

## PRESS RELEASE: NAVY RELUCTANTLY SURRENDERS TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

([www.persuade.tv](http://www.persuade.tv)) The Navy Chaplain staging a hunger strike outside the White House will end his fast this morning, after accepting religious accommodations from his reluctant superior officers.

“They’re finally giving me back my uniform, and letting me pray publicly in Jesus name,” said Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt.

The Chaplain will participate in a “bona fide public worship service” in front of the White House at 11 am Saturday January 7th, wearing his Navy uniform, and he’ll pray publicly “in Jesus name” in front of the media. He’ll then break his water-only fast after 18 days (having lost 14 pounds), by sharing communion with everybody who attends.

“Today we celebrate a victory for religious liberty for all our Sailors, by worshipping God in public, in uniform, through our Lord Jesus Christ,” said the chaplain. “We prayed in Jesus name, and God has answered our prayers. To God be the glory, great things He hath done.”

Before his fast began on December 20th, the chaplain was in danger of losing his career for praying publicly “in Jesus name” and had been stripped of his uniform for all media appearances. But now, Klingenschmitt’s career is saved, and he can pray publicly “in Jesus name” in uniform.

While the Navy has reluctantly accommodated Klingenschmitt’s request to worship publicly in uniform (see attached documents from his superiors) the Navy has not yet granted religious liberty to all other chaplains.

The Chief of Navy Chaplains remains steadfast in his position that praying publicly in Jesus name “denigrates other faiths” and defends his predecessor’s 1998 policy that tells chaplains who pray in Jesus name they “ought to exclude themselves from participation in public events as the prayer giver.” (See Appendices Z and N in block 4 at [www.persuade.tv](http://www.persuade.tv) )

Over 65 chaplains are still suing the Navy citing religious discrimination, and most of them are no longer in uniform, claiming they were passed over for promotion because their faith practices didn’t conform to Navy pluralism. Congressional hearings and legislation may be forthcoming.

“Today the Navy has reluctantly obeyed the law, to grant me the religious liberty I always should’ve had,” Klingenschmitt said. “But I won’t stop fighting until every chaplain has the same rights I have today. I don’t want special favors just because I’ve been on television. Mr. President, please sign the executive order to enforce the law since 1860 that allows ALL military chaplains to pray according to their diverse faith, in all settings, private and public.”

Despite requests by 74 Congressmen and 173,000 Americans, the President has not yet signed the executive order.

The public is invited to worship with Chaplain Klingenschmitt, in front of the White House in Lafayette Park, at 11 am Saturday 7 January 2006.

3 JAN 06

From: LT Gordon James Klingenschmitt, CHC, USN  
To: Commanding Officer, Naval Station Norfolk

Subj: Request to wear uniform during public worship

Ref: (a) Your letter, 16 Dec 05  
(b) U.S. Navy Uniform Regulations, para 1401.3.b

1. Sir, thanks for your recent patience with me and my cause. In reference (a) you direct that I may not wear my uniform in public if I talk about religion or if TV cameras may be present, citing the prohibition of reference (b).

2. As you must already know, reference (b) specifically authorizes me to wear the uniform (even without commanding officer approval) when "attending or participating in a bona fide religious service or observance." Does your directive in ref. (a) intend to override ref. (b), and prohibit me from publicly worshiping Jesus Christ, or saying public prayers "in Jesus name" while in uniform? Please clarify your interpretation of the religious exception stated in the uniform regulations, to assure me your directive doesn't abrogate the spirit and intent of that exception.

3. Additionally, US Code Title 10 Section 6031 states: "An officer in the chaplain corps may conduct public worship according to the manner and forms of the church of which he is a member." Does reference (a) intend to abrogate US Code, which protects my right to worship publicly in uniform? Please clarify your interpretation of US Code, as it relates to my right to wear a uniform.

4. Respectfully request your express permission to participate in bona fide public worship events wearing my uniform.



G. J. KLINGENSCHMITT



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**

NAVAL STATION NORFOLK  
1530 GILBERT STREET SUITE 2000  
NORFOLK VA 23511-2722

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1020  
Ser /N01L  
6 Jan 06

From: Commanding Officer, Naval Station Norfolk  
To: LT Gordon J. Klingenschmitt, CHC, USNR

Subj: REQUEST TO WEAR UNIFORM DURING PUBLIC WORSHHIP

Ref: (a) Subject request of 3 JAN 06  
(b) CO NAVSTA Norfolk ltr of 16 DEC 05  
(c) U.S. Navy Uniform Regulations  
(d) Your email of 4 JAN 06

1. In reference (a), you seek clarification of the order delivered to you by reference (b). That order directed you not to wear your uniform for a scheduled appearance on the Bill O'Reilly television show. It was clear the purpose of your appearance on the O'Reilly show was to support personal or partisan views on political, social and religious issues. Reference (c), U.S. Navy Uniform Regulations, prohibits members of the naval service from engaging in such activities while in uniform. The order further prohibited you from wearing your uniform for any other media appearance without express prior permission. The order did not direct that you "may not wear (your) uniform in public if (you) talk about religion or if TV cameras may be present."

2. "Media appearances," as used in reference (b) meant interviews, press conferences, press availabilities, and similar events, like the scheduled interview on the Bill O'Reilly show, where you deliberately engage with the press to express personal views.

3. Reference (b) did not contradict or supersede reference (c) in any way. Its purpose was simply to apply the general rule to specific facts. Neither does reference (b) narrow the scope of reference (c) in any way. So, for example, while reference (b) only addressed the application of reference (c) in the context of media appearances, reference (c) itself prohibits the wearing of the naval uniform in a much broader range of situations, even situations in which no media are present. You are obliged to obey both references (b) and (c).

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4. Reference (c) permits a member of the naval service to wear his or her uniform, without obtaining authorization in advance, incident to attending or participating in a bona fide religious service or observance.

5. In reference (d), you state that you have been invited to participate this weekend, in uniform, in what you characterize as "bona fide public worship." In the email, you appear to seek command approval of your assertion that the event to which you refer constitutes a "bona fide religious service or observance" under the Uniform Regulations, and that you do not require advance authorization to wear your uniform at such events.

a. I understand your request to participate in this event in uniform to be a request to participate in your personal capacity, and not in your official capacity or as part of your official duties. I further understand this event to be distinct and separate from your letter to the President of 29 December 2005, where you requested to conduct a public worship service "on duty, in uniform ..... inviting public media to attend."

b. Based on the limited information about this event that you have provided, including your statement to the Executive Officer that the event was being organized by a clergy lobbyist group, I have strong reservations about whether this event will, indeed, be a bona fide religious service or observance, rather than a demonstration or assembly to promote personal or partisan views on political, social or religious issues. Accordingly, I recommend that you not wear your uniform for this event.

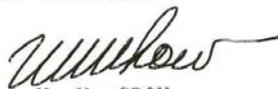
c. Notwithstanding my recommendation, you must use your own best judgment to evaluate the facts and conform your conduct to regulations.

d. If, despite my recommendation, you choose to participate in this event in uniform, you should limit your participation, while in uniform, to the "bona fide religious service or observance." If the event becomes a demonstration or assembly of personal or partisan views you are directed to ensure that you conform to the guidance as specified in reference (c). You should not, while in uniform, give interviews, make speeches, or otherwise engage in public advocacy of personal or partisan views on political, social or religious issues.

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e. Nothing in this letter should be understood to indicate agreement with your assertion that this event is, indeed, a bona fide religious service or observance. If you choose to attend and participate in this event in uniform, any judgment about the appropriateness of your having participated in the event in uniform will be made subsequent to the event, with reference to the actual facts and circumstances.

6. I trust this clarification and guidance will assist you in your efforts to conform your conduct to the necessarily high standards expected of all naval officers.



W. W. CROW  
By direction

Copy to:  
CAPT N. D. Holcomb, JR, CHC, USN