

Thursday, August 9, 2007

Silence, Christian soldiers!

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By Gordon James Klingenschmitt

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This week, the [Washington Post](#) and [Time magazine](#) both report the Department of Defense inspector general found six senior military officers and one senior chaplain "guilty of violating ethics rules" because they wore their uniforms while making public statements endorsing Jesus Christ and said "thank you" to Christian ministers who pray for our troops and teach Bible studies at the Pentagon.

One accused Pentagon official dared to say [on videotape](#) that those ministers have "been a rock that I can rely on, been an organization that helped me in my walk with Christ, and I'm just thankful for the service they give." But since his statement of gratitude didn't offer a "legal disclaimer," he faces a possible reprimand that could end his career.

Are these DoD inspectors the same ones who found "nothing wrong" after admitting my commander punished me (a Navy chaplain) for quoting "exclusive" Bible verses in the chapel during optional worship? Are these the same DoD inspectors who sat idly by watching the Pentagon punish Christian whistleblowers, including 68 chaplains now suing the Navy? Are these the same DoD inspectors who ignored Navy Uniform Regulation 6405 (chaplain's have the option to wear their uniform during "public worship"), while affirming the Navy judge's ruling that my prayers in uniform were "not public worship" since I prayed outside of Sunday chapel? (Although that Navy judge admitted I may have been "worshipping in public" in uniform, which he ruled was punishable as a misdemeanor crime.)

(Column continues below)

Yet whatever unconstitutional "ethics rules" these good officers may have violated (Joint Ethics Reg 3-300.a apparently prohibits saying thank you to pastors in uniform) should likewise be overturned by Congress and thrown out with the DoD inspector general staffers who narrowly misinterpret that rule as prohibiting religious speech.

It's a sad irony when our troops fight to protect religious liberty for others, but their own "inalienable" freedom of religious expression is suddenly deemed "alienable" because they put on a uniform.

More anti-faith animosity allowed by Washington Post bloggers included breathtaking comments like "We need to purge our government of these Evangelical Christians." That's their true agenda, isn't it? That reveals more about what's lurking in their hearts than ours.

Left-wing activists salivate to punish officers who preach Christ in uniform, starting with Commander in Chief George W. (Gen. George Washington, that is). German Lutheran Rev. Henry Muhlenberg witnessed George Washington share his Christian faith (in uniform) with his troops: "I heard a fine example today, namely that His Excellency General Washington rode among his army yesterday and admonished each and every one to fear God, to put away wickedness that has set in and become so general, and to practice Christian virtues."

What's this? A general officer publicly endorsing Jesus Christ in uniform, speaking of his faith in front of the troops? I suppose next week the DoD inspectors will call for Gen. Washington's posthumous reprimand and subpoena Chaplain Muhlenberg's journal as proof against him.

So, if left-wing activist Mikey Weinstein wants congressional hearings, count me in, too. Let them haul us Christians before the tribunals to give an account for our public faith-speech. Only let us wear our uniforms to testify before Congress like Lt. Col. Ollie North did bravely, to their embarrassment. Let us testify about Jesus Christ before Congress and the entire world. We may surrender our wrists to their nails, right there on C-SPAN, but we'll never be ashamed to speak publicly of our Lord and Savior.

Nor shall we fail to perform, as Gen. Washington declared, our "duty calling us devoutly to express our grateful acknowledgements to God for the manifold blessings he has granted us." Our duty to worship God and defend the Constitution against its *domestic* enemies doesn't end when we put on a uniform; it only begins. If the Constitution protects anybody's rights, it first protects our soldiers and sailors who sacrifice to uphold religious liberty.

DoD Inspector General Claude M. Kicklighter receives public complaints on his toll-free hotline, 1-800-424-9098, and on his [website](#). Maybe somebody should file a complaint about him to members of Congress requesting an investigation into Kicklighter's persecution of Christian officers.

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Gordon James Klingenschmitt is a former Navy chaplain who sacrificed his career to help change national policy, allowing military chaplains to publicly pray "in Jesus' name" – even in uniform. He continues his fight to be reinstated. Klingenschmitt is available to speak and can be reached via e-mail. He encourages readers to sign his petition to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.
