to shed light on this issue. Thank you.

(USAF Academy faculty member's name, rank, and faculty department all withheld)

A recurring theme in so many of the emails received by MRFF is fear of retaliation, especially in the emails from service members who have families. That fear is still there even among those who do decide to try to go through military channels to try to resolve an issue, as you can see in the case of the airman who wrote this next email.

**Subject: Religious material in the workplace crisis**

Date: June 30, 2013

I am a member of the (unit and military installation withheld). Recently my unit chaplain set up a display and dropped off some pamphlets written by the Christian Counseling & Education Foundation dealing with various issues such as suicide, grief, marital issues, child rearing, and such. The pamphlets were full of biblical verses and references to prayer, Jesus, and God. I was shocked to see such a display in the hallway of a secular military workplace as this is the first time anything like this has ever happened during my (number of years withheld) of service. I spoke with a few other people in the office and they were just as shocked/upset about it as well, these people included atheists, Christians, a even a Buddhist. In addition to the people I spoke with I also people talking about how odd it was in the hall, someone even removed a large number of them and put them inside of a locker. This clearly indicated to me that, while not a huge issue for some, these pamphlets were clearly not welcome and are causing a distraction. I wanted to talk to leadership about this but I have a family and was afraid of hidden reprisals. Instead I contacted the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) to help assess my options with the thought of going to MEO/IG. I eventually got in contact with MEO a few weeks later. During my phone

conversation with the representative I relayed to her that other people had issues with it and explained to her that the pamphlets made it appear that the Squadron only cared about your issues if you were only of a specific religion. I got the impression that she didn't see much of an issue with the material and why some people might see it as offensive and divisive but she said she would look into it. I then went TDY for 2 weeks and when I returned I had an email from the MEO rep saying that she had spoken to her colleagues and the Chaplain's office and determined that the material was approved by the Wing Chaplain and that she looked at the material and didn't find it offensive or divisive. There are several dozen USAF members who are extremely upset and scared. We all request MRFF client status. Don't know what to do next? MRFF please help us. We will talk to the press if requested. Several of us are willing to be identified if MRFF protects us.

(name, rank, AFSC, unit, and installation all withheld)

Something that our opponents really don't seem to understand is the effect that being forced to do something as seemingly inconsequential as adding religious words to an oath or, in the case of the next email, following an order to bow their heads for a prayer, has on service members who feel that such acts violate their conscience. But these acts, and being ordered to perform them, are no small matter for those service members, who are made to feel like they have two choices: follow the order and feel like a hypocrite, or disobey the order and risk the repercussions of disobeying an order.

**Subject: THANK YOU MRFF**

Date: June 20, 2010

Dear Mr. Weinstein,

This week presented one of the most frustrating days of my military career. The occasion to disagree with an order from someone in my chain of command is not an altogether rare occurrence but this is the first time that an order literally turned my stomach. Being ordered to bow my head during the invocation, at a ceremony I was required to attend, was something that I could not do in good conscience. It called to mind silent film I had been shown in college of the compound over which Jim Jones presided. It felt like something required of people in a cult and I felt so sick that I couldn't see straight.

Please understand that I, in no way, want people to stop praying or bowing their head when they do so if it is part of what they believe. I was raised in a Southern Baptist home and, although I no longer think of the Bible as a historical, literal account of events, going to church and learning the Bible plays a huge part of who I am. My parents still believe in the Bible that way and attend church and I support them 100 percent.

Ordering someone to fake an action of belief seems so contrary to the values with which I grew up. Come to find out, I wasn't the only one in my unit that had such a strong reaction against that order. I heard of a petition going around in an attempt to change the mind of whomever in our chain of command gave the order but I wasn't sure if that was an acceptable course of action in terms of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ). I did know one thing for sure; that contacting you and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation would bring no retribution my way.

I was very anxious about calling your office. I felt like I was opening Pandora's Box and that made me doubt myself. I thought that maybe I was making a mountain out of a mole hill and that I should just do what I'm told because it wouldn't hurt me physically. Still, I knew that it wasn't right to be given such an order and I thought about all of my shipmates and knew that I had to follow what my heart was telling me. When I called, Ms. Bekki Miller, your personal assistant, she was very helpful and made me feel like my concerns would be swiftly

addressed by you and MRFF and that all I needed to do was send an email. I still wondered if my voice would get lost in a ocean of business traffic. I knew there had to be people out there suffering worse persecution than me and I wondered if I would even be a blip on the radar. Thank you so much for responding to my email so quickly and with such aggressive determination and immediate positive effect.

Thankfully, the next day I didn't have to disobey that order because somehow and in some way, incredibly, you and MRFF had already gone to work! The command had all of a sudden "become aware" of how uncomfortable many of the Sailors in my unit were as a result of being told to bow their heads at the word of the Chaplain. After the ceremony we mustered and were informed that we would never again be ordered to visually support a religious idea despite our individual beliefs. My command made it clear that no retribution would come to anyone who spoke up about an inappropriate order of that nature. I believe that some members of my chain of command might not have even considered what anxiety their actions would create when they gave the order but they definitely know now.

I know for a fact that the ground work that you and MRFF did on our behalf, Mr. Weinstein, resulted in a sea change that will continue to ripple in the coming weeks and years. I have a notion that the type of events which our command supports is going to be looked at more closely in the future and that we may not be forced to take part in some of the ideological services which we have been required to support in the past. It feels like my command and those like mine which are scattered throughout the United States and overseas are waking up to a reality of which they hadn't been aware. The diversity that we value so much in terms of race and culture is spreading to an appreciation of the the diversity of beliefs that exists in all commands.

I know that, thanks to you, Mr. Weinstein and MRFF, nobody in my unit will be humiliated in the way I and many of my fellow sailors/shipmates felt humiliated. I know for an absolute FACT that change for the better is happening right now totally because of your work at The Military Religious Freedom Foundation. I know that your work is not against religion and that means the world to me because I think that people should believe what ever it is that gives their life meaning and gives them peace of mind. As a unit, our movements during a ceremony are practiced and precise. The act of bowing our heads was to be another of those movements. I do realize the power of uniform movements in a military ceremony but I also realize the power of having this one part be individual. When people see only some heads go down, they will realize the diversity of they Navy. They will know that anyone can serve with pride whatever their beliefs as long as their beliefs are in harmony with the UCMJ. They will know that even someone who only believes in Ships and Shipmates is welcome to serve with honor, courage and commitment. THANK YOU MIKEY AND MRFF!

Very Respectfully,

A Grateful Sailor, on Behalf of Many Other Grateful Sailors Who Wish To Remain Anonymous

MRFF also very often hears from service members to whom their chaplains are not a source of comfort and inspiration, but a source of distress and even harassment.

**Subject: Help! 'Manga messiah' in the CENTCOM AOR**

Date: January 6, 2013

Mikey and MRFF,

HELP! I am an active U.S. Army soldier. Service members are receiving this dreadful 'Manga Messiah' Japanese comic. This thing goes way beyond your standard tract, it



depicts homophobic and racially bigoted hatred. It's clearly aimed at children and teenagers, such as young impressionable US service members.

I personally received a copy under my bunk in the transient area of Camp Arifjan, Kuwait – 'The I Building' in zone 1. This is often the last stop service members have before entering or leaving Iraq (pre drawdown) or Afghanistan. It was in a plastic bag bundled with other standard tracts that you find in stacks on every chaplain's desk. It's clear that there are boxes of this shocking material somewhere in the CENTCOM AOR. Perhaps hundreds or thousands of copies have been distributed to military personnel. I'd hate to see one of them fall into the hands of a local Muslim, as there are vile depiction – (think Danish cartoon scandal.)

I'm not sure if it was deliberately placed under my bunk to build a case for plausible deniability, but it fits the pattern. Every day I showed up, more and more pamphlets were piled on my desk, and only on my desk. It was because of a Chaplain. He zeroed in on me because I requested he stop giving me pamphlets, as I am not a Christian. He said he "reserved the right to evangelize the unchurched." I can't link him or anyone directly to this Manga Messiah, because I received it in such a weird way (where I sleep rather than where I work).

Please, Mikey, you've gotta do something. Nobody understand just how WRONG this thing is. I know the Military Religious Freedom Foundation has dealt with similar things in the past. Please get somebody to find the chaplain(s) responsible for distributing this, and also destroy all copies! Most of my fellow soldiers that ARE Christians are shocked when I show them just how crazy this thing is!

Very respectfully,

(U.S. Army Soldier's name, rank, MOS, military installation and unit withheld)

**Subject: Congratulations, MRFF, I Think**

Date: May 5, 2011

Mr Weinstein, I am one of the most senior Non-Commissioned Officers of a large military combat unit currently stationed in Afghanistan. I have been in the (military branch and number of years of service withheld) years. I was raised a Baptist but while I still consider myself to be a Christian, I am not vocal about it and am offended when so many others in my military chain of command are which is very, very frequent. Yesterday afternoon your name and the name of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation came up at the tail end of our senior staff meeting chaired by the Commanding Officer. I noticed that one of the chaplains (there were several attending) was carrying a medium size notebook binder with a peculiar sticker on the front of it entitled "Enemies of Our Lord and Savior; 1 Corinthians 15:25". I don't know what the bible quotation means? This notebook was among many others which this chaplain carried. After the meeting I asked him about it. Of course, as an NCO, the chaplain outranks me. He told me that he keeps careful track of all organizations that stands in the way of the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the free exercise of religion given to us by the Lord. Enraged but hiding it, I asked to see it. it was a rank-ordered list. Guess who was in the "Number One" slot on his enemies list? The MRFF was. He told me that he had placed the MRFF there in the top spot a few months ago and by doing so it knocked the ACLU out of first place and into second. Beneath the ACLU was People for the American Way, Americans United and Planned Parenthood. There were many others lower on the list but I don't remember them all. The chaplain seemed pleased that I was asking him about his "enemies list". I asked him why the MRFF was on top of that list. Listen to what he said. He actually told me with a straight face that it was because the MRFF

and you, Mr. Weinstein by name, had become the most devoted servants of Satan of all the organizations out there. I wanted to say and ask many other things to him. I was afraid that he could see I was getting angry. But this chaplain is the fair haired boy of the unit's Commanding Officer and that would only spell trouble for me. I thanked him and walked away after he invited me to his nightly bible study group for our combat unit. I'm still trying to figure out what to do? Anyways, I thought you and the MRFF would want to know that you are Number One on that list. I was not a supporter very much before but knew about the MRFF as most of us do. But I will be from now on, Mr. Weinstein. I am sorry I did not speak out to that chaplain and feel bad about that. Thank you and the MRFF for being at the top of that chaplain's list. As one of my fellow NCO's said to me, it is not Satan that you serve. You and the MRFF serve Sanity instead.

(name, rank, combat specialty, combat unit and military installation withheld)

And, even worse than the distress caused by the kind of chaplains described in the above emails is the distress caused by the same religious pressure coming from a commanding officer.

**Subject: What Do I Tell Him?**

Date: December 26, 2012

Mr. Weinstein, my name is (name withheld). I am a (rank withheld) in the U.S. navy stationed and assigned on board the aircraft carrier (name withheld). Our unit Commander, (name and rank withheld), asked all of the senior NCOs in our unit including me whether or not we had "come to Christ yet" at the unit's so-called "Xmas Party" on board ship held a few days ago. He did it in front of the whole unit. Everyone was intimidated and they all said yes except for me. I just said "working on it Skip." He frowned and I felt bad but thought it was over with. I was mistaken. Today he came by my work station with a bible. And a personal written invitation to join his "bible study". It meets 3 times a week. During actual duty hours either late or early. Again in front of the crew I lead. Now I don't know what to do. He can mess up everything for me in the Navy. I have a wife and 4 kids. I've been in the Navy for (# of years withheld) and have seen this happen before a lot. I contacted my dad and my wife. They said to take it to you. Can the MRFF help me out of the whole I dug into with this officer? Please do not give anyone my name or tell them anything that will get me in worst trouble ok?

V/R

(United States Navy Sr. NCO's name, rank, unit and assigned ship all withheld)

One case that did make headlines a few years ago was that of the "Jesus rifles," the nickname given by service members to the rifles equipped with scopes made by Trijicon, a company that includes Bible verse references on its scopes. Our opponents cry "Christian persecution" over the removal of the Bible references from these scopes, calling it an infringement on free religious expression of Christians. In one of the first of the many emails received by MRFF about the "Jesus rifles," a soldier told MRFF how his unit was being told to use these weapons. The following is the paragraph of that soldier's email in which he recounted a particular incident regarding these weapons.

**Subject: "Spiritually Transformed Into The Fire Arm of Jesus Christ"**

Date: January 14, 2010

Nothing in my first 2 deployments prepared me for what happened with the Trijicon ACOG gun sights during my 3rd deployment to Afghanistan. I will never forget the day it occurred. It was morning and there was a mandatory formation of several companies. A very senior NCO was yelling at us which is not that unusual. He asked a private what it was that he(the private) was holding in his hand and the private said it was his "weapon" several times to

which the senior NCO replied “and what ELSE is it”? Finally, the senior NCO said that the private’s rifle was also something else; that because of the biblical quote on the ACOG gunsight it had been “spiritually transformed into the Fire Arm of Jesus Christ” and that we would be expected to kill every “haji” we could find with it. He said that if we were to run out of ammo, then the rifle would become the “spiritually transformed club of Jesus Christ” and that we should “bust open the head of every haji we find with it.” He said that Uncle Sam had seen fit not to give us a “pussy ‘Jewzzi’ (combination of the word ‘Jew’ and Israeli made weapon ‘Uzi’) but the “fire arm of Jesus Christ” and made specific mention of the biblical quotes on our gun sights. He said that the enemy no doubt had quotes from the Koran on their guns but that “our Lord is bigger than theirs because theirs is a fraud and an idol”. As a Muslim and an American soldier I was fit to be tied but I kept it in. There were many Afghans, both civilian and military, on base within earshot of what was being yelled at us and I can only wonder in shock what they must have thought. This senior NCO was apparently also the head person of a conservative, crazy Christian group called the “Christian Military Fellowship” and made a big deal about the importance of joining to everyone. He told us all that we MUST read a book called “Under Orders” in order to make it through this combat deployment and said he had many copies for everyone. Some of my friends went and got their copies. I refused. Finally, this senior NCO ended his yelling by warning us that if we did not “get right with Jesus” then our rifles would not provide spiritual strength despite the bible quotes on our ACOG gunsights and that we would be considered “spiritual cripples” to our fellow units and soldiers. He didn’t say it in so many words, but the message was clear; if anything bad happened in a combat situation, it would be the fault of anyone who had not accepted Jesus Christ in the “right way”. I have never felt so ashamed and scared in my life. I have never hated myself so much for not speaking out. So I thought of my wife and children and endured. Every time I looked at my rifle with that Trijicon ACOG gunsight/scope with the biblical quote from the book of John (8:12), it would make me sick. If I had tried to protest, it would have made me dead. And if I’m dead I’m of no use to my wife and children.

MRFF also receives a lot of “thank you” emails from service members once whatever problem they came to MRFF about has been fixed. Some of these emails might read like testimonials, and that’s because they are. Their authors wrote them with the intent that they be published on MRFF’s website or elsewhere, in hopes of letting other service members know that MRFF is somewhere they can turn if they’re facing a similar situation, despite any misinformation or lies they might have heard about MRFF.

This next email came from one of the airmen at Mountain Home AFB who came to MRFF for help in getting a disturbing piece of artwork removed from their dining facility (the specifics of this case can be found in the second enclosure in this package, as this is a case that is completely misrepresented in the Family Research Council’s “Clear and Present Danger” report).

**Subject: Appreciation From Mountain Home AFB, Idaho**

Date: June 7, 2013

Mr. Weinstein, I am one of the 22 USAF airmen who MRFF represented last Friday when you were able to get the USAF to remove the unlawful and offensive painting. From the Wagon Wheel dining facility at Mountain Home AFB in Idaho. To begin with, I am asking that you please remove any information from this e-mail to you which might allow USAF officials or anyone else to figure out my identity. If I was found out, there is no question that my career as a USAF fighter pilot would be over instantly. Or worse. So the readers of this know, I am a practicing Christian, have a family and belong to and regularly attend a (protestant denomination withheld) church here in the general local area. I graduated from the (university name and year withheld). I love my country as much as anyone.

I wanted to say a very, very serious thank you. From me and my fellow airmen, Mr. Weinstein.

Thank you and the MRFF for doing what I and my colleagues were too afraid to do. That fighter pilot-crusader painting (I know some say that it was a cop but nobody I know here saw it as anything but a fighter pilot) has been a source of unending dissention and disruption for a real long time here. I don't need to tell you of all people how wrong it was. Its display was totally messed up. Most of us knew it too. A while back in (month and year withheld) my unit held a get together for an enlisted member who had just received an award. We gathered at this same Wagon Wheel dining facility over the lunch hour. Not everyone was able to come of course but enough did. My (title withheld) Commander made special notice of that fighter pilot-crusader painting and in front of everyone said aloud "This is why we fly and fight. We have our jets and we have our faith in Christ. Victory in the air. Victory in Christ. This is America." I am not paraphrasing here, Mr. Weinstein. He said every single word as I just wrote it to you. You could have heard a pin drop. Noone dared to say anything. Especially since a bunch of the (unit's name withheld) members were clapping and otherwise jacked up expressing their approval. I was floored as were some others. But we did nothing. To our shame. None of us will forget that we failed to act.

We are also thankful to our Wing Commander Col. Short for taking action quickly to take down that crusader painting. After you called HQ USAF in Washington and then spoke to him directly. What Col. Short did was right and we all noticed. The NCO who spoke to you for the 22 of us has our gratitude as well.

In the week that has followed the removal of that painting, we have been told over and over that we all should take these matters to our chain of command first before going to outside agencies like MRFF. That is very easy for them to say. Too easy. I have read many things you have said and written Mr. Weinstein. I have watched many vidoes of your speeches and You Tubed your television and radio appearances and talks. My wife (name withheld) and my fellow pilots and airmen (MRFF client-pilot's and airmen's names and ranks withheld) have done this with me. (wife's name withheld) has also ordered your book called No Snowflake. The one thing you say that means the most to me and my fellow pilots and airmen is so simple. That until the USAF gets serious about punishing those that wrongfully push their religion on their lesser ranking airmen noone and I mean nobody will ever use the chain of command to report abusers. Why? Because the USAF will destroy them. Totally and forever. We have seen it happen. Alot. I could tell you stories of this. so could my friends.

I waited a week to send this to you on behalf of myself and many others here who you stood up for. Was it not for the MRFF we would have no place to turn to. We did not know how much we needed you until we needed you. Does that make any sense? If you are ever out this way, a bunch of us from (USAF unit designation and nickname withheld) would like to treat you to drinks at (off base restaurant's name withheld). Your money will be no good out here. We all owe you. Let us repay you and the MRFF if we can.

V/R

(USAF fighter pilot's name, rank, unit and title/job assignment all withheld)

**Subject: Thank You MRFF**

Date: August 16, 2012

Dear Mikey and Chris,

My name is (U.S. Army Soldier's name and rank withheld) of the (military unit and MOS withheld), which is an Army (specific type withheld) unit in Southern (U.S. state withheld). I recently contacted you regarding a situation in which my commander instructed Chaplains to read verses from the Bible which depict the United States Military as the "wrath of God"; and

that they do this in mandatory formation. As an atheist myself, I was disturbed by this; but as a leader within my company, and one of four non-Christians of which I am aware, I felt that this issue needed to be addressed. I raised the issue at an After Action Review (AAR) and was summarily dismissed; although later my Commander did concede that in the future, Soldiers would be given permission to leave the formation, before the Bible is read. This did not satisfy me, as it does nothing but give these Soldiers the choice between outing themselves (which they didn't want to do for fear of reprisal) and simply accepting that they have to be preached to, and slandered as holy warriors.

It was at this point that I contacted the two of you. Following your advice, as well as the philosophy of the Minimum Force Doctrine; I warned my chain of command that if this issue was not resolved satisfactorily, that I would have no choice but to pursue this as an Equal Opportunity case, and that I had already sought the counsel of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation.

At this time, I'm happy to inform you that the situation has been resolved. My Commander, a very religious man, has agreed that in formation, Chaplains should not preach or read from religious books.

As important as the results of this case have been, mine is only one unit. I have no doubt that there are soldiers all over the world right now, who are in the same situation as mine; who feel alone and powerless, because they don't have the rank to stand up to their chain of command. Frankly, I didn't have the rank to stand up to mine either. I have no doubt that the clout that comes with your name, and that of the MRFF, are what gave me much of the leverage to stand my ground and achieve this victory for religious equality.

As the son of a minister in the Midwest, who lost his faith; I know all too well the loneliness that comes with a minority viewpoint. I know the fear of rejection and reprisal, and even the fear that I might be wrong. As a Non-Commissioned Officer in the Army, and the only one in my unit who is an atheist; I've been approached by soldiers who feel alone, and afraid. I've seen the same pain and loneliness in their eyes that I've experienced.

This is why what the MRFF does, is so critical. Not only do you level the playing field between self-righteous rank, and righteous subordinates; but you also remind us that we are not alone. A minority, yes; but not alone. Through the MRFF we are a brotherhood of many different faiths, united by our love of country; and the idea that in a nation which celebrates religious freedom, those who protect that freedom, must be free as well.

I've been fortunate. My case was a successful one, in that the results were positive, and I didn't have to burn any bridges to reach them. Others will not have it as easy, but I hope that with the help of MRFF, and the knowledge that others are already fighting this fight; those who are afraid, will find the courage to stand their ground. And I would like to offer my help in any way I can, to MRFF, and to the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines who need my help, my advice, or just a listening ear.

Yours

(U.S. Army Soldier's name, rank, MOS, unit, and military installation withheld)

**Subject: Thank you MRFF, from an Overseas Soldier**

Date: April 6, 2014

This email is to thank the good people of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation for their help resolving a recent issue of enormous Constitutional consequences for my military unit. I



am a company-grade officer serving in a potentially volatile OCONUS (overseas) location. We were recently informed that an evangelical preacher was being brought to our specific area, and were told by our senior command leadership that our attendance would be absolutely mandatory. Worse, after a cursory search on the preacher in question, I was astounded to see some of the things he happily professed: that secularism was the root of all of Americas ills, posts denigrating President Obama who is our commander-in-chief, and advocating for a definition of leadership that determined one's success based on how deeply one accepted Jesus Christ as one's personal lord and savior.

Needless to say, I and so many of my fellow Soldiers were shocked and deeply concerned. I wanted my unit to respect Soldiers of all faith backgrounds (or lack thereof). That said, I also didn't want to cause negative publicity for my unit. I emailed MRFF outlining the situation and my concerns, and was stunned to receive an email back within a few minutes from the head of the MRFF, Mikey Weinstein, himself. After correspondence back and forth by both email and phone (much of which was very late at night for Mikey), MRFF immediately went to work for myself and the countless other members of our very large military unit concerned by this potential, serious Constitutional breach as well as violations of military regulations. Very quickly we received the incredible word that, due to MRFF's decisive advocacy on our behalf, all the events were now non-mandatory and that official attendance would not be taken. And throughout the process, my anonymity and the anonymity of my fellow service members was completely protected.

So, again, thank you to the MRFF. Their hard work and dedication has ensured that our civil rights were protected. To my fellow service members out there who face similar kinds of illegal religious dictates from their leadership, based on this recent experience I can say with full confidence that the MRFF will provide you with the outstanding assistance they provided us.

V/R

(U.S. Army Officer's name, rank, MOS, assigned unit and military installation withheld)

This final email, although a few years old, is included for two reasons. First, the dilemma that this Coast Guard officer was facing is one that, unfortunately, due to the astonishing decision recently made by the Air Force, we are likely to be hearing about from many more service members in the coming months – the issue of being forced to add the words “So help me God” to their oaths. MRFF receives many emails about this issue, some from service members who are actually ordered to add the words and others from service members who feel so pressured to add the words that they might as well have been ordered to add them. The second reason that this particular email, out of all the emails received by MRFF about this same oath issue, is included here is because of something that this Coast Guard officer said at the end of it – that we at MRFF “not only take on the big issues, but pay attention to the little issues affecting the lives” of the service members who turn to us for help. While you won't hear about these “little issues” in the news, they are by no means little issues to the service members whose lives they are affecting, and no issue that is affecting the life of even one service member will ever be considered by MRFF to be a “little issue.”

**Subject: Gracious thanks are in order!**

Date: May 18, 2010

Mikey and everyone at MRFF,

I can't thank you enough for your quick response to the concern I raised with you. I was promoted this morning to O-3, but yesterday I was deeply apprehensive about taking my oath of office, which includes at the end the clause, “So help me God.” As an atheist, it

would go completely against my conscience to say those words (and for those that are religious, I think everyone is capable of keeping their word without having to promise it to their deity).

I had done some research on the internet for a few days, reading everything from U.S. Code to Wikipedia. Everything seemed to indicate that I could make an affirmation instead of an oath, allowing me to leave out the words "so help me God." However, I was fearful that my somewhat Christian command would not take my request for an affirmation at face value. Late in the day, I hoped an email regarding my options would reach you before the promotion ceremony this morning.

Not only did it reach you, but you and your staff replied in a manner that can only be described as lightning quick. You had just gotten out of a taping with CNN, and no sooner than that was over, you called me personally and told me in no uncertain terms that I did not have to say those words. Even more, you told me that if anyone gave me guff, to just call you up so you could "educate" them! Needless to say, I was incredibly relieved when I hung up the phone.

As it turned out, not much drama ensued the following day, and the ceremony went off without a hitch. But without the firm footing you put me on last night, I doubt it would have gone anywhere near as smoothly.

What you and your staff do to take on the big issues like Jesus rifles and Islamophobes being invited to speak at the Pentagon is invaluable. And yet, it is wonderful to know that you not only take on the big issues, but pay attention to the little issues affecting the lives of your members, and handle them with the utmost care and urgency. Like I said, I can't say enough good things about you and your organization!

It was a pleasure to speak with you on the phone and I look forward to seeing MRFF in the news even more.

Respectfully,

(name withheld), LT, USCG



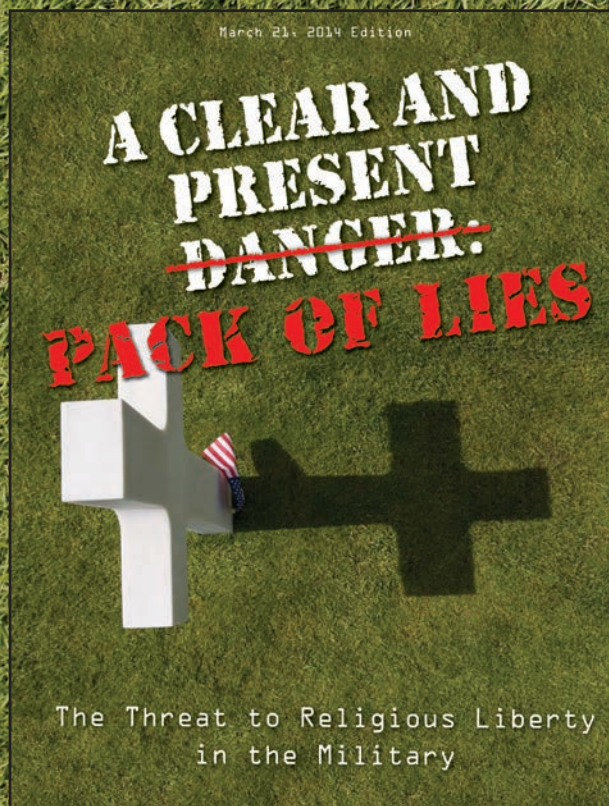
June 9, 2014

**The Three Most Often Heard Lies  
From Members of Congress  
Citing the Family Research Council's  
Propaganda Entitled:**

**A CLEAR AND  
PRESENT DANGER:**

**The Threat to Religious Liberty in the Military**

**Otherwise Known As:**





Last July, as the FY14 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) was being debated in Congress, a coalition of about a dozen and a half organizations, claiming to be defenders of religious liberty in the Armed Forces, was formed. Calling itself the “Restore Military Religious Freedom Coalition,” this coalition has now grown to over two dozen member organizations (listed at <http://militaryfreedom.org>). The goals of this organization, however, have nothing to do with defending religious liberty. The primary mission of this so-called "religious freedom" coalition is to protect the "right" of anti-gay Christians in the military to continue to discriminate against and harass LGB service members in a post-DADT and post-DOMA military.

The formation of this coalition cannot be separated from an amendment to the FY14 NDAA, introduced by Rep. John Fleming under the guise of "religious liberty." The real purpose of Fleming's so-called “religious liberty” amendment, however, was not religious liberty. It was nothing but a sneaky way of reversing the protections gained by LGB service members with the repeal of DADT. If passed, it would essentially have taken away the ability of military commanders to do anything to stop anti-gay harassment and discrimination within their ranks until it rose from the level of merely being a threat to good order and discipline to the level of having already done "actual harm" to good order and discipline. As long as a service member claimed that their anti-gay speech or actions were an expression of their sincerely held religious beliefs, their superiors would have been powerless to do anything to stop them.

The so-called “Restore Military Religious Freedom Coalition” was formed, in large part if not exclusively, to launch a propaganda campaign promoting the Fleming amendment and its discriminatory agenda. In an email blast sent out to its members about a meeting between this so-called religious liberty coalition’s leaders and Pentagon officials, the American Family Association (AFA), one of the largest and most influential organizations in the coalition, didn’t even try to make a secret of its goals, writing:

We made our point very clear ... Christian soldiers and airmen have the right to express their faith and to maintain deeply held religious convictions in every area including homosexuality and homosexual marriage.

In June 2013, the Obama administration strongly objected to the amendment, stating: “By limiting the discretion of commanders to address potentially problematic speech and actions within their units, this provision would have a significant adverse effect on good order, discipline, morale, and mission accomplishment.”

On July 9, 2013, Rep. Fleming, Rep. Louie Gohmert, and Rep. Jim Bridenstine, along with the leaders of the so-called "Restore Military Religious Freedom Coalition,” held a press conference on Capitol Hill in support of Fleming's amendment. This was also when the Family Research Council (FRC), the big mover and shaker behind this coalition, put out the first of three editions of a report entitled "A Clear and Present Danger: The Threat to Religious Liberty in the Military."

Employing a tactic often referred to as the “Gish Gallop” – presenting such a lengthy list of claims as to overwhelm anyone who might attempt to refute any of them – the current

edition of the FRC's report lists sixty-three separate claims of alleged "Christian persecution" in the military.

This report and examples taken from it have been, and continue to be, cited by members of Congress, both on the House floor and in Armed Services Committee hearings, most recently in hearings regarding the FY15 NDAA.

It was expected that Rep. Fleming, or one of the other members of Rep. Randy Forbes's Congressional Prayer Caucus, would try again this year to get the language of the Fleming amendment into the NDAA. But, they didn't even wait that long. What they are attempting to do right now, and are dangerously close to succeeding in doing, is to supplant the *real* religious liberty protections in an Air Force instruction (AFI 1-1) with an even more far-reaching and dangerous version of the Fleming amendment.

The justification for this undermining of AFI 1-1 relies entirely on the claims made in the FRC's "A Clear and Present Danger" report. But what if those claims in the FRC's report aren't true?

What follows are three examples picked from the sixty-three listed in the FRC's report. These particular three claims were chosen to use as examples because they are the ones that have been cited most frequently by members of Congress, be it on the House floor, in committee meetings, or elsewhere.

After reading the real stories behind these three claims, and judging for yourself how far apart the FRC's "A Clear and Present Danger" report versions of these stories are from the facts, please give some thought to how truthful you think the other sixty claims in this "Gish Gallop" of a report are likely to be.

And, most importantly, please remember that it is the list of examples in the FRC's report that the members of Congress who are currently trying to alter AFI 1-1 are claiming as the justification for this action. If the FRC's report isn't true, then neither is the claim that AFI 1-1 needs to be changed.

## **THE ONE ABOUT THE PAINTING BEING REMOVED FROM AN AIR FORCE BASE**

On May 31, 2013, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) was contacted via email by an Air Force NCO at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho. Attached to that email was a photograph the NCO had taken of a piece of artwork hanging in a dining hall on the base. Writing on behalf of himself and a group of twenty-one other airmen, all of whom found the artwork to be inappropriate and offensive, the NCO requested MRFF's help in getting it removed.

The photograph that the NCO sent to MRFF is on the reverse side of this page, but please don't turn the page to look at it just yet. First, without having seen the painting in question, read the description of it given in the FRC's "A Clear and Present Danger" report:

### **A painting including a Bible verse is removed – May 31, 2013**

Weinstein complained to the Pentagon about an inspirational painting in the dining hall of Mountain Home Air Force Base, Idaho. It focused on a depiction of a policeman and included a Scripture citation and the image of a cross. The painting is reportedly removed 56 minutes later.

Now, still without looking at the painting, what do you picture when reading the FRC's description of its being a painting "focused on a depiction of a policeman and includ[ing] a Scripture citation and the image of a cross"?

Do you picture that there was just a small cross somewhere in the painting? That this cross was just some minor and relatively unnoticeable element somewhere in what was primarily a painting of a policeman? Well, that's what the FRC wants you to picture. They want you to think that some oversensitive anti-Christian complainer demanded that this painting be removed over a tiny little cross and Bible reference, and that the Air Force caved to one completely unreasonable person's demand in removing it from the dining hall.

Well, let's compare what the FRC's description is designed to make you envision to what was actually depicted in this painting.

Please turn the page now and look at the painting.



Yes, that is the painting that the FRC describes in its report as just being a picture of a policeman that happens to include “a Scripture citation and the image of a cross.” That is the painting that the FRC wants you to think was overreacted to by the airmen at Mountain Home Air Force Base who found it offensive, by Mikey Weinstein who acted on behalf of those airmen to get it removed, and by the Air Force in agreeing that it was inappropriate and removing it.

In addition to the obvious reasons that this painting was altogether inappropriate to be hung in a U.S. military dining hall (you know, a Christian crusader as big as the policeman, and the American flag morphing into a Christian crusader flag) the airmen who objected to this painting did not realize that the policeman in the painting was meant to be a policeman. Their natural impression, being airmen and seeing this painting on an Air Force base, was that the figure depicted was an Air Force pilot — a quite understandable perception given the strong similarity between an old-fashioned Air Force officer’s hat and flight jacket and the hat and leather jacket worn by the policeman in the painting. This same painting, if hung in a police station, would no doubt be assumed to depict a policeman, but hanging in an Air Force dining hall it was assumed by the airmen to depict an Air Force pilot – with a great big Christian crusader behind him and an American flag morphing into a Christian crusader flag in the background. For some reason, a whole bunch of airmen found this image offensive and disturbing.

To the airmen who wanted this painting removed, its message seemed pretty clear: The job of a United States airman is to be a Christian crusader.

Were these airmen who wanted this painting removed a bunch of anti-Christian atheists? Well, no. Most of them were Christians, as is virtually always the case when a group of service members comes to MRFF with a complaint about something like this. Of the group of 22 airmen who initially contacted MRFF about this painting, 17 were either Protestant or Catholic. The initial group of 22 was joined by even more airmen once the complaint was made, for a total 48, with 40 of the 48 identifying themselves as Christians.

Note that the FRC’s report, in addition to its gross misportrayal of what this painting really depicted, doesn’t even mention that it was actually a group of airmen at the base who complained about the painting, let alone that most of those airmen were Christians. Reading the FRC’s version of the story, one would think that Mikey Weinstein (named in over a third of the examples in the FRC’s report, and labeled “anti-Christian” in five) spends his time traveling from Air Force base dining hall to Air Force base dining hall in search of tiny religious symbols to complain about. And that, of course, is exactly what the FRC wants you to think.





## **THE ONE ABOUT THE AIR FORCE STOPPING THE TEACHING OF JUST WAR THEORY**

On July 20, 2011, MRFF was contacted via email by an Air Force officer who had been through ICBM missile training a decade earlier, in 2001. The officer had stumbled upon MRFF in the course of an unrelated search on the internet. Finding out that an organization such as MRFF existed caused the officer to recall a part of his ICBM missile training that he had found thoroughly repugnant – so repugnant that he still remembered it vividly even ten years later.

Before contacting MRFF, the officer, through a FOIA request, obtained a copy of the Air Force's ICBM training materials in use at that time to see if the part of the training that he had found so offensive ten years earlier was still being used in the training of new nuclear missile officers. He found out that it was, and decided to do something to try to stop it so that no future nuclear missile officers would be subjected to what he and countless others had been subjected to over the years.

The issue, as the officer explained to MRFF, was not only the inclusion of completely inappropriate religious content in the training presentation. It was also the highly questionable timing of this presentation, which, according to the officer's recollection, occurred two or three days after the new officers arrived. In the opinion of this officer, who was speaking from his personal experience of having been through this training, the Air Force was using this religious presentation to prime the nuclear missile officer candidates for what immediately followed – the moment when these officers would be required to sign on the dotted line that they would unleash nuclear weapons without reservation if so ordered.

Just how overtly Christian was this training presentation? Well, the fact that it acquired the nickname among Air Force nuclear missile officers of the "Jesus loves nukes speech" should give you an idea.

Now, let's look at how the FRC describes the Air Force's pulling of this training in its "A Clear and Present Danger" report:

### **Air Force pulls ethics course from curriculum at air base – July 27, 2011**

For 20 years, an ethics training course for nuclear missile officers was conducted by a chaplain at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. It included texts from the Bible and materials related to just war theory by Saint Augustine. This course was pulled for "thorough review" by the Air Force primarily due to its use of Christian reading materials.

The FRC's description is, of course, designed to give the impression that the pulling of this training presentation was part of the alleged attack on Christianity in the military that its report is trying to persuade you is happening.

But, just like the case of the painting in the Air Force dining hall, the problem with

attempting to portray the pulling of this presentation as an effort by anti-Christian zealots to rid the military of the mere mention of Christianity is that the overwhelming majority of the Air Force nuclear missile officers who wanted this presentation pulled were Christians.

Almost immediately after word got out that someone was finally trying to put a stop to this training, a group of 30 more nuclear missile officers, 29 of whom were Christians, joined the officer who had initially contacted MRFF. A few days later, 38 more nuclear missile officers contacted MRFF, wanting to join the other 31. This second group came to MRFF after Fox News released a letter written by Sen. John Cornyn of Texas objecting to the pulling of the training. 32 of the 38 officers in this second group were also Christians. The number of nuclear missile officers who contacted MRFF to join the others would eventually rise into the hundreds as word spread further, but just out of those 69 officers who came forward in the first week, there were 61 who identified themselves as Christians. And yet the FRC would have you believe that this training was pulled as part of some alleged war on Christians in the military.

So, what exactly was it about this particular presentation that so many Air Force nuclear missile officers would want to put an end to it? Was it really that they had a problem with the Air Force teaching ethics, as some have ridiculously been claiming. Of course not. Was it because there was a bit of religious material in the presentation's discussion of Just War Theory? No, that wasn't it either. Nobody had, or now has, a problem with the inclusion, in a legitimate historical context, of the role of religious figures or religious precepts in a discussion of the development of Just War Theory. But that's not what was going on in this training.

The presentation's section on Just War Theory started out just fine, with a series of slides showing Saint Augustine and listing "Augustine's Qualifications for Just War." If the presentation had continued from there with a discussion of Augustine's qualifications for just war (and included at least some content that wasn't exclusively Christian, such as mentioning the other prominent figures in the development of Just War Theory, like Cicero, and that the theory has since been updated and further expanded by the UN *because of* nuclear weapons), there would have been absolutely no objections. But that's not how the presentation continued. It continued with slide after slide of Bible verses – verses that became progressively less and less relevant to the subject of Just War Theory and closer and closer to Christian proselytizing. By the end of the section, the term "soldier" as used in the Bible verses being cited was no longer even referring to a military soldier, but to a "soldier of Jesus Christ."

The second to last verse cited was 2 Timothy 2:3, with the slide's commentary saying, "Paul chooses three illustrations to show what it means to be a good disciple of Christ." The actual Bible verse says, "Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus," the point being that "a good soldier of Christ" will try to please Jesus as a military soldier would try to please their commanding officer. Immediately following that verse, the presentation cited Revelation 19:11 to make the statement: "Jesus Christ is the mighty warrior."

You can kind of see now how this presentation earned the nickname the "Jesus loves nukes speech," right?



## Christian Just War Theory



- *New Testament examples cont.*
  - Romans 13:4 In spite of personal blemishes, God calls **the emperor** to be an instrument of justice
  - II Timothy 2:3 Paul chooses three illustrations to show what it means to be a good disciple of Christ
    - Farmer – work hard and be patient
    - Athlete – be self disciplined, train

## Christian Just War Theory



- *New Testament examples cont.*
  - **Soldier – be willing to put up with hardship**
  - **Revelation 19:11 Jesus Christ is the mighty warrior**



**If war in the natural order is inherently unethical, it cannot be a good illustration in the spiritual order**

The FRC's "A Clear and Present Danger" report says that this training presentation was pulled "primarily" due to its use of what it says were Christian reading materials. Obviously, the use of the word "primarily" indicates that there was something else about this presentation that was deemed to be offensive. So, what was this other element of the presentation to which many took offense? Well, that would be its use of former Nazi and SS officer Wernher von Braun as a moral authority.

Besides the obvious (you know, the whole Nazi thing and his literally working his slave labor force to death), von Braun had nothing to do with nuclear weapons. He was a rocket scientist. But to those in our military whose primary goal is to promote Christianity at every possible opportunity, no matter how inappropriately, von Braun's saying that Americans were "people guided by the Bible," and his "moral" opinion that only people who are guided by the Bible can be trusted, was apparently just too good to pass up regardless of any sense of propriety or concern for facts.

**Nuclear Ethics:**

**Wernher von Braun** upon surrendering to the Americans in June of 1945 said "We knew that we had created a new means of warfare, and the question as to what nation, to what victorious nation we were willing to entrust this brainchild of ours was a **moral decision** more than anything else. We wanted to see the world spared another conflict such as Germany had just been through, and **we felt that only by surrendering such a weapon to people who are guided by the Bible could such an assurance to the world be best secured.**"



But, according to the FRC's "Clear and Present Danger" report, this presentation was pulled for review by the Air Force merely because it was "conducted by a chaplain" and contained some "Christian reading materials."

## THE ONE ABOUT JERRY BOYKIN NOT SPEAKING AT WEST POINT

On the night of January 26, 2012, Mikey Weinstein was contacted by a group of 27 West Point faculty members via a conference call. The reason for the conference call was that they had just found out that the speaker scheduled to appear at West Point's upcoming National Prayer Breakfast was retired Army Lt. Gen. William "Jerry" Boykin.

All of the 27 West Point faculty members who initially contacted MRFF were Christians. Those 27 faculty members were quickly joined by 85 others at West Point – a mix of faculty, staff, and cadets – for a total of 112. Of that 112 total, 98 were Christians.

In addition to the majority of faculty, staff, and cadets at West Point who objected to having Jerry Boykin speak at the prayer breakfast being Christians, a number of them were actually involved in working on the prayer breakfast. Those working on the prayer breakfast were the most outraged of all when they found out that Boykin was to be the speaker, not just because they objected to Boykin speaking at West Point, but because they had been kept in the dark about who the speaker was going to be even though they were working on the event. They felt as if they had been fooled into working on an event that they wouldn't even have supported, let alone volunteered to help with.

Due to a widespread outcry, not only from faculty, staff, and cadets at West Point, but from a number of different civil rights organizations representing various groups of Americans, Boykin withdrew from the event.

Now, here's what the FRC's "A Clear and Present Danger" report has to say about what occurred:

### **Army General withdraws from speaking at West Point after protest for [*sic*] anti-Christian groups – February 8, 2012**

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) launched a campaign to bar Lt. Gen. Jerry Boykin (USA-ret.), a founding member of the Army's Delta Force and former Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, from speaking at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. CAIR and MRFF said their opposition was based upon Gen. Boykin's "Islamophobic" comments. Gen. Boykin voluntarily withdrew from speaking at the event, stating in an interview with OneNewsNow that the pressure on the Academy, which the Obama Administration did not resist, was overpowering.

See how the FRC calls the groups that protested Boykin's speaking at West Point "anti-Christian" groups? And how MRFF and CAIR are the only groups mentioned?

Well, the FRC (besides lying about MRFF and CAIR being anti-Christian groups), leaves out an inconvenient little fact here. The first organization to formally launch a protest against Boykin speaking was neither MRFF nor CAIR – it was VoteVets, a veterans organization representing veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. But the FRC doesn't want you to know that. It's much easier for them to dishonestly paint MRFF

and CAIR as anti-Christian groups than to try to pin this label on a veterans group.

The 27 West Point faculty members who contacted MRFF on the night of January 26, 2012 (who, as mentioned, were all Christians), did so *after* VoteVets launched the protest by sending a letter to the Superintendent of West Point on behalf of the Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans they represent. The following is from the letter written by VoteVets, a letter with which MRFF was in total agreement:

It has come to the attention of our organization that LTG Boykin has been invited to speak at the USMA prayer breakfast on February 8, 2012. You may not be aware of Lieutenant General Boykin's history of extremist and hateful comments towards Islam. LTG Boykin has repeatedly characterized our war against al-Qaeda and other extremist groups, a war that we are both Veterans of, as a religious war pitting Christianity against Islam. Boykin claims to have captured terrorists in Somalia solely because the god of Muslims is "an idol." The Pentagon Office of the Inspector General later found that LTG Boykin's remarks were improper for a military officer. LTG Boykin, since his retirement, has also stated that "there is no greater threat to America than Islam." LTG Boykin also co-authored a study from the Center for Security Policy that claimed that "most mosques in the United States already have been radicalized, that most Muslim social organizations are fronts for violent jihadists."

These remarks are incompatible with the Army values, and a person who is incompatible with Army values should not address the cadets of the United States Military Academy. As has been articulated by GEN Petraeus, these remarks threaten our relationships with Muslims around the world, and thereby, our troops serving in harm's way. LTG Boykin's values are inconsistent even with current Army doctrine that is taught at the Joint Readiness Training Center, National Training Center and the Combined Arms Center which instructs Army leaders to respect the Muslim culture as a part of counterinsurgency operations. It is counterproductive for our future Army leaders to hear the views of LTG Boykin, a man whose views are inconsistent with the values of the Army as an institution.

Not to mention, many Muslim Americans have fought and died in the uniform of the American Soldier in post-9/11 combat, as well as in previous eras. To allow LTG Boykin to address the corps of cadets would be disrespectful to the Muslim cadets currently enrolled at West Point. It would be a slap to the face to Muslim Americans who have served their country, not to mention those who gave the fullest sacrifice for their nation and their comrades.

Sir, as Veterans, we have the utmost faith in your leadership. As Veterans of these wars and men who have served in combat alongside Muslim Americans, we respectfully request that you retract LTG Boykin's invite to

the USMA Prayer Breakfast. The presence of LTG Boykin at West Point would violate Army Values, as well as potentially be used as propaganda by the enemy and endanger our troops in combat.

It was *following* this letter being made public by VoteVets that MRFF was contacted by the first of the eventual 112 faculty, staff, and cadets at West Point who wanted MRFF to represent them in objecting to Boykin's speaking at the event (just as CAIR was presumably contacted by members of its organization, leading to its also joining in the protest).

So, just to recap here, of the 112 faculty, staff members, and cadets at West Point who contacted MRFF for help in getting Boykin removed as the speaker for the prayer breakfast, 98 were Christians, some of whom were actually involved in working on this prayer breakfast. And yet the FRC, in its "A Clear and Present Danger" report, claims that Boykin was pressured to withdraw from the event by "anti-Christian groups."

With Jerry Boykin being the executive vice president of the FRC and one of the authors of the "A Clear and Present Danger" report, it's pretty obvious why CAIR was also singled out in this example – they're Muslims, and, you know, "there is no greater threat to America" than those idol-worshipping Muslims.





As explained at the beginning of this report, what you have just seen are only three of the sixty-three examples of alleged Christian persecution listed in the FRC's report.

What we at the Military Religious Freedom Foundation ask is that you carefully consider, based on the three examples you just read about, how far apart the FRC's claims are from the truth, and how likely you think it is that there is any more truth to the "A Clear and Present Danger" report's other sixty claims than there is to these three.

And, once again, please remember that it is the list of examples in the FRC's report that the members of Congress who are currently trying to alter AFI 1-1 are claiming as the justification for this action. If the FRC's report isn't true, then neither is the claim that AFI 1-1 needs to be changed.



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## AGAINST ALL ENEMIES, FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC

*Chris Rodda*

### **Top 10 Ways to Convince the Muslims We're on a Crusade**

#### **10. Have Top US Military Officers, Defense Department Officials, and Politicians Say We're in a Religious War.**

We couldn't have gotten off to a better start on winning hearts and minds back in 2003, when US Army Lt Gen William "Jerry" Boykin decided to go on a speaking tour of churches, publicly proclaiming in uniform that the global war on terrorism (GWOT) was really a battle between Satan and Christians, and making comments like, "We in the Army of God, in the House of God, the Kingdom of God have been raised for such a time as this." Of course, Boykin knew what he was talking about. After all, a decade earlier he had captured the dangerous Somali warlord Osman Atto and was very clear about the reason that happened—"I knew that my God was a real God, and his was an idol."

President Bush, in spite of the fact that Boykin believed he was "in the White House because God put him there," wasn't too pleased with these remarks, but still, the general's friends stood by him—friends like then-Cong. Robin Hayes (R-NC), who, speaking at a Rotary Club meeting in his hometown a few years later, pronounced that stability in Iraq ultimately depended on "spreading the message of Jesus Christ, the message of peace on earth, good will towards men," and "everything depends on everyone learning about the birth of the Savior."<sup>1</sup>

While few such statements have been as overt or widely publicized as those of Boykin and Hayes, plenty of other military leaders and policy makers are on record espousing similar views. When asked what effect such statements have on the US military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, a retired Air Force officer appearing on MSNBC in a segment about the remarks of Congressman Hayes answered:

Well, it's not helpful if this stuff gets back to the Iraqis, and of course in the days of the internet and the blogosphere out there it's likely that it could. And you

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Portions of this article were originally published in the *Daily Kos* on 18 September 2009.

know our troops have enough problems over there just doing their jobs. Having to defend what a U.S. congressman might say, because you know, when you bring up the idea of proselytizing Christianity, to a lot of Muslims, that's very offensive, and if we can keep religion out of what we're trying to do over there, which is very difficult, it would be a lot easier for our troops. . . . If you're trying to be a unit trainer to, say, an Iraqi battalion and the battalion religious advisor, the imam, would come in and say look what a congressman said, it just takes away from what we're trying to do.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, some representatives of our government continue to present the war on terror as a spiritual battle, promoting the specious notion that victory in Iraq and Afghanistan is somehow necessary to preserve our own religious freedom here in America. "Thomas Jefferson would understand the threat we face today—tyranny in the name of religion," asserted a top Army official at a West Point graduation ceremony. "Your sons and daughters are fighting to protect our citizens . . . from zealots who would restrain, molest, burden, and cause to suffer those who do not share their religious beliefs, deny us, whom they call infidels, our unalienable rights."<sup>3</sup> And, finding it vitally important for Congress to recognize "the importance of Christmas and the Christian faith," another congressman made his case: "American men and women in uniform are fighting a battle across the world so that all Americans might continue to freely exercise their faith."<sup>4</sup> As of yet, nobody making such statements has offered any explanation of *how* the outcome of this war could possibly affect the free exercise of religion by Americans.

### **9. Have Top US Military Officers Appear in a Video Showing Just How Christian the Pentagon Is.**

In addition to providing propaganda material to our enemies, public endorsements of Christianity by US military leaders can also cause concern among our Muslim allies. It might have seemed like a good idea at the time, but the situation became very awkward for Air Force Maj Gen Pete Sutton shortly after he appeared in a promotional video for the Christian Embassy.<sup>5</sup> Dressed in uniform and using their official titles, several high-ranking military officers and DOD civilians gave testimonials and made statements such as "we're the aroma of Jesus Christ," which were publicly available on the Christian Embassy's Web site. What Sutton didn't know when he appeared in this video was that he would soon be assigned as the US European Command's chief of defense cooperation to Turkey, a country in which religion and government are strictly separated. According to the DOD Inspector General's report on the investigation of allegations relating to the video:

Maj Gen Sutton testified that while in Turkey in his current duty position, his Turkish driver approached him with an article in the Turkish newspaper 'Sabah.' That article featured a photograph of Maj Gen Sutton in uniform and described him as a member of a radical fundamentalist sect. The article in the online edition of Sabah also included still photographs taken from the Christian Embassy video. Maj Gen Sutton's duties in Ankara included establishing good relations with his counterparts on the Turkish General Staff. Maj Gen Sutton testified

that Turkey is a predominantly Muslim nation, with religious matters being kept strictly separate from matters of state. He said that when the article was published in *Sabah*, it caused his Turkish counterparts concern, and a number of Turkish general officers asked him to explain his participation in the video.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, there is no shortage of uniformed military personnel endorsing fundamentalist Christian organizations and military ministries, some of which have clearly publicized missions that include proselytizing Muslims. These videos are easily found on the Internet, providing plenty of potential propaganda material for recruiting by extremists.

### **8. Plant Crosses in Muslim Lands and Make Sure They're Big Enough to Be Visible from Really Far Away.**

As Gen Norman Schwarzkopf recounted in his autobiography, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, back in 1990, when US troops were deployed to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield, an attempt by a Christian missionary organization to use the military to proselytize Saudi Muslims led the Pentagon to issue strict guidelines on religious activities and displays of religion in the region. It was left to the discretion of individual company commanders to determine how visible religious services should be, depending on their particular location's proximity to Saudi populations. In some cases, decisions were made not to display crucifixes or other religious symbols, even at worship services. There were a few complaints about these decisions, but the majority of the troops willingly complied, understanding that these decisions were being made for their own security. According to General Schwarzkopf, even his request that chaplains refrain from wearing crosses on their uniforms received an unexpectedly positive reaction, with the chaplains not only agreeing with the policy, but also going a step further by calling themselves "morale officers" rather than chaplains.

But now, in Iraq and Afghanistan, General Schwarzkopf's commonsense policies and priority of keeping the troops safe have been replaced by a flaunting of Christianity by Christian troops and chaplains who feel that nothing comes before their right to exercise their religion, even if it means putting the safety of their fellow troops at risk. Numerous photos, some posted on official military Web sites, show conspicuously displayed Christian symbols, such as large crosses, being erected on and around our military bases in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup>

Large Christian murals have been painted on the outside of the T-barriers surrounding a chapel on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warhorse in Iraq. In addition to being a highly visible display of Christianity to Iraqis on the base, photos of these murals were posted on an official military Web site.<sup>8</sup> It is even more important that the regulation prohibiting displays of any particular religion on the grounds of an Army chapel—a regulation that protects the religious freedom of our Soldiers by keeping chapels neutral and welcoming Soldiers of all faiths—be strictly enforced on our bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. Yet there is clear and credible evidence that those in charge routinely overlook such regulations.

## **7. Paint Crosses and Christian Messages on Military Vehicles and Drive Them through Iraq.**

For those Iraqis who may not see the overt stationary displays of Christianity on and near US military bases in their country, there have been plenty of mobile Christian messages painted on our tanks and other vehicles that patrol their streets.

The title of Jeff Sharlet's May 2009 *Harper's Magazine* cover story, "Jesus Killed Mohammed: The Crusade for a Christian Military," actually comes from one such vehicular message—the words "Jesus killed Mohammed" were painted in *large red Arabic lettering* on a Bradley fighting vehicle, drawing fire from nearly every doorway as it was driven through Samarra. Other vehicles have sported everything from the Islamic crescent overlaid with the internationally recognized red circle and slash "no" sign to large crucifixes hanging from gun barrels. A military public relations office even officially released a photo of the tank named "New Testament."<sup>9</sup>

## **6. Make Sure That Our Christian Soldiers and Chaplains See the War As a Way to Fulfill the Great Commission.**

To many fundamentalist Christians, the "Great Commission" from Matthew 28:19—"Go and make disciples of all nations"—trumps all man-made laws, including military regulations. It's hard to find a military ministry whose mission statement doesn't, in one way or another, include fulfilling the Great Commission. Thus, it is not surprising that many service members who've been influenced by these military ministries are conflicted about their mission, a conflict often leading some of these service members to disregard the military's prohibition on proselytizing.

Campus Crusade for Christ's (CCC) Military Ministry,<sup>10</sup> a parachurch ministry active at all of the largest US military training installations, the service academies, and on ROTC campuses, frequently states its goal of turning the US military into a force of "government-paid missionaries for Christ." The vision statement of another organization, Military Missions Network,<sup>11</sup> is "an expanding global network of kingdom-minded movements of evangelism and discipleship reaching the world through the military of the world."

Describing the duties of a CCC Military Ministry position at Lackland Air Force Base and Fort Sam Houston in Texas, for example, the organization's Web site stated, "Responsibilities include working with Chaplains and Military personnel to bring lost soldiers closer to Christ, build them in their faith and send them out into the world as government paid missionaries."<sup>12</sup>

CCC's Valor ministry,<sup>13</sup> which primarily targets future officers on ROTC campuses, states, "The Valor ROTC cadet and midshipman ministry reaches our future military leaders at their initial entry points on college campuses, helps them grow in their faith, then sends them to their first duty assignments throughout the world as 'government-paid missionaries for Christ.'"<sup>14</sup>

In a promotional video filmed at the US Air Force Academy, a USAFA CCC program director pronounced that CCC's purpose is to "make Jesus Christ the issue at the Academy," and for the cadets to be "government paid missionaries" by the time they leave.<sup>15</sup>

According to a CCC Military Ministry instructional publication uncovered in 2007, CCC's mission is not simply to provide Bible studies to allow Christians in the military to exercise their religion, as its defenders claim. The instructions state, "We should never be satisfied with just having Bible studies of like-minded believers. We need to take seriously the Great Commission."<sup>16</sup>

Whatever one's position on the issue of evangelism, the undeniable fact is that all of the above quotes, as well as the video filmed at the Air Force Academy, were found on the Internet, which, of course, means that any extremist looking for recruiting tools could also find this easily accessible "evidence" that the US military is being groomed to be a force of crusaders.

### **5. Post Photos on the Internet of US Soldiers with Their Rifles and Bibles.**

CCC's indoctrination of basic trainees at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, the Army's largest basic training installation, is a program called "God's Basic Training," in which the recruits are taught that "The Military = 'God's Ministers'" and that one of their responsibilities is "to punish those who do evil" as "God's servant, an angel of wrath."<sup>17</sup>

Until being exposed (and taken down), the Fort Jackson CCC Military Ministry had a Web site containing not only its Bible study materials, but also numerous photos of smiling trainees posed with their rifles and Bibles.<sup>18</sup> Obviously, no explanation is necessary to see the propaganda value of photos like these.

### **4. Invite Virulently Anti-Muslim Speakers to Lecture at Our Military Colleges and Service Academies.**

In June 2007, anti-Muslim activist Brigitte Gabriel, author of *Because They Hate*, was allowed to deliver a lecture at the Joint Forces Staff College (JFSC).<sup>19</sup> In February 2008, the 3 Ex-Terrorists,<sup>20</sup> a trio of self-proclaimed former Muslim terrorists turned fundamentalist Christians, appeared at the US Air Force Academy's 50th Annual Academy Assembly, in spite of the fact that their claims about their terrorist pasts have long been questioned by both academics and terrorism experts.<sup>21</sup>

Gabriel's JFSC lecture, which was broadcast to the world on C-SPAN, eventually ended up on YouTube,<sup>22</sup> and articles about the ex-terrorists' Air Force Academy presentation, which included details such as Walid Shoebat's pronouncement that converting Muslims to Christianity was a good way to defeat terrorism, also ended up online,<sup>23</sup> providing yet more "evidence" to extremists that the US military's training includes teaching cadets, officers, and senior non-commissioned officers (NCO) that Islam is evil and must be stopped.

### 3. Have a Christian TV Network Broadcast to the World That the Military Is Helping Missionaries Convert Muslims.

*Travel the Road*, a popular Christian reality TV series that airs on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), follows the exploits of two “extreme” missionaries who travel to remote, and often dangerous, parts of the world to fulfill their two-part mission to “(1) Vigorously spread the gospel to people who are either cut off from active mission work, or have never heard the gospel,” and “(2) Produce dynamic media content to display the life of missions, and thus, through these episodic series electrify a new generation to accomplish the Great Commission.”

The second season of the series ended with three episodes filmed in Afghanistan. To film these episodes, the missionaries were embedded with US troops as “journalists,” staying on US military bases and accompanying and filming troops on patrols—all for the purposes of evangelizing Afghan Muslims and producing a television show promoting the Christian religion. As the first of the program’s three Afghanistan episodes clearly showed, these missionaries were able to waltz into Afghanistan without any of the advance approval and planning required for embedded journalists and, within two days, be embedded with an Army unit.

A question that many will ask is whether or not the Army knew what these missionaries were up to. According to ABC News *Nightline*, which did a segment on the embedded missionaries, the answer from one of the missionaries was yes: “They knew what we were doing. We told them that we were born again Christians, we’re here doing ministry, we shoot for this TV station and we want to embed and see what it was like.”<sup>24</sup>

USCENTCOM’s General Order 1A (now GO-1B) prohibits any and all proselytizing in its area of responsibility (AOR) and applies to civilians accompanying US troops as well as military personnel. Yet despite this directive, the US Army facilitated the evangelizing of Afghans by these Christian missionaries, which included the distribution of New Testaments in the Dari language. Numerous Soldiers and NCOs, as well as several officers, including one general, appeared in the program.<sup>25</sup>

While the Army’s participation in the *Travel the Road* program is certainly one of the most prominent examples of broadcasting to the world that the US military was aiding missionaries who were trying to convert Muslims, it is regrettably not the only example.

In September 2008, the Discovery Channel’s Military Channel aired a two-hour program titled *God’s Soldier*. Filmed at FOB McHenry in Hawijah, Iraq, the program’s credits identified that it had been “produced with the full co-operation of the 2-27 Infantry Battalion ‘Wolfhounds.’” The co-producer of the program was Jerusalem Productions, a British production company whose “primary aim is to increase understanding and knowledge of the Christian religion and to promote Christian values, via the broadcast media, to as wide an audience as possible.”



Bible verse text captions appearing between segments of the program included “I did not come to bring peace, but the sword” and “put on the full armor of God so that when the day of evil comes, you may stand your ground.”

This was one of the prayers uttered by the program’s star, CPT Charles Popov, an evangelical Christian Army chaplain, during a scene in which he was blessing a group of Soldiers about to go out on a patrol: “I pray that you would give them the ability to exterminate the enemy and to accomplish the task that they’ve been sent forth by God and country to do. In Christ’s name I pray. Amen.” That prayer was followed by a scene in which the chaplain, sounding an awful lot like the Campus Crusade Bible study described earlier, said to the Soldiers: “Every soldier should know Romans 13, that the government is set up by God, and the magistrate, or the one who wields the sword—you have not swords but 50 calcs and [unintelligible] like that—does not yield it in vain because the magistrate has been called, as you, to execute wrath upon those who do evil.”

The scene that tops them all, however, is one in which Popov is setting up a nativity pageant for Christmas—using the unit’s Iraqi interpreters to play some of the roles. The chaplain described this as some sort of cultural exchange, with US troops recognizing Ramadan, and Muslim interpreters, in turn, celebrating Christmas. The notion of this merely being a harmless cultural exchange is absurd. US Soldiers participating in a Muslim religious observance are not risking death by doing so, while Muslims, in a country where many consider converting to Christianity a death penalty offense, are. Broadcasting to the world via the Discovery Channel that US Army personnel were putting Muslims in a Christmas pageant not only provides more fodder for radical Islam extremists, but also exposes the Iraqis who are helping the US military to grave danger.<sup>26</sup>

## **2. Make Sure Bibles and Evangelizing Materials Sent to Muslim Lands Have Official US Military Emblems on Them.**

It’s not hard to imagine what message is being communicated to the Iraqis and Afghans when hundreds of thousands of Bibles with official US military emblems show up in their countries. Some of these military Bibles are produced by private organizations, and others are officially authorized by the military. One of the officially distributed editions has both the Multi-National Corps-Iraq and I Corps seals imprinted on a camouflage background cover. And it doesn’t stop with Bibles.<sup>27</sup>

A chief warrant officer from the 101st Airborne Division, for example, referring to a special military edition of a Bible study daily devotional published and donated by Bible Pathways Ministries, told Mission Network News that “the soldiers who are patrolling and walking the streets are taking along this copy, and they’re using it to minister to the local residents,” and that his “division is also getting ready to head toward Afghanistan, so there will be copies heading out with the soldiers.” Just like the many civilian missionaries who see the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as a window of opportunity to evangelize Muslims, the warrant officer continued, “The soldiers are being placed in strategic

places with a purpose. They're continuing to spread the Word." This daily devotional, admittedly being used by the 101st Airborne Division "to minister to the local residents," has the official military branch seals on its cover, giving the impression that it is an official US military publication. And while these logos are sometimes used without permission and may have been on this particular book, the Iraqis and Afghans don't know that.<sup>28</sup>

The chiefs of chaplains even designed one of the Bibles sporting the official military logos. An organization called Revival Fires Ministries has, "at the request of the Chief Chaplains of the Pentagon," been promoting, collecting money for, and shipping these Bibles to Iraq since 2003. A formal arrangement between the Pentagon and Revival Fires has allowed these Bibles to be shipped via military airlift.

To promote these Bibles, a Navy chaplain, whose own anti-Muslim book was taken off the market when it was revealed that much of its content had been plagiarized and some of the endorsements on its cover fabricated, has improperly appeared in uniform at three of Revival Fires' rancorously anti-Muslim camp meetings<sup>29</sup> and also endorses the ministry on the Web sites of both its founder, Cecil Todd, and his son, evangelist Tim Todd. At one point, the chaplain's photo and endorsement appeared right next to the following statement on the younger Todd's Web site: "We must let the Muslims, the Hare Krishnas, the Hindus, the Buddhists and all other cults and false religions know, 'You are welcome to live in America . . . but this is a Christian nation . . . this is God's country! If you don't like our emphasis on Christ, prayer and the Holy Bible, you are free to leave anytime!'"<sup>30</sup>

### **1. Send Lots of Arabic, Dari, and Pashtu Language Bibles to Convert the Muslims.**

Arguably worse than any English language Bibles stamped with official US military emblems are the countless thousands of Arabic, Dari, and Pashtu Bibles making their way into Iraq and Afghanistan, often with the help of US military personnel.

In his autobiography, General Schwarzkopf recounted his 1990 run-in with one fundamentalist Christian organization—an incident that made it clear that the Saudis' fears and complaints of Christian proselytizing were not unfounded. While some of the Saudis' fears, as the general explained, had resulted from Iraqi propaganda about American troops disrespecting Islamic shrines, the attempt by this religious organization to get US troops to distribute tens of thousands of Arabic language New Testaments to Muslims was real.

The Saudi concern about religious pollution seemed overblown to me but understandable, and on a few occasions I agreed they really did have a gripe. There was a fundamentalist Christian group in North Carolina called Samaritan's Purse that had the bright idea of sending unsolicited copies of the New Testament in Arabic to our troops. A little note with each book read: "Enclosed is a copy of the New Testament in the Arab language. You may want to get a Saudi friend to help you to read it." One

day Khalid<sup>31</sup> handed me a copy. “What is this all about?” he asked mildly. This time he didn’t need to protest—he knew how dismayed I’d be.

This was the incident that, as mentioned earlier, led to the implementation of strict guidelines on religious activities of military personnel in Muslim countries.

A recent al-Jazeera English news report showed US troops at Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan discussing the distribution of Dari and Pashtu language Bibles to the local Afghans.<sup>32</sup> While the US military claimed that these Bibles were destroyed and that this was an isolated incident, countless other examples seem to indicate that these incidents are anything but isolated.

In the newsletter of the International Ministerial Fellowship (IMF), an Army chaplain described the evangelizing he was doing while passing out food in the predominantly Sunni village of Ad Dawr: “I am able to give them tracts on how to be saved, printed in Arabic. I wish I had enough Arabic Bibles to give them as well. The issue of mailing Arabic Bibles into Iraq from the U.S. is difficult (given the current postal regulations prohibiting all religious materials contrary to Islam except for personal use of the soldiers). But the hunger for the Word of God in Iraq is very great, as I have witnessed first-hand.”<sup>33</sup>

Another Army chaplain, in an article titled “Kingdom Building in Combat Boots,” wrote: “But the most amazing thing is that I was constantly led to stop and talk with Iraqis working at the Coalition Provisional Authority. I learned their names, became a part of their lives, and shared Jesus Christ by distributing DVDs and Arabic Bibles.”<sup>34</sup>

And here’s one from a private organization, boasting of the help it gets from military personnel to distribute its Bibles: “OnlyOneCross.com recently sent a case of Arabic Bibles to a Brother who is working in a detention center in Iraq.”<sup>35</sup>

Another organization, the Salvation Evangelistic Association, now has the Soldiers they converted at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, distributing the Arabic Bibles for them: “Many young men in training at Fort Leonard Wood were converted to Christ. The Lord led us on to preaching in Army camps in the US, Korea, and the Philippines. We are now supplying Arabic Bibles for distribution by our troops in Iraq.”<sup>36</sup>

Then there was a lieutenant colonel, whose religious zeal was so extreme that a missionary had to explain to him that he was putting his troops at risk. The missionary’s organization had already shipped 20,000 Arabic-language “Soul-Winning Booklets” into theater with more on the way. The lieutenant colonel, who knew the missionary from the states, had gone to his hotel with 15–20 armed troops and literally blocked off an entire city block with tanks and Humvees to secure the area. He offered to use his troops to protect the missionaries who were there on an evangelical mission to convert the Muslims. The missionary later remarked, “I had to tell [the lieutenant colonel] that it would probably be best if he and his unit left as soon as possible. . . . The Iraqi people in the hotel and those on the street were to say the least, very concerned. I did not want to bring that much attention to the hotel for fear that the terrorists would target the area as well.”<sup>37</sup>

In a video from Soldiers Bible Ministry, an Army chaplain boasts about managing to get Swahili Bibles into Iraq to evangelize Muslim workers from Uganda employed by the US military, in spite of the regulations prohibiting this. Referring to this shipment of Bibles, the chaplain said, “Actually, they’re in Baghdad right now. Somehow the enemy tried to get ‘em hung up there. There was a threat they were gonna get shipped back to the States and all that. We prayed, and they’re gonna be picked up in a couple of days. God raised someone up right there in Baghdad that’s gonna go—a Christian colonel that’s stationed there in Baghdad, and he’s gonna go and get the Bibles.”<sup>38</sup> Despite its disregard of military regulations, Soldiers Bible Ministry is officially endorsed by the Army’s chief of chaplains, with the following statement on his Web site: “Thanks so much for your invaluable ministry of the Word to our Soldiers.”<sup>39</sup>

In addition to Bibles, other Arabic language Christian books are being shipped into Iraq for distribution by our troops. The January 2009 newsletter of Worldwide Military Baptist Missions, for example, included photos of its English-Arabic proselytizing materials, an English-Arabic New Testament, and an English-Arabic Gospel of John. This is from the caption for these photos: “In 2008, we shipped over 226,000 gospel tracts, 21,000 Bibles, New Testaments and gospels of John (to include English-Arabic ones!) and 404 ‘discipleship kits’ to service members & churches for use in war zones, on ships and near military bases around the world.”<sup>40</sup>

Clearly, converting the Iraqis and Afghans is a pet project of numerous private organizations, some with the help of the military, as well as military personnel and military ministries. In one case, a DOD-authorized chaplain endorsing agency actually set up a well-organized network of 40 of its chaplains in Iraq to receive and distribute Arabic Bibles and an Arabic gospel tract titled “Who Is Jesus” for a private missionary organization.<sup>41</sup> All of these groups and individuals have found ways to circumvent the prohibition on sending religious materials contrary to Islam into the region. There are literally thousands of people involved, and hundreds of thousands of Arabic and other native language Bibles, tracts, videos, and audio cassettes have made their way into Iraq and Afghanistan, along with Christian comic books, coloring books, and other materials to evangelize Muslim children. The line between joining the military and joining the ministry has seemingly become increasingly blurred for many.

## Joining the Military = Joining the Ministry

To Campus Crusade for Christ, basic training installations and the military service academies are “gateways”—the places that young and vulnerable military personnel pass through early in their careers. This was the explanation of its gateway strategy that appeared on CCC’s Military Ministry Web site: “Young recruits are under great pressure as they enter the military at their initial training gateways. The demands of drill instructors push recruits and new cadets to the edge. This is why they are most open to the ‘good news.’ We target specific locations, like Lackland AFB and Fort Jackson, where large numbers

of military members transition early in their career. These sites are excellent locations to pursue our strategic goals.”<sup>42</sup>

According to CCC’s executive director, “We must pursue our particular means for transforming the nation—through the military. And the military may well be the most influential way to affect that spiritual superstructure. Militaries exercise, generally speaking, the most intensive and purposeful indoctrination program of citizens.”<sup>43</sup>

At Fort Jackson, the largest Army basic training installation, trainees attending CCC’s “God’s Basic Training” Bible studies are taught that by joining the military, they’ve become ministers of God. This is also taught by CCC’s Valor ministry, which targets future officers on ROTC campuses.

A Valor ministry video titled “God and the Military” is a presentation given at Texas A&M by a Texas pastor to an audience of cadets and an assortment of officers from the various branches of the military. The pastor’s presentation opens:

I, a number of years ago, was speaking at the University of North Texas—it happens to be my alma mater, up in Denton, Texas—and I was speaking to an ROTC group up there and when I stepped in I said, “It’s good to be speaking to all you men and women who are in the ministry,” and they all kind of looked at me, and I think they wondered if maybe I had found the wrong room, or if they were in the wrong room, and I assured them that I was speaking to men and women in the ministry, these that were going to be future officers.”<sup>44</sup>

The stated mission of CCC’s ministry for enlisted personnel is “Evangelize and Disciple All Enlisted Members of the US Military. Utilize Ministry at each basic training center and beyond. Transform our culture through the US Military.”<sup>45</sup>

Cadence International<sup>46</sup> is another large military ministry that targets young service members, seeing those who are likely to be deployed to war zones as low-hanging fruit. One of the reasons given by Cadence for the success of its “strategic ministry” “Deployment and possibly deadly combat are ever-present possibilities. They are shaken. Shaken people are usually more ready to hear about God than those who are at ease, making them more responsive to the gospel.”<sup>47</sup>

Organizations like CCC’s Military Ministry and Cadence could not succeed in their goals without the sanction and aid of the military commanders who allow them to conduct their missionary recruiting activities on their installations. And there is no shortage of military officers who not only condone but also participate in and promote these activities. The Officers’ Christian Fellowship, an organization consisting of over 15,000 officers and operating on virtually every US military installation worldwide, which has frequently stated its goal to “create a spiritually transformed US military with Ambassadors for Christ in uniform, empowered by the Holy Spirit,”<sup>48</sup> has actually partnered with CCC’s Military Ministry.

In addition to the military-wide organizations like Campus Crusade, there are also a number of coercive religious programs on individual bases. A basic training schedule from Fort Leonard Wood described “Free Day Away,” a

program attended by all trainees during their fifth week of training, as follows: “Soldiers spend the day away from Fort Leonard Wood and training in the town of Lebanon. Free Day Away is designed as a stress relief that helps soldiers return to training re-motivated and rejuvenated.”

Omitted from this event description was that this day was actually spent at the Tabernacle Baptist Church and included a fundamentalist religious service. All facilities that the trainees were permitted to go to during this free time (a bowling alley, a convenience store, etc.) are owned by the church. Numerous Soldiers have reported that they were unaware that this part of their “training” was run by a church until they were being loaded onto the church’s buses that came to pick them up, and those who wanted to opt out of the church service once they were there were not permitted to do so.

While claims are made that Free Day Away and other religious programs and events conducted at basic training installations are not mandatory, these words make little or no difference to the trainees. As anyone who has gone through basic training is well aware, no trainee wants to stand out, and almost none would risk being singled out as different or difficult by speaking up and telling their drill sergeant that they don’t want to attend a program or event because it goes against their religious beliefs.

## Spiritual Fitness

“Spiritual fitness” is the military’s new code phrase for promoting religion, and the religion being promoted is Christianity. There are spiritual fitness centers, spiritual fitness programs, spiritual fitness concerts, spiritual fitness runs and walks, and so forth.

This year, for example, Fort Eustis, Virginia, and Fort Lee, Virginia, have been holding a spiritual fitness concert series. At Fort Eustis, it’s actually called the “Commanding General’s Spiritual Fitness Concert Series.” This is a Christian concert series. All of the performers are Christian recording artists. Photos from one of the Fort Lee concerts show crosses everywhere, and one photo’s caption even says that the performer “took a moment to read a Bible passage” during her set.<sup>49</sup> In some cases, attendance at Christian concerts held at basic training installations has been mandatory for the Soldiers in training.<sup>50</sup>

In March 2008, a program was presented at a commander’s call at RAF Lakenheath, England. This commander’s call was mandatory for an estimated 1,000 service members, and the PowerPoint version of the presentation was e-mailed to an additional 4,000–5,000 members. The “spiritual fitness” segment of this presentation was titled “A New Approach to Suicide Prevention: Developing Purpose-Driven Airmen,” a takeoff on Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life*. The presentation also incorporated creationism into suicide prevention. One slide, titled “Contrasting Theories of Hope, 2 Ultimate Theories Explaining Our Existence,” has two columns, the first titled “Chance,” and the second “Design,” comparing Charles Darwin and “Random/Chaos” to God and “Purpose/Design.” Darwin, creationism, and religion are also part of a



chart comparing the former Soviet Union to the United States, which concludes that “Naturalism/Evolution/Atheism” lead to people being “in bondage” and having “no hope,” while theism leads to “People of Freedom” and “People of Hope/Destiny.”<sup>51</sup>

## Strong Bonds

Strong Bonds is an Army-wide evangelistic Christian program operating under the guise of a predeployment and postdeployment family wellness and marriage-training program. Strong Bonds events are typically held at ski lodges, beach resorts, and other attractive vacation spots, luring Soldiers who would never attend a religious retreat to sign up for the free vacation.

The materials officially authorized by the Army for Strong Bonds are not religious, but there's a loophole. These authorized materials are only required to be used for a minimal number of the mandatory training hours, leaving the remaining mandatory training hours open for other materials selected by the chaplain running the retreat. In some cases, the chaplains do stick to the authorized materials and keep the program nonreligious, but this is not the norm.

At one Strong Bonds weekend, the attendees, upon arrival, were handed a camouflage box called “Every Soldier's Battle Kit.” This kit was imprinted with the name New Life Ministries and the ministry's phone number and Web site, and contained *The Life Recovery Bible* and four volumes by a Christian author. They were also given several Christian devotional books and *The Five Love Languages* by pastor Gary Chapman, who is described on his Web site as “the leading author in biblical marriage counseling.” Pastor Chapman's book was used as the core of the Saturday portion of the training, at which a video of Chapman, full of Bible verses and a call to “love your partner like Jesus loved the church,” was also shown.<sup>52</sup>

DOD contracts also show the frequent hiring of Christian entertainers and speakers for Strong Bonds events. One base, for example, contracted, at a cost of \$38,269, an organization called Unlimited Potential, Inc.<sup>53</sup> to provide “social services” for a Strong Bonds event. Unlimited Potential, Inc. is an evangelical baseball ministry that has a military ministry whose mission is “to assist commanders and chaplains in providing religious support to military service members and their families by sharing the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ through the medium of baseball” and “to use our God-given abilities in baseball to reach those who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” This same ministry has been “serving Christ through baseball” at a number of other Army bases in the United States, as well as many bases overseas.

## Godspam

The use of official military e-mail to send religious messages is another ongoing problem. These e-mails range in content from Bible verses and

evangelistic Christian messages to “invitations” from superiors to worship services and Bible studies.

One recent e-mail, widely distributed to an Air Force installation’s e-mail list, contained an essay by the executive director of the Officers’ Christian Fellowship. The essay began by posing the question, “Why do you serve in our military?” The answer was:

We serve our Lord by serving our nation, our family or prospective future family, and so that we have something that we can share with God’s people in need. But what is the greatest need? Why do we serve our God as Joshua exhorted? We serve our God because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross. We are blessed to be able, through our lives in the military, to demonstrate the message of salvation to those who have not heard or received it. It was by God’s grace through faith that we were brought fully into His family and presence. Our love for Him motivates us to serve Him in our military, to serve and work for our families, and to serve and work to enable the message of salvation to reach those who have yet to accept Him as Lord and Savior.

In another recent case, an Air Force colonel sent out an e-mail to a large number of subordinates containing a link to an “inspirational” video. Not only was the video an overt promotion of Christianity, but the Web site linked to was a far right Catholic Web site containing material attacking the president and vice president of the United States, including an image of the president depicted as Adolf Hitler.<sup>54</sup>

Often, command staff and NCOs forward religious e-mails to a base or a unit on behalf of a chaplain. A recent example of this was a flyer for a Bible study titled “Moses the Leader: How Would You Like to Lead 1,000,000 Whiners?” Numerous recipients of this e-mail complained about its negative stereotype of Jews, as well as the fact that it was e-mailed to the base e-mail list by command staff.

Occasionally, officers and NCOs send out e-mails inviting their subordinates to religious events that they themselves are hosting, putting the recipients in the position of wondering if not attending their superior’s religious event will negatively affect their career, and if those who do attend will be shown favoritism.

For example, the Soldiers of a platoon in Iraq recently received an e-mail that had a flyer<sup>55</sup> attached to it for a Christian men’s conference being hosted by their platoon sergeant. The flyer had the unit and division emblems on it, and the sender of the e-mail, an E-7, listed himself as a minister and the host of the event.

This platoon sergeant had been sending out religious e-mails almost daily, including one with an attachment titled “Psalm 23 (For the Work Place),” which began, “The Lord is my real boss, and I shall not want,” and ended with, “When it’s all said and done, I’ll be working for Him a whole lot longer and for that, I BLESS HIS NAME!!!!!!”<sup>56</sup> Another contained several Bible verses, preceded by the following statement: “There are many things that work to keep us from completing our life-missions. Over the years, I’ve debated whether the worst enemy is procrastination or discouragement. If Satan can’t get us to put off our life missions, then he’ll try to get us to quit altogether.”

## Overt Promotions of Christianity in Military Publications

Numerous chaplains, as well as a few commanders and other officers and NCOs, are taking advantage of their military base newspapers and unit newsletters as another forum for promoting Christianity. While some would argue that protection of free speech applies and that anyone can publish virtually anything anywhere, when the publication is an officially sponsored base newspaper and the authors are members of the military, the perception is an official endorsement of these religious messages.

In an article titled “Living in Victory,” a publication of the Louisiana National Guard, one chaplain explained how having Jesus as “your reference point to victory is crucial,” how “victory is not something that is ahead of us, but has already been accomplished by Jesus’ completed victory on the cross,” and why “when you experience defeat, it just shows you that you need to quickly get your branch re-connected to the Vine, who is the Victorious Life of Christ in you.” He summed up his piece by telling the troops that they “are Champions ‘in Jesus Christ.’”<sup>57</sup>

In a column about Independence Day in a Marine unit newsletter, the chaplain got off to a good start, explaining in his opening paragraph how our independence from England led to “people having the right to worship in accordance with their own faith tradition,” and that the First Amendment is “the reason the military has chaplains to uphold every service member’s . . . right to worship in accordance to their particular faith group tradition.” The rest of his article, however, was all about promoting one “particular faith group tradition”—his.

I always remind people that we live in a fallen world, darkened by sin and evil because mankind wanted their independence from God. I also remind people of the incredible cost our Heavenly Father paid with the sacrifice of his one and only Son who died in our place in order that whomever [*sic*] would believe in Him would not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). In other words, our Heavenly Father through his Son paid the ultimate price, even death on a cross in order that whomever [*sic*] would believe could live a life independent from sin. Therefore, because of this great sacrifice paid by the Son of God any and every person can walk in victory beyond the struggles, skeletons in one’s closet, and temptations that can keep us from being men and women of honor, courage and commitment.<sup>58</sup>

Writing about the upcoming move of the headquarters of an Air National Guard fighter wing, a chaplain assistant compared the move to Moses, the tabernacle, and the Christian Holy Spirit. She wrote:

I have been studying about the life of Moses and recently studied how the Israelites set up the tabernacle. I won’t go into all of the details about the tabernacle, but I do want to tell you about the “cloud” since I found the cloud to be very interesting and perfect for our upcoming Wing HQ move. . . .

The cloud was a gift to the Israelites that the Lord had given to them for protection from the hot and cold. This cloud is like the Christian Holy Spirit that we have available to us today. The cloud was a gift and the Holy Spirit is a gift that all human beings can receive. The Holy Spirit helps us to make decisions and enables us to know when we need to move just like the cloud did for the Israelites.<sup>59</sup>

Sometimes, in addition to promoting Christianity, the articles get political, as in this example from one Army base newspaper. In an article titled “Virtue of Truth,” the chaplain condemns all the “sins” of our “progressive” culture—freedom of choice, gay marriage, and so forth. He then injects the word “progressive” into a quote from the apostle John, a word that appears nowhere in the Bible verse he quotes, and adds the word “progressive” again before a quote from Pope John Paul II, although that word was not used by the late pontiff.

At the heart of all sin is pride. This is the kind of pride that makes itself the arbiter of right and wrong. This is good to remember in an age when euthanasia is called mercy, suicide termed “creative medicine” and abortion described as “freedom of choice.” All three are really murder.

Today, marriage is too often considered outdated as an institution and divorce is considered the better option. Even more disturbing, opposition to same-sex marriage is thought to be bigoted and intolerant. This makes adultery and sodomy very uncomfortable terms in some people’s lexicon.

In contrast with today’s attitudes, the apostle John reminds us: “Anyone who is so ‘progressive’ as not to remain in the teaching of the Christ does not have God; whoever remains in the teaching has the Father and the Son” (2 John 9).<sup>60</sup>

The last example comes from an article titled “The Opportunity to Follow Is Afforded to Us All,” written by an Air Force master sergeant:

There’s a tremendous biblical illustration of the ever-present duplicitous nature of followership between leading and accepting and executing orders.

This passage tells of a military leader in command of 100 followers. One day this leader, who is not a religious man, compassionately sends messengers to ask Jesus to pray for a dying subordinate. Jesus, so motivated by this compassionate appeal, deviates from his intended course to visit this kindhearted leader. However, just prior to Jesus’ arrival to the installation, the leader sends his followers to stop Jesus from coming to his installation, deeming himself not worthy of hosting such an esteemed visitor. This is where the leader communicates through his followers the most convicting principle of true followership. His principled statement is, “I know authority because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come.” This very powerful confession prompts Jesus to clearly identify the next principle of responsible followership. The scripture reads, “when Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to the crowd following him, ‘I tell you, I have not seen faith, or confidence, like this in all the land . . .’” The leader’s statement truly reflects the heart of followership. Followership is firmly rooted in confident obedience. And followership and leadership are transitional meaning to pass back and forth between positions. This compassionate military leader knew that even though he was not a religious man, demonstrating his willingness to follow Jesus’ command without question would save his follower’s life.<sup>61</sup>

The master sergeant who wrote the above is from the wing’s Equal Opportunity Office—the very office where an Airman would go for help if he or she had a complaint about an inappropriate promotion of religion, like this article written by this master sergeant.

## Religious Programs for Military Children

Nobody would disagree that military personnel and their families should have the opportunity to worship as they choose. This is the justification for the military providing chaplains and chapels, and it is a reasonable one. But just how much support of religion is necessary to ensure this access to worship opportunities?

Countless DOD contracts show that what the government is providing for religion on military bases goes far beyond chaplains and chapels and, in many cases, far beyond what would be available to most civilians in their communities or towns. If a civilian church doesn't happen to have any talented musicians in its congregation, for example, the congregation might have to deal with having less than professional quality music at their services. Not so in military chapels. If chapels want better music, they hire professional musicians and music directors, contracted by the DOD. If a civilian church wants to start a youth program or provide religious education classes, it might have to find volunteers to run them. Military chapels hire base religious education directors, also paid for with DOD contracts.

And, while the contracting of these religious "service providers" is in itself highly questionable, the larger problem is that these contracts are almost exclusively open only to Christians. Contract descriptions, in complete disregard of the Constitution's "no religious test" clause, make this abundantly clear by including requirements such as "contractor shall ensure all programs and activities are inclusive of all Christian traditions," and the contractor will "use a variety of communications medium that shall appeal to a diverse group of youth, such as music, skits, games, humor, and a clear, concise, relevant presentation of the Gospel."<sup>62</sup>

The most egregious practices are found in the programs for the children of military personnel. These youth programs, many funded by DOD contracts, are designed to target and evangelize the "unchurched" among our military youth. The tactics employed by these government-contracted Christian ministries to achieve this goal range from luring teenagers with irresistible events and activities to infiltrating the off-post public middle and high schools attended by military children. One of these organizations, Youth for Christ Military Youth Ministry, actually goes as far as stalking military children, following their school buses to find out where they live and what schools they go to.

Incredibly, even the job descriptions in some DOD contracts make it clear that stalking kids is expected. One recently posted Army base position required that the contractor target "locations and activities where youth live and spend time, such as neighborhood community centers, school and sports and recreational activities, etc." to draw in "youth that are not regularly affiliated with established chapel congregational youth programs."<sup>63</sup>

According to a video interview<sup>64</sup> of Fort Riley's religious education director about one of the base's exclusively Christian youth programs, the mission of the program, called Spiritual Rangers, is "to train young men to be Godly leaders by instilling in them biblical character, values and principles and thus giving them a sense of what it truly means to be a man." This video, which was aired

on the base's local cable access channel, described a program where teenage boys get to do things like using the base's close combat tactical trainer, engagement skills trainer, and helicopter flight simulator—in other words, the coolest video games *ever!* And all a kid on Fort Riley has to do to play them is hang out with the “godly” men and memorize some scripture.

Military Community Youth Ministries (MCYM),<sup>65</sup> whose Club Beyond program “seeks to celebrate life with military kids and introduce them to the Life-giver, Jesus Christ,” has received millions of dollars in DOD contracts and operates on dozens of US military bases, both overseas and in the United States.

MCYM's Contracting Officer's Performance Evaluation, a form to be filled out each year by a “person duly appointed with the authority to enter into and to administer contracts on behalf of the government” at the installations where the organization is contracted, not only shows that MCYM's mission is to target non-Christian children, but also that the contracting officer actually rates MCYM on its success in this constitutional violation. These are two of the questions on the evaluation form:

1. MCYM staff are expected to conduct outreach ministry to teens who have no relationship with the chapel or established churches. What is your assessment of this ministry objective?
2. MCYM staff are expected to present the Gospel to teens with due respect to their spiritual traditions, i.e. to engage in evangelism but not proselytization. This means that they are not to endorse a particular theology or denomination or creed excepting that which is generally accepted as representing the principle tenets [*sic*] of the Christian faith with a focus on introducing teens to Jesus Christ and to help teens develop in their faith in God. What is your assessment of this ministry objective?<sup>66</sup>

Saying that they “engage in evangelism but not proselytization” is questionable at best. MCYM narrowly defines refraining from proselytization as not trying to convert someone from one Christian denomination to another and places no restrictions on evangelizing those teenagers who need some “introducing” to Jesus Christ.

One of MCYM's “partner” organizations is Youth for Christ's Military Youth Ministry. Actually, Youth for Christ (YFC) and MCYM are one and the same. Both have the same address and phone number, and the YFC Military Youth Ministry mission statement states only one mission—to partner with MCYM: “The Mission of Youth For Christ Military Youth Ministry is to partner with Military Community Youth Ministries (MCYM) in assisting and equipping Commanders, Chaplains, Parents, Volunteers and local Youth for Christ (YFC) chapters on behalf of reaching military teens with the Good News of Jesus Christ.”<sup>67</sup>

YFC Military Youth Ministry is just the arm of MCYM that goes after military children who attend off-post public schools, and its first step in obtaining a contract from the military is to convince a chaplain that his or her base needs its services. To do this convincing, YFC provides a fill-in-the-blank



template for a YFC “steering committee” to write up an assessment to present to the installation chaplain. The first part of completing this assessment is for the YFC steering committee to attempt to get a meeting with the local high school principal. This is done with a cold call to the principal in which committee members say, according to the script provided by YFC, that they are assisting the base chaplains, even though this phone call appears to be made prior to approaching the chaplains:

Example when you call the principle [*sic*] of the local high school: Hello my name is and I am assisting the chaplains of Fort \_\_\_\_\_ by putting together several facts concerning adolescent culture and youth serving organizations in our community. Could I drop by and ask a few questions?

Here are a few more sections of YFC’s assessment template, including the instruction to essentially stalk the children by following their public school buses:

3. a. \_\_\_\_\_ High School. The principle [*sic*] is \_\_\_\_\_. I spoke with \_\_\_\_\_ and he indicated that he would be willing/unwilling to allow me campus access. He did indicate that he would be glad to allow me to support students by attending practices, games, rehearsals and school activities on an “as invited” basis. My general impression is that \_\_\_\_\_ and will continue to develop my relationships at the High School.

b. \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School. The principle [*sic*] is \_\_\_\_\_.

ASSESSMENT [*sic*]:

#### 6. Demographics

a. High School: This is a completely unscientific measurement but I followed the buses around for three days. Each morning four buses leave the installation in [*sic*] route to the high school. There are approximately \_\_\_\_\_ students on these buses. Students are primarily picked up in the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ neighborhoods. Students appeared to be equally spread over the four different grade levels with slightly more/less 9th and 10th graders.

b. Middle School: See a above.<sup>68</sup>

Like MCYM, Malachi Youth Ministries,<sup>69</sup> the youth division of Cadence International, is funded by DOD contracts. In addition to teenagers, Cadence International also targets the younger children of military personnel, partnering with Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) “to anchor children in the hope of Jesus and lead them to living fully devoted to Him” by getting the elementary school children into Good News Clubs on their bases and in their schools.<sup>70</sup>

Cadence and CEF have the “mutual goal of reaching every child of the US military around the world,” and clearly they will have the support and aid of the military itself to achieve this goal, based on statements like this one from the deputy installation chaplain at one large Army base, who, in a video promoting CEF, proclaimed, “The harvest is ready, and I mean it’s out there in more abundance than we have ability to harvest.”<sup>71</sup>

## Religious Tests

In addition to the unconstitutional “religious tests” found in job requirements for DOD contracts, there are a number of service members who have expressed concerns about the requirement to disclose their religion on forms whose purposes would include no legitimate reason to contain any information about their religion. Two examples are the Army Officer Record Brief (ORB) and the Air Force Single Unit Retrieval Format (SURF). The ORB and the SURF are forms whose purpose is to provide information on the career history, education, and special skills of officers. The information contained in these forms is used for job placement, award nominations, applications to military training programs and colleges, and so forth. The religion of an officer should never be a factor in career decisions or recommendations, yet the Army’s ORB now contains a block for the officer’s religion, and the Air Force’s SURF, a recently implemented electronic form, also lists the officer’s religion.

## Fear of Making Complaints through Military Channels

The almost universal problem faced by military personnel who encounter any of the problems listed above is the fear of what might happen if they report a violation of regulations or bring a complaint to their superiors or the Equal Opportunity Office. Service members who fear harassment from both peers and superiors, negative effects on their careers, and occasionally even physical harm often refrain from reporting violations of regulations regarding religion, even when those violations are personally impacting their or their family’s lives. Few ever decide to file official complaints, allowing military spokespersons, when an issue is reported or uncovered, to say that it was an isolated incident and to quickly point out how few official complaints have been filed. Clearly, the number of official complaints filed, usually said to be less than 100, is unrealistically small given that over 15,000 service members have contacted the Military Religious Freedom Foundation for assistance from 2005 to 2009. The disparity in these numbers is something that cannot be ignored.

## Recommendations

After dealing with thousands of service members and carefully examining virtually every military regulation that would apply to their concerns and complaints, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation has concluded that there are very few situations in which the existing regulations are the problem. The problem is that these existing regulations are not being followed or enforced.

One important exception, however, relating to the proselytizing of Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan, must be noted here. Because CENTCOM’s General Order 1B, in its list of prohibited activities in the CENTCOM AOR, lists only “*proselytizing of any religion*” as being prohibited, Christian military personnel

intent on converting Muslims are getting around this crucial prohibition. How? By saying that the order only prohibits proselytizing, but not evangelizing, and claiming that activities such as distributing Arabic and other native-language Bibles are merely evangelizing and thus do not violate the order. Simply changing the wording of GO-1B to “*evangelizing or proselytizing of any religion*” would leave no loophole for those who rely on semantics to continue their attempts to convert the Iraqis and Afghans to Christianity.

## Setting the Record Straight Regarding the Military Chaplaincy

Ever since chaplains praying in Jesus’ name at nonreligious military functions and ceremonies became a hot-button issue, a distorted version of the history of the chaplaincy has emerged. This altered history of the chaplaincy has one purpose—to make it appear that the military chaplaincy has existed continuously since the Revolutionary War, with no problems or objections until recent years. This is accomplished by simply leaving a few minor gaps in the history, such as most of the nineteenth century.

***MYTH:** The chaplaincy has been an essential part of the military since the Revolutionary War.*

***FACT:** The military chaplaincy was almost nonexistent between the end of the Revolutionary War and the Civil War.*

There really wasn’t much of a military chaplaincy at all during the War of 1812 or up through and including the Mexican-American War. Naval commanders were authorized to appoint chaplains, but many of these were not ordained ministers, and their purpose was as much to be instructors in everything from reading and writing to navigational skills as it was to be preachers. Some officers even saw their authority to appoint chaplains as a way to get a personal secretary and chose them for their ability to perform that job, with little regard for their religious qualifications.

During the War of 1812, there was only one Army chaplain for as many as 8,000 men, and, with the exception of the 1818 appointment of a chaplain at West Point who doubled as a professor of history, geography, and ethics, there were no new Army chaplains until 1838, when a small number of post chaplains were authorized. But these post chaplains were not members of the military. They were civilian employees hired by the post’s administrators, and like their counterparts in the Navy, they were hired mainly as teachers and also served as everything from librarians to mess officers to defense counsel during courts-martial. Post chaplains, since they were not in the military, were not assigned to a military unit, but to their post, so when the Mexican-American War began, they did not accompany the troops.

In 1847, Congress passed a law transferring control over post chaplains from the post administrators to the secretary of war, giving the secretary of war

the authority to require a chaplain to accompany his post's troops into the field whenever a majority of the troops were deployed. Those chaplains who refused to go were fired. This 1847 law caused a bit of a problem, however, because it neglected to actually give anyone the authority to appoint chaplains. In fact, when President Polk appointed two Catholic priests as "chaplains" in an effort to stop the propaganda that the war was an attack upon the Mexicans' religion, he made them as political appointments rather than chaplain appointments, saying that there was no law authorizing Army chaplains.

The total number of Army chaplains during the Mexican-American War was 15, including the two Catholic priests who weren't actually chaplains. The chaplaincy grew much larger during the Civil War, of course, with the appointment of a chaplain for each regiment. But when the war ended, the chaplaincy was reduced to the 30 post chaplains authorized in 1838, even though the regular Army was twice the size it had been in 1838. Six additional chaplains were authorized for the six black regiments of the regular Army, but this was reduced to four in 1869. The number of chaplains authorized for the Army would remain 34 until 1898.

***MYTH:** There were no problems with or objections to chaplains until recent years.*

***FACT:** There was a widespread campaign to completely abolish the chaplaincy in the mid-1800s.*

By the late 1840s, opposition to government-paid chaplains was growing, and a vigorous campaign to abolish both the military and congressional chaplaincies would go on for well over a decade, supported by both members of the military and civilians, including churches and religious leaders. Hundreds of petitions, signed by thousands of Americans, were sent to Congress during the 1840s and 1850s calling for an end to all government-paid chaplains. A large part of the American public of the mid-1800s objected to chaplaincy establishments on constitutional grounds; religious organizations objected to them on both religious and constitutional grounds; and military personnel, including chaplains, had complaints of religious coercion and discrimination uncannily similar to those heard today.

Take, for example, the following statement, which was written in 1858: "Mr. Hamlin presented the memorial of Joseph Stockbridge, a chaplain in the navy, praying the enactment of a law to protect chaplains in the performance of divine service on shipboard, according to the practices and customs of the churches of which they may be members."<sup>72</sup> Given the current disputes over chaplains' prayers, this statement could just as easily be from 2010.

A common complaint in the military during the nineteenth century was the takeover of the chaplaincy by Episcopalians. Once the Episcopalians gained control, all members of the military, regardless of their religion or denomination, began to be forced or coerced to attend Episcopalian worship services, and non-Episcopalian chaplains were being forced to perform these services.

While the particular "bully" denomination may have changed since the petition of the naval officers in 1858, the issue has not. In the mid-1800s it was the

Episcopalians; in 2010 it's fundamentalist Protestants. And, as in the mid-1880s, this is also not an issue of Christians versus non-Christians. The overwhelming majority of the petitions received by the Congresses of the 1840s and 1850s were written and signed by Christians and Christian religious organizations, just as the majority of complaints received by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation—96 percent of them—are from self-identified Christians, both Protestant and Catholic.

Beginning in 1848, hundreds of petitions poured into both houses of Congress. The first of these petitions to be presented in the Senate was from a Baptist association in North Carolina:

Mr. Badger presented the memorial, petition, and remonstrance of the ministers and delegates representing the churches which compose the Kehukee Primitive Baptist Association, assembled in Conference with the Baptist Church at Great Swamp, Pitt County, North Carolina praying that Congress will abolish all laws or resolutions now in force respecting the establishment of religion, whereby Chaplains to Congress, the army, and navy, are employed and paid to exercise their religious functions.

Mr. Badger said he wished it to be understood that he did not concur in the object of this memorial. He thought the petitioners were entirely wrong. But as the petition was couched in respectful language, he would ask for its reading and would then move that it be laid on the table and printed.<sup>73</sup>

Five years later, as a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator Badger, a devout Episcopalian, would write a very pro-Christian report dismissing the countless petitions received by that time to abolish the chaplaincy—a report that is frequently quoted by today's Christian nationalists to show just how very religious and pro-Christian Congress was in the nineteenth century. These historical revisionists simply neglect to mention that Badger's report, and a similar report written a year later by an equally religious member of a House committee,<sup>74</sup> had anything to do with a campaign to abolish the chaplaincy. Acknowledging the historical context of these reports would, of course, contradict their claims that there were no complaints or questions about the constitutionality of government religious establishments until modern-day secularists decided to wage a war on Christianity.

Obviously, Senator Badger, who had already stated in 1848 that he “did not concur in the object” of the Baptists' petition to abolish the chaplaincy, was not someone who was going to be objective in considering the many similar petitions he was asked to report on in 1853. So it was no big surprise that Badger's report dismissed the petitions, stating that “the whole view of the petitioners seems founded upon mistaken conceptions of the meaning of the Constitution,” and that the Founding Fathers “did not intend to spread over all the public authorities and the whole public action of the nation the dead and revolting spectacle of atheistical apathy.”<sup>75</sup>

In 1860, Congress addressed the issue of commanders forcing chaplains to conduct worship services of a faith tradition other than their own with a provision stating, “Every chaplain shall be permitted to conduct public worship according to

the manner and forms of the church of which he may be a member.”<sup>76</sup> They did not, however, address the issue of the hijacking of the chaplaincy of one denomination, even though an investigation had shown the complaints to be valid.

Instead of moving forward, Congress soon took a giant step backwards, mandating in August 1861, in the act that authorized the appointment of regimental chaplains for the Union Army, that all chaplains be Christians.<sup>77</sup> A similar provision was in the act for the regular Army—the act passed in July 1861 authorizing the president to raise a volunteer force stated that a chaplain “must be a regular ordained minister of a Christian denomination.”<sup>78</sup> No prior legislation authorizing chaplains had ever mandated that chaplains had to be of a particular religion or even that they had to be ordained ministers. Apparently, the earlier Congresses were familiar with that pesky “no religious test” clause in the Constitution, applying it even to the office of chaplain. The criteria for a chaplain in the 1838 law authorizing post chaplains, for example, was simply that “such person as they may think proper to officiate as chaplain.”<sup>79</sup>

But the 1861 law requiring chaplains to be Christians was quickly and successfully challenged. The usual practice at the time for appointing Army chaplains was for each regiment to elect its own chaplain, and a regiment from Pennsylvania had elected a Jewish cantor. When the Young Men’s Christian Association exposed this grievous violation of the 1861 chaplain law, the Jewish chaplain resigned rather than face the humiliation of losing his commission. But the regiment decided to test the constitutionality of the law. This time they chose a rabbi, knowing full well that his application for a commission would be denied. After a public outcry over the denial of the rabbi’s commission, which included numerous petitions from Jewish organizations, groups of citizens, and even the members of one state legislature, the provision requiring chaplains to be Christians was repealed.<sup>80</sup> A few months later, in September 1862, President Lincoln legally commissioned the first Jewish chaplain.

Another issue during the mid-nineteenth-century chaplain battle was over a naval regulation from 1800 giving commanders the authority to force their subordinates to attend religious services.<sup>81</sup> It had been enacted during the very religious Adams administration and remained in force in 1858. This example is often used by historical revisionists to show that “it is simply inconceivable that the members of the First Congress, who drafted the Establishment Clause, thought it to prohibit chaplain-led prayer at military ceremonies, having passed legislation not only approving that practice, but indeed requiring service members to attend divine services.” However, what these revisionists fail to mention is that, in 1858, this act was protested by a group of naval officers<sup>82</sup> who successfully petitioned Congress to amend it to make religious services optional.

As already mentioned, most of the protests against government-paid chaplains came from Christians, and it’s absolutely remarkable how similar the opinions of these nineteenth century Christians were to those of the modern-day “secularists” who are currently trying to destroy Christianity. The following was written by Rev. William Anderson Scott, one of the most prominent Presbyterian ministers of his day, in his 1859 book *The Bible and Politics*. Reverend



Scott's book was written in large part to refute the arguments being used by those who wanted the Bible in public schools, another issue that is far from new, but it also addressed the issue of government-paid chaplains, including the following from a section on military chaplains:

Is it constitutional to take the public money to pay a chaplain for religious services that are not acceptable to a majority of the rank and file of the army? I do not think so. If the majority of a regiment, or of the men on board a man-of-war, should elect a chaplain, then, possibly, the Government might make an appropriation to pay him, though I doubt whether this is constitutional, and I do not believe it the best way. I believe that the supplying of religious consolations to the members of our Legislature, and to the officers and men of our army and navy, according to our organic laws, should be left to themselves, just as it is to our merchant ships and to our frontier settlements—that is, to their own voluntary support. Our blacksmiths, police officers, Front-street merchants, lawyers and physicians all need the blessings of religion; but they must provide for their own individual wants. And, in the same way, I would leave the army and the navy and the legislatures, and I would do so the more readily, because the different churches and voluntary religious societies would then all stand truly on an equality, and hold themselves ready to help in furnishing such supplies. Suppose a regiment is ordered to the wilderness, let the men elect a chaplain and pay him themselves. Then they will be more likely to profit by his services. Or let a missionary society, by the vote of the citizen soldiers, be asked to send them a minister of religion. If the government appoints a Protestant chaplain, is it a disobedience of orders for a Catholic to refuse to accept of his services? I see nothing but difficulty and the engendering of constant sectarian feuds and bad feeling, if the Federal Government touches anything that is religious.<sup>83</sup>

Clearly, this nineteenth century Presbyterian minister must have been trying to destroy Christianity and turn the military into a bunch of atheists.

### **What Would the Founding Father of the US Military Think?**

The version of history in which the inconvenient events of the 1800s are simply ignored typically begins with the many instances of George Washington issuing orders regarding chaplains and religious services and usually includes his 1776 directive for each regiment to procure a chaplain. What's omitted is that a year later, when Congress wanted to cut the number of chaplains from one per regiment to one per brigade, an act that would put many regiments under chaplains who were not of similar beliefs to the Soldiers, Washington and his generals strongly objected.

This is what Washington wrote to the Continental Congress in 1777 on behalf of his generals:

It has been suggested, that **it has a tendency to introduce religious disputes into the Army, which above all things should be avoided, and in many instances would compel men to a mode of Worship which they do not profess.** The old Establishment gives every Regiment an Opportunity of having a Chaplain of their own religious Sentiments, it is founded on a plan of a more generous

toleration, and the choice of the Chaplains to officiate, has been generally in the Regiments. Supposing one Chaplain could do the duties of a Brigade, (which supposition However is inadmissible, when we view things in practice) that being composed of four or five, perhaps in some instances, Six Regiments, there might be so many different modes of Worship. I have mentioned the Opinion of the Officers and these hints to Congress upon this Subject; from a principle of duty and because I am well assured, *it is most foreign to their wishes or intention to excite by any act, the smallest uneasiness and jealousy among the Troops.*<sup>84</sup> (emphasis added)

Washington and his generals worried about the “smallest uneasiness” over religion and objected to anything that would “compel men to a mode of worship that they didn’t profess.” What would they have to say about what’s going on in today’s military? Regardless of the side one happens to be on, few would disagree that the current issues are causing far more than the “smallest uneasiness.”

## Notes

1. “Hayes: Most Troops Will Be Home by 2008,” *Concord Standard and Mount Pleasant Times*, 21 December 2006.

2. Lt Col Rick Francona, retired US Air Force intelligence officer, appearing on MSNBC, 28 December 2006.

3. Pete Geren, then secretary of the Army (commencement remarks, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY, 31 May 2008), <http://www.army.mil/-news/2008/06/02/9573-west-point-commencement-remarks-by-secretary-of-the-army-pete-geren/>. Secretary Geren was also among the civilian DOD officials who appeared in the Christian Embassy video.

4. Rep. Trent Franks (R-AZ), remarks on “Religious Freedom,” 11 December 2007, Congressional Record, H15291.

5. Christian Embassy is the arm of Campus Crusade for Christ operating at the Pentagon. The Christian Embassy promotional video can be viewed at [http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/Media\\_video/christian-embassy/index.html](http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/Media_video/christian-embassy/index.html).

6. DOD Inspector General, “Alleged Misconduct by DoD Officials Concerning Christian Embassy,” Report No. H06L102270308, 20 July 2007, [http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/press-releases/christian\\_embassy\\_report.pdf](http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/press-releases/christian_embassy_report.pdf).

7. Photos archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.

8. “Mural Painter,” <http://www.riley.army.mil/NewsViewer.aspx?id=579>. Photos also archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.

9. Photos archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.

10. <http://www.militaryministry.org/>.

11. <http://www.militarymissionsnetwork.com>.

12. Web page archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.

13. <http://www.valormovement.com>.

14. Web page archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.

15. Video at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/video/USAF.mov>.

16. Military Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, *Movement Model of Ministry Volume 2*.

17. “God’s Basic Training” Bible study. Page images archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.

18. Photos archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.

19. From Brigitte Gabriel’s lecture at the Joint Forces Staff College on 13 June 2007: Questioning a statement in Gabriel’s book, a student asked, “Should we resist Muslims who want to seek political office in this nation?” Gabriel replied:

Absolutely. If a Muslim who has—who is—a practicing Muslim who believes the word of the Koran to be the word of Allah, who abides by Islam, who goes to mosque and prays every Friday, who prays five times a day—this practicing Muslim, who believes in the teachings of the Koran, cannot be a loyal citizen to the United States of America. . . . A Muslim is allowed to lie under any situation to make Islam, or for the benefit of Islam in the long run. A Muslim sworn to office can lay his hand on the Koran and say “I swear that I’m telling the truth and nothing but the truth,” fully knowing that he is lying because the same Koran that he is swearing on justifies his lying in order to advance the cause of Islam. What is worrisome about that is when we are faced with war and a Muslim political official in office has to make a decision either in the interest of the United States, which is considered infidel according to the teachings of Islam, and our Constitution is incompatible [*sic*] with Islam—not compatible—that Muslim in office will always have his loyalty to Islam.

Among her many other derogatory statements, Gabriel referred to Dearborn, Michigan, as “Dearbornistan” because of its large Muslim community, and, in a comment about racial profiling, said that American Muslims “are good at nothing but complaining about every single thing.”

20. <http://www.3xterrorists.com>.

21. Bethany Duemler, “Alleged Ex-PLO Raises Eyebrows,” *Chimes* (newspaper of Calvin College, where the 3 Ex-Terrorists appeared), 9 November 2007, <http://www-stu.calvin.edu/chimes/article.php?id=3125>; “Doubt Cast on Anani’s Terrorist Claims,” *The Windsor Star*, 20 January 2007, <http://www.canada.com/windsorstar/news/story.html?id=4a479502-4490-408e-bdb5-f2638619a62c>; and Neil MacFarquhar, “Speakers at Academy Said to Make False Claims,” *New York Times*, 7 February 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/07/us/07muslim.html?scp=1&sq=Shoeb&st=nyt>.

22. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2WN5rqKkhUU>; [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipqO\\_ke-NH4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipqO_ke-NH4); [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3l\\_Mc-0MaZM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3l_Mc-0MaZM); <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thfYB-VejSQ>; and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIoKAAQ1Xs4>.

23. Maria Luisa Tucker, “Reformed Muslim Terrorists’ Preach Christ to College Kids,” *Village Voice*, 19 February 2008, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2008-02-19/news/reformed-muslim-terrorists-preach-christ-to-college-kids/1>.

24. Video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MibbDnH8BM>.

25. Video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFqIPjj3ciU>.

26. Video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UVPejVvvMQU>.

27. Photos of military Bibles archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodsp>.

28. “Ministry Provides Hope in Second Run of Bible Devotional,” *Mission Network News*, 26 November 2007, <http://www.mnnonline.org/article/10592>.

29. In November 2008, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation wrote to the secretary of defense, calling for the DOD inspector general to promptly initiate an investigation into the background and activities of Navy chaplain LCDR Brian K. Waite and requesting that any existing association between the US military and Revival Fires Ministries be immediately terminated. That letter can be found at [http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/Gates\\_Letter.pdf](http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/Gates_Letter.pdf). Video of Lieutenant Commander Waite at a Revival Fires camp meeting and links to additional information regarding this situation can be found at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/newsletters/2008-11/video.html>. The Web page is also archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodsp>.

30. Video at [http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/Media\\_video/al\\_jazeera/index.html](http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/Media_video/al_jazeera/index.html).

31. Lt Gen Khalid Bin Sultan al-Saud, commander of Saudi Arabia’s air defense forces, appointed by King Fahd as General Schwarzkopf’s counterpart.

32. “IMF Chaplains Serving in Iraq,” *Gathering*, Spring 2004, <http://www.i-m-f.org/pdfs/Gatherings/Spring2004.pdf>.

33. *Ibid.*

34. LTC Lyn Brown, “Kingdom Building in Combat Boots,” *Heart & Mind*, Bethel Seminary, Summer 2005, <http://www.bethel.edu/publications/heartmind/2005-summer/bethel-army-boots/>.

35. <http://www.onlyonecross.com>.

36. [http://www.larryclayton.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=27&Itemid=2](http://www.larryclayton.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=27&Itemid=2).

37. <http://www.lightsofliberty.us/iraq.html>.

38. Video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0B7pBbkZpq0>.
39. <http://soldiersbibleministry.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1783>.
40. Worldwide Military Baptist Missions "Prayer Letter," archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
41. For numerous reasons in addition to the distribution of Arabic Bibles, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation has demanded that the DOD revoke the ecclesiastical endorsing authority of this endorsing agency. The letter to the secretary of defense and enclosures detailing the reason for this demand can be found at [http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/press-releases/gates\\_letter.html](http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/press-releases/gates_letter.html).
42. Web page archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
43. Campus Crusade for Christ Military Ministry Life and Leadership newsletter, October 2005, archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
44. *God and the Military*, video, filmed in 1997, re-released on DVD in 2005 for distribution by Campus Crusade for Christ Military Ministry.
45. <http://www.militaryministry.org/about/strategic-objectives/>.
46. <http://www.cadence.org>.
47. <http://www.cadence.org/home/who-we-are/a-strategic-ministry>.
48. Until January 2009, the Officers' Christian Fellowship's official vision statement was "a spiritually transformed military with ambassadors for Christ in uniform, empowered by the Holy Spirit, living with a passion for God and a compassion for the entire military society." Its mission statement was "Christian officers exercising biblical leadership to raise up a godly military." Examples of the use of these statements are archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
49. Photos archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
50. Several sources confirm that, in some cases, concerts by Eric Horner, a Christian artist who regularly performs at military bases, have been mandatory for basic trainees.
51. <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/powerpoint/Lakenheath.ppt.htm>.
52. Report of a US Army major in the National Guard who attended this Strong Bonds event.
53. <http://www.fedspending.org>.
54. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/15/washington/15video.html>.
55. Archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
56. Archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
57. Chaplain Maj. Jeff Mitchell, "Living in Victory," *The Engineer Express*, 225th Engineer Brigade, Louisiana National Guard, 15 July 2009.
58. Chaplain Bailey, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit newsletter, July 2009.
59. MSgt Diane Watters, *In Formation*, newsletter of the 187th Fighter Wing of the Alabama Air National Guard, February/March 2009.
60. Chaplain Capt Paul-Anthony Halladay, "Virtue of Truth," *The Guidon*, base newspaper of Fort Leonard Wood, 15 April 2009.
61. MSgt Stephen Love, "The Opportunity to Follow Is Afforded to Us All," 460th Space Wing at Buckley Air Force Base, 18 March 2009, <http://www.buckley.af.mil/news/story.aspx?id=123138478>.
62. Community-wide Outreach Youth Ministry Program for High School Students, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Solicitation Number: W9124709T0004, 17 October 2008.
63. Ibid.
64. [http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/media\\_video/spiritual\\_rangers/index.html](http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/media_video/spiritual_rangers/index.html).
65. <http://www.mcy.m.org>.
66. Archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
67. <http://www.yfcmym.org>.
68. Archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
69. <http://www.malachi.org>.
70. <http://www.cefonline.com/content/category/4/102/343/>.
71. Video archived at <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org/dodssp>.
72. *Journal of the Senate of the United States of America*, vol. 50, 35th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Washington, DC: William A. Harris, 1858-59), 53.

73. *The Congressional Globe*, 30th Cong., 2nd Sess., 13 December 1848, 21.
74. *Reports of Committees of the House of Representatives Made During the First Session of the Thirty-Third Congress*, vol. 2, H. Rep. 124 (Washington, DC: A. O. P. Nicholson, 1854).
75. *Reports of Committees of the Senate of the United States for the Second Session of the Thirty-Second Congress, 1852-53*, S. Rep. 376 (Washington, DC: Robert Armstrong, 1853), 4.
76. George P. Sanger, ed., *The Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America*, vol. 12, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1863), 24.
77. *Ibid.*, 37th Cong., 1st Sess., 288.
78. *Ibid.*, 270.
79. Richard Peters, ed., *The Public Statutes at Large of the United States of America*, vol. 5, 25th Cong., 2nd Sess. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856), 259.
80. Sanger, ed., *Statutes at Large*, vol. 12, 37th Cong., 2nd Sess., 595.
81. Peters, ed., *Public Statutes at Large*, vol. 2, 45.
82. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States*, vol. 54, 35th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, DC: James B. Steedman, 1857 [sic]), 792.
83. Rev. W. A. Scott, DD, *The Bible and Politics: Or, An Humble Plea for Equal, Perfect, Absolute Religious Freedom, and Against All Sectarianism in Our Public Schools* (San Francisco: H.H. Bancroft & Co., 1859), 78.
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## About the Author

**Chris Rodda** is the senior research director for the Military Religious Freedom Foundation and a writer on issues related to religion and politics. Focusing for many years on the issue of the politically motivated revisionism and distortion of American history by the Religious Right, she authored the book *Liars For Jesus: The Religious Right's Alternate Version of American History*, vol. 1, the first of a projected three-volume series debunking the historical myths and lies found everywhere from homeschooling textbooks to congressional debates and legislation to Supreme Court opinions. She is a regular contributor at Talk2Action.org and a blogger on the *Huffington Post*.

**The Military Religious Freedom Foundation** is a 501(c)(3) founded by Mikey Weinstein in 2005. Weinstein is a 1977 graduate of the US Air Force Academy. MRFF does not seek to rid the military of all religion, as its critics would have people believe. In fact, 96 percent of the service members who seek the assistance of MRFF are Christians, and the work of the foundation is endorsed by a number of religious organizations representing a variety of faiths. For more information, visit <http://www.militaryreligiousfreedom.org>.