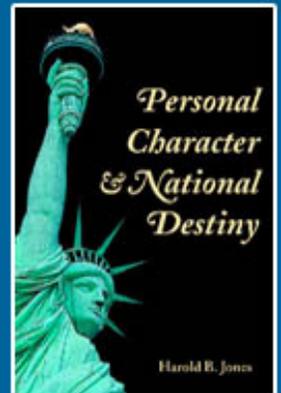


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## PERSONAL CHARACTER & NATIONAL DESTINY



Harold B. Jones, Ph.D.

Seeking a scapegoat to explain national disasters is the opposite of seeing the strong correlation between individual responsibility and national prosperity.



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## Navy prayer rule ignites a constitutional debate

By Eric Pfeiffer

The Washington Times

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WASHINGTON -- A new Navy policy that encourages chaplains to use only "nonsectarian" language outside of divine services has prompted criticism that regulating prayer services violates the chaplains' First Amendment rights.

Under new rules signed by Secretary of the Navy Donald C. Winter, chaplains of all faiths in the Navy are asked to consider the views of their audience before invoking specific religious beliefs in prayer.

"I'm very disappointed with the secretary of the Navy," said Navy chaplain Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt. "He's doing the opposite of what President Bush wants."

Navy spokesman Lt. William Marks says Lt. Klingenschmitt has exaggerated the policy's reach.

"The only thing we ask is that chaplains be inclusive of the people in their audience," Lt. Marks said.

"We've never said they can't invoke Jesus in their prayers. You aren't going to get into trouble for that."

Lt. Klingenschmitt is urging Mr. Bush to sign an executive order to allow military chaplains to pray according to their individual faith tradition. He said that if the president decides not to sign such an order, he might sue the Navy.

The Navy policy appears to be similar to that of the Air Force, which reads, "nondenominational, inclusive prayer or a moment of silence may be appropriate for military ceremonies."

The rule change completes an evolution of the Navy's official policy toward religious language.

In 1998, former Chief of Navy Chaplains Byron Holderby submitted a "memo of suggestion" that chaplains who wish to use sectarian language withdraw from events such as evening prayer services aboard Navy ships.

On Feb. 21, Mr. Winter quietly signed the regulation making the suggestion official Navy policy.

Yesterday, Lt. Klingenschmitt filed a "formal whistleblower complaint" against

Mr. Winter and Chief of Navy Chaplains Rear Adm. Louis V. Iasiello.

The complaint was sent to Senate Armed Services Committee members Hillary Rodham Clinton, New York Democrat, and James M. Inhofe, Oklahoma Republican. Lt. Klingenschmitt, a New York native, says Mrs. Clinton has already written a letter to the Navy on his behalf.

Reps. Thomas M. Reynolds, New York Republican, and Walter B. Jones, North Carolina Republican, received copies of the complaint as well.

"We have been working on Chaplain Klingenschmitt's behalf since last May," Reynolds spokesman L.D. Platt said. "The congressman is not satisfied so far with what the Navy has come back with."

Mr. Reynolds is the chaplain's congressman.

Mr. Jones, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, told The Washington Times this week that his office has been working with the office of panel Chairman Duncan Hunter, California Republican, to try to rectify the situation.

"Mr. Hunter wants to help us with this issue," Mr. Jones said.

He also said aides are working on language, which he hopes Mr. Hunter will present to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld in an effort to resolve the problem administratively.

Mr. Jones said he won't give up on the issue.

"We're talking about the First Amendment rights of all chaplains."

In summer 2004, an optional worship service performed by Lt. Klingenschmitt, described as a "Christian memorial service," on the USS Anzio reportedly offended a minority of those in attendance.

"There are 350 men on my ship. Fifty attended the service -- including wives and family, about 80 total," Lt. Klingenschmitt said.

After complaints from some in attendance, Lt. Klingenschmitt received a "poor fitness" mark on his permanent record which he is fighting to have removed.

"They did a survey of the ship afterwards, and 84 percent of the crew said they believe the chaplain cares for all denominations," Lt. Klingenschmitt said. "Even though some people complained, I figured I had an 84 percent approval rating."

•*Rowan Scarborough and Amy Fagan contributed to this report.*



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