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Navy Chaplain Dismissed From Service

By Matt Reed

Associated Press Writer

March 1, 2007

CBNNews.com - RICHMOND, Va. (AP) - A Navy chaplain said Thursday he was dismissed from service following his public protest of the branch's policy on nondenominational prayer.

The Navy had sought to dismiss Lt. Gordon Klingenschmitt since a military jury in September said he had disobeyed a superior officer's order for wearing his uniform to a political protest at the White House in March 2006.

Klingenschmitt had argued that he was allowed to wear his uniform if conducting a "bona fide worship service." He said he believes he was punished for making a political speech in uniform because he prayed in Jesus' name.

William Farley, Klingenschmitt's attorney, said the Navy's decision violated his client's constitutional right to practice his religion.

In December 2005, Klingenschmitt went on an 18-day hunger strike in front of the White House over the right to invoke Jesus' name.

A federal appeals court ruling on Tuesday lifted an injunction and paved the way for the Navy to discharge Klingenschmitt.

Klingenschmitt said he would continue a federal lawsuit against the Navy as a civilian and try to get reinstated. He said he is pursuing a doctorate in theology at Regent University in Virginia Beach and that he and his family have moved into student housing.

"This has ended my 16-year career as an officer," Klingenschmitt said. "I lost a million-dollar pension. My family has been evicted from military housing."

Klingenschmitt, a priest in the Evangelical Episcopal Church, had served as a chaplain at Naval Station Norfolk for the last two years. Telephone messages left after business hours at the station were not returned.




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