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CHAPLAIN ALLIANCE FOR RELIGIOUS LIBERTY
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Chaplains to Air Force: Do not deny religious freedom to servicemen and women

Air Force commander removes religious article from Ohio base newsletter

WASHINGTON – The Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty sent a [letter](#) to the Air Force Monday after it censored an article by one of its servicemen in a Ohio base newsletter because it discussed religion.

“The Air Force’s action sends a clear message to service members everywhere: the Air Force does not tolerate public expressions of religion,” said Chaplain (COL) Ron Crews, USA retired, executive director of Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty. “These actions violate the National Defense Authorization Act and the First Amendment of our Constitution.”

Commander of the 180th Fighter Wing of the Ohio Air National Guard Col. Craig Baker removed an article written by one of his subordinate commanders which appeared in the Ohio base’s September 2014 newsletter of *The Stinger*, after receiving a complaint. In the article, “[A Spiritual Journey as a Commander](#),” Col. Florencio Marquinez discusses his faith and how it sustained him throughout his 28-year military career.

“The First Amendment protects airmen and even commanders in their exercise of free speech and religion, in both their religious beliefs and their individual expression of those beliefs,” the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty letter explains. “The Ohio National Guard is not free to censor the protected speech of one of its members based on the content of that speech. Nor can it intentionally burden a member’s exercise of religion, which the Supreme Court has defined to include ‘belief and profession,’ as well as actions such as ‘proselytizing.’”

“We call on Col. Baker to reverse his decision to not allow all airmen and officers to express their religious beliefs,” Crews added. “We hope this will be the last time the Air Force gives in to any demand that tramples the religious freedom of the men and women who serve this country.”

The Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty is an organization of chaplain endorsers, the faith groups that provide chaplains for the U.S. military and other agencies needing chaplains. The endorsers in the Chaplain Alliance speak for more than 2,600 chaplains serving the Armed Forces.

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