

## The Birmingham News

### Moore joins Navy chaplain in protest

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WASHINGTON - Roy Moore joined a Navy chaplain Thursday in protesting a Pentagon policy they believe prohibits clergy in the military from using sectarian prayer in military events that are not religious services.

"We've got to recognize that the law does not forbid our chaplains in the military, in the Air Force, in the Navy, from praying in the name of Jesus. Indeed, it contradicts our entire history and our law and it should be stopped and this president is responsible if it is not," Moore said in a news conference on Pennsylvania Avenue outside the White House.

Moore, who lost his job as chief justice of Alabama after disobeying a court order, appeared with Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt, who himself disobeyed an order to not appear at his news conference in his Navy uniform.

Klingenschmitt says a Navy policy violates his First Amendment rights by prohibiting him from reciting Christian prayer at non-religious events. To make his point, Klingenschmitt, wearing his uniform with a stole around his neck, specifically invoked Jesus Christ in prayer during the news conference, and invited reprimand.

"Chaplain Klingenschmitt fully expects the Navy to punish him, as they properly should do, if they intend to enforce their own rules," said the Rev. Rob Schenck, who spoke on the chaplain's behalf. Later, Klingenschmitt changed into civilian clothes and a clerical collar and personally criticized the policy.

Moore, a Republican candidate for governor of Alabama, argued that Klingenschmitt is morally bound to pray according to his specific faith and break any rules or orders that say otherwise.

"You do not follow unlawful orders," said Moore, a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and veteran of the Vietnam War. Individual members of the military are capable of determining which orders are unlawful, Moore said, and they "must" disobey them.

The section of the U.S. Code regarding divine or religious services says a military chaplain "may conduct public worship according to the manner and forms of the church of which he is a member."

But the controversy is over non-religious events, such as promotion ceremonies, where a chaplain would be asked to deliver a non-sectarian prayer.

Chaplains "must be willing to function in a pluralistic environment in the military, where diverse religious traditions exist side-by-side with tolerance and respect," according to a Feb. 21 policy from the secretary of the Navy.

### **The Navy's view:**

"There is nothing in this policy that strictly forbids praying to Jesus. It's just not in there. It is fair to say that we ask they be inclusive," Navy spokesman Lt. William Marks said.

Klingenschmitt is an active-duty chaplain at the Naval Air Station in Norfolk, Va., and took a vacation day to hold in his news conference. Moore flew to Washington on a private plane provided by Barry Conner, a homebuilder from Gainesville, Ga., and Moore supporter, according to Rich Hobson, president of the Foundation for Moral Law Inc. in Montgomery.

He said the event was not related to his race for governor. He was planning to meet Thursday with U.S. Reps. Walter Jones, R-N.C., and Robert Aderholt, R-Haleyville.

Moore in February wrote a letter to President Bush asking that he stop "this unwarranted and unlawful attack" on military chaplains. "We're standing up for one of the most basic rights that's ever existed in this country, the right to worship God according to the dictates of our conscience," Moore said.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said last month that he was not familiar with Klingenschmitt's case but that "we believe it's important to value the contributions of our military chaplains that they provide to our men and women in uniform

"Our men and women in uniform ought to be able to express their religion freely," he said. "And that's what our view is, and that's what we're committed to."

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