



**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF EVANGELICAL  
CHAPLAIN ENDORSERS (ICECE)  
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Michael B. Donley  
Secretary of the Air Force  
1670 Air Force Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I write on behalf of the International Conference of Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers (ICECE) to express our grave concern for the blatant anti-Christian censorship by Col. Brian Duffy, Commander of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, of Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Kenneth Reyes' article in the Post newspaper. And the basis of the censorship? The article mentioned the word "faith", provided a history of the phrase "no atheists in foxholes", and pointed out most people have "faith" in something. Col. Duffy censored the article immediately following a Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) representative's absurd claim it offended an atheist reader. This action indicates an increasing hostility to men of faith on behalf of a misguided and constitutionally ignorant/antagonistic minority.

An objective review of Ch. Reyes's article shows: (1) there is nothing that would offend the normal person; (2) one could claim an offense only by greatly exaggerating or misrepresenting the content and thrust of the article; and (3) MRFF's claim the article "defiles the dignity of service members by telling them that regardless of their personally held philosophical beliefs they must have faith" has no basis in fact, logic or reality. Is there a logical disconnect here? Do not "beliefs" equal "faith"? Reyes's article demeans no one; it merely pointed out everyone has to have some faith, a word whose common secular meanings include "confidence or trust in a person or thing; faith in another's ability", and "belief that is not based on proof", which clearly fits the context of Ch. Reyes's article. Censorship of the article based on MRFF's absurd and obtuse claims demeans Ch. Reyes and every service person who ever fought for the religious and free speech liberty enshrined in the Constitution, as our attached letter to Col. Duffy raising ICECE's concerns explains.

The fact that the Air Force has not publicly apologized for Col. Duffy's blatantly unconstitutional action and taken judicial or administrative action to prevent further such illegal acts appears to be official approval of his actions. This raises several serious issues.

First is the obvious chilling effect of fear of retribution or official displeasure not only on the right of chaplains to freely speak, but other men and women of faith. MRFF's objective, contrary to its deceptive title and misleading advertising, is freedom from religion, particularly the Christian religion. Col. Duffy does not seem to recognize the Constitution rejects that concept by embracing the right of freedom of religion.

Second, the Establishment Clause mandates federal government neutrality in areas of religion and Col. Duffy's response is anything but neutral. As a chaplain, Ch. Reyes has a constitutional right to accurately represent his faith group and speak to religious issues and topics without the heavy-handed censorship dictated by the anti-Christian MRFF, an organization dedicated to eliminating the free exercise of religion. Many faith groups, including those represented by ICECE, believe faith is something they live 24 hours a day, a fact reflected in military history. Col. Duffy's actions indicate he believes chaplains' speech is only protected in the Chapel, a minority religious viewpoint with which he, and apparently the Air Force, have aligned themselves in violation of the Constitution.

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"But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." Gal. 6:14

Page 2

As President Washington once explained, this nation embraced and adopted religious liberty and rejected toleration. "Religious toleration" implies a departure from a recognized norm, which the ruling elite allows to exist at its pleasure and may later change.

Third, Col. Duffy's response is a textbook example of the Heckler's Veto, where the government gives a heckler in the audience a veto power over a speaker's content, context, and viewpoint. Your Judge Advocate can explain why the courts have uniformly rejected the Heckler's Veto as unconstitutional. MRFF has power only because those in authority do not fully recognize, or embrace, the scope of liberty the Constitution guarantees, even in the unique setting of the military. The great need in today's military is to add to its physical courage the moral courage to serve God without fear. Such moral courage is vital in the defense of our most cherished liberties, a moral courage which is anchored in the Word of God and His created nature.

Fourth, Col. Duffy's actions violate the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which forbids the Air Force from burdening a person's religious exercise unless furthers a compelling military objective and the action represents the least restrictive means available. ICECE respectfully requests the Air Force provide the "compelling military objective" supporting Col. Duffy's actions and an explanation why it is the least burdensome.

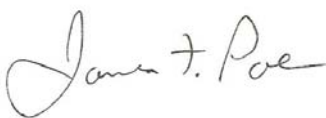
Fifth, and most troubling, Col. Duffy's actions and other recent Air Force actions, such as ordering an Air Force officer not to display his Bible on his desk lest he offend someone, or the removal of a painting, "Blessed are the Peacemakers", at Mountain Home Air Base because it contained a Scripture reference, are other versions of the Heckler's Veto. These all seem to have been instigated directly by MRFF and are a significant departure and rejection of both our nation's military history and the wisdom of our former leaders. MRFF would obviously disagree with many of the pronouncements and official acts of George Washington as Commanding General of the Continental Army and later as President expressing his religious faith, not to mention the acts and words of our founding fathers. Other military leaders have recognized the value of religious faith and its critical importance in the profession of arms. Perhaps you have heard of Gen. Patton's prayer during the Battle of the Bulge.

I look upon the spiritual life of the soldier as even more important than his physical equipment...the soldier's heart, the soldier's spirit, the soldier's soul are everything. Unless the soldier's soul sustains him, he cannot be relied upon and will fail himself and his commander and his country in the end. It's morale, and I mean morale, which wins the victory in the ultimate, and that type of morale can only come out of the religious fervor in his soul. (Gen. George C. Marshall, quoted in JCS Joint Pub 1-05, Religious Ministry Support for Joint Operations, 1996.)

Gen. Curtis Lemay, former USAF Chief of Staff whose reputation as a warrior is beyond challenge, once said, "if we maintain our faith in God, love of freedom, and superior global air power, the future looks good." Gen. Lemay recognized air power's importance for our nation's future but also recognized and unreservedly verbalized the critical importance of "faith" in God.

The Air Force's 2004 and 2005 Guidelines barring chaplains from offering sectarian prayers at command functions most visibly manifested its hostility to religious expression. The very concept of "non-sectarian prayer" is an oxymoron. Chaplains represent their faith group, and when they provide religious speech, they illustrate in a way no other symbol can the Constitution at work with its respect for religious liberty and diversity, and the role of faith in our nation's history. Congress found the Guidelines offensive to the principles of religious liberty and directed their rescission. It seems the Air Force has not accepted the message. We believe you can change that. ICECE looks forward to a dialogue to help bring about that change.

Sincerely,



James F. Poe  
CAPT, CHC, USN, Ret.  
ICECE Chairman