



MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
f o u n d a t i o n

Wednesday, April 22, 2015

CAPT W. Douglas Pfeifle  
Recruit Training Command  
3355 Illinois Street  
Great Lakes, IL 60088

ATTN: CAPT W. DOUGLAS PFEIFLE  
SUBJECT: UNCONSTITUTIONAL ELIMINATION OF RELIGIOUS SUPPORT PROGRAMS

It has been brought to the attention of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) that under your command the decision has been made to eliminate religious support programs for more than **250** recruits passing through your organization each cycle. The long-standing and highly valued programs which have been maliciously taken from your recruits include Unitarian Universalist, Earth Centered, Buddhist, Bahai, Christian Science, and Church of Christ. The MRFF represents more than 41,000 clients from all branches of service in the US Military and have been acting on the behalf of clients in similar draconian situations for a decade. In that time we have NEVER seen a commander authorize such a sweeping abuse of the religious freedoms of those under their leadership.

Our clients have noted that the decision to restrict the religious freedom of your subordinates originated at the direction of Chaplain (CDR) Ted L. Williams. Further, we have been informed that this is not the first time he has solicited a commander of RTC to make such an action, however you are the first commander to authorize this unnecessary, nefarious action. While Chaplain Williams is in a position to advise you on matters of religious accommodation, *you* Sir are the commanding officer here and are ultimately responsible for the care of your subordinates.

OPNAVINST 1730.1E, section 4 para a:

Religious ministry in the Navy provides for the free exercise of religion; attends to the sacred, spiritual, and moral aspects of life; and serves to enhance the resilience of Service members, civilians and their families, who form the foundation of the Navy's readiness. Religious ministry is entrusted to Navy chaplains and delivered under the authority of commanders and commanding officers.

Our clients have also informed us that Chaplain Williams has advised that utilization of outside volunteer lay leaders for religious services is in violation of Navy regulations as justification for stripping away the rights of free-exercise of religion of your subordinates. After having my team review the regulations and further considering them myself I have found that this is simply not true as you may see for yourself:

OPNAVINST 1730.1E 5.1

I. Volunteers. Uniformed Service members and civilians approved by the commander to support the CRP on a voluntary basis. Volunteers shall comply with reference (m).

Reference (m) from above: OPNAVINST 5380.1B 4.c.2

c. This instruction does not apply to:

(2) Volunteers who donate their services to entities that are non-Navy activities (including public, private, or commercial organizations, or contractors for the Government) on military installations or with military units. This is true even when volunteer services to non-Navy activities are in direct support of a program providing services to members of the Navy and their families, even if such voluntary services are otherwise permissible.

In this situation, the allowance of those in your command to practice their religion with the support of donated services from outside volunteers is entirely at your discretion as none of the prohibitive regulations apply. Having volunteers support the spiritual welfare of your sailors violates no regulations whatsoever.

Now that this fact has been established, we must ask, what possible justification could you have for denying these services to those under your command? Is it inconvenient to allow them to worship as they see fit? While you may not be aware, one of the primary reasons that these programs were instituted at RTC more than a decade ago was to attempt to combat the increasing number of suicides. By offering sailors of all faith groups an opportunity to commune with like-minded individuals and receive religious counseling from volunteers, the resiliency of sailors under RTC was improved. Today the hundreds of affected sailors want to know why it is that they will no longer be allowed to practice their religion. They want to know why that one refuge which has bolstered them so much during this trying time is being swept out from under them. I would like to know as well, and soon the American people will be asking you the same question. Before it gets to that, I challenge you to hold a formation and look your subordinates in the eyes while telling them that no Buddhist, no Unitarian Universalist, no Earth Centered Spiritualist, no member of the Church of Christ, and no other member of these now disenfranchised groups will be afforded their constitutionally guaranteed rights to practice their religion.

We demand to know why you are essentially raping our 250 Navy recruit clients' constitutionally guaranteed civil rights of free exercise to worship in the time, place and manner which is universally provided to accommodate the "officially accepted chosen religious faith" of their Navy recruit colleagues. We demand that you remediate this repugnant and illicit behavior immediately.

We fully expect to expeditiously hear from you or your office in the next 24 hours to work together to resolve this abysmal situation.

Sincerely,



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Military Religious Freedom Foundation  
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CC:

The Honorable Ashton Carter, United States Secretary of Defense  
General Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff  
The Honorable Ray Mabus, United States Secretary of the Navy  
Admiral Jonathan Greenert, Chief of Naval Operations  
Randal G. Mathis, Mathis & Donheiser P.C. – MRFF Lead Trial Counsel