



Fall 2015 - Issue 2

PURSUING a nation where all chaplains, and those whom they serve, freely exercise their God-given and constitutionally protected religious liberties without fear of reprisal.

On CALL

One of the Greatest Threats to Religious Liberty Exists within Our Own Military

The following excerpt is from a post by Chaplain Alliance For Religious Liberty Executive Director CH (COL) Ron Crews, USA (Ret.) featured on the blog of the Religious Freedom Project at Georgetown University's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, *Cornerstone | A Conversation On Religious Freedom And Its Social Implications*.

His post was in response to *Cornerstone's* ongoing discussion of Religious Freedom In The US Military.

You can read the post in its entirety at berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu

Take the case of Monifa Sterling, a Marine currently awaiting word on the appeal of her court-martial. She had printed out small strips of paper with her favorite scripture paraphrased on it: "No weapon formed against me shall prosper" (Isaiah 54:17). She posted them at her Camp Lejeune work station in three places (she said it was one for each part of the Holy Trinity) for daily inspiration and devotion.

Though other Marines had similarly decorated their workspaces with personal effects, only Monifa was asked by her superior to remove her papers. When Monifa asserted that she had the freedom under the First Amendment to express herself in that way, her superior took them

down. When Monifa reposted her papers, she found herself charged with criminal offenses and brought before a panel for trial by court-martial.

Monifa was found guilty and given a bad-conduct discharge. She will never get the veterans benefits she earned, and her discharge will be a "Scarlet Letter" on her record for life. She lost her appeal to the Navy-Marine Corps Court of Appeals. In fact, that court went so far as to find that posting those scripture verses was not an exercise of religion. She now awaits word on her appeal to the highest military court, the Court of Appeals for the Armed Forces.

Did you know?

Chaplain Alliance (CALL) speaks on behalf of over half of the nation's uniformed chaplains. CALL exists to ensure that chaplains can defend and provide for the freedom of religion and conscience that the Constitution guarantees all chaplains and those whom they serve.



In The News:

- October 2015: The commanding officer at Marine Corps Base Hawaii has issued a statement announcing that a sign which reads “God bless the military, their families, and the civilians who work with them” will remain on the base without alteration. The decision comes after Col. Sean Killeen received a letter from the Military Religious Freedom Foundation that demanded the sign’s removal or relocation to an area near a chapel.

- September 2015: Top Navy officials have quashed an effort by a commander at the Nuclear Power Training Command in South Carolina to fire a chaplain. Capt. J.R. Fahs relieved Lt. Cmdr. Chaplain Wes Modder from duty allegedly because he offered counseling on sexuality consistent with his Christian faith.

Fahs recommended that Modder be “detached for cause” after some service members who went to the chaplain filed a complaint against him for offering counsel they didn’t agree with but was nonetheless consistent with the chaplain’s faith. Navy Personnel Command rejected the recommendation, saying that the “evidence of substandard performance in this case does not meet the standard of gross negligence or complete disregard for duty” that Navy rules require for a detachment for cause.

- July 2015: Some activists have called for the ouster of chaplains from the military in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision on marriage. The calls specifically target chaplains who maintain a sincerely held religious belief that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman.



Chaplain Ministers To Student Aviators And Instructors – From The Cockpit Of A T-57B Helicopter

Naval Air Station Whiting Field, Florida — CBAmerica Chaplain (LT) Ray Fondren, USN, a former U.S. Marine line officer, was assigned to NAS Whiting Field in Milton, Florida to minister to thousands of student aviators from all U.S. flying branches and international allied pilots, but the assignment has also afforded him a unique opportunity.

Chaplain Fondren has been granted “student aviator status” to fly with students and instructors to help him “identify” with the crews. He attends briefings to pick up some foundational knowledge of the functional operations of helicopters and performs pre-flight checks with the crew, but his experience isn’t limited to just the passenger seat. CH Fondren got to participate in lift off, landing and hovering the helicopter himself!

However, as he wrote in a “Leader Letter,” “it took all of two seconds of trying to hover before there was too much left pedal, too much forward cyclic and too much collective compensation which resulted in the helicopter IMMEDIATELY doing the Funky Chicken. It was at that exact moment that I heard a voice say “I Have Controls” as the Helicopter began to spin out of control!”

Our student aviator and his crew are safe and sound thanks to the confident and experienced Instructor Pilots aboard, and CH Fondren and his Religious Ministry Team are always available to help servicemen and women successfully navigate the trials and travails of military life, not just at Whiting Field Chapel but in the air, on land, at sea, and wherever our service members are called to serve our country.

*Contact the On CALL Editor for fact checking all stories in this newsletter:
info@chaplainalliance.org*