



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

Thursday, April 17, 2014

The Honorable Chuck Hagel
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Hagel:

Sir, I have something very disturbing and unfortunate to report to you which, respectfully, demands your immediate review, remediation, and investigation.

It has come to the attention of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation ([MRFF](#)) that the upcoming annual National Day of Prayer (NDP) event, scheduled to be held on Thursday, May 1, 2014, at the United States Congress' Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill, is to specifically include several Department of Defense (DoD) activities which are plagued with egregiously clear violations of foundational DoD regulations and instructions.

According to the [website](#) of the "National Day of Prayer Task Force" (NDP Task Force), the sectarian, fundamentalist Christian, private religious organization that runs this extraordinarily high-profile NDP event, a Joint Armed Forces Color Guard, and a performance by a Military Brass Quintet are all fully confirmed to participate in this event.

Just so you know the critical distinction, this "NDP Task Force" is not at all the same thing as the aforementioned "NDP." As a matter of fact, this NDP Task Force event is often mistaken for the *actual* NDP [established years ago](#) by President Truman. That particular day was intended to be a day for Americans of ALL religions to join together, not a day for one fundamentalist Christian organization to promote their rapaciously exclusivist religion as the quasi-official religion of the nation -- not to mention conveying this utterly false perception of the United States of America as a "Christian nation" to the world by broadcasting the event internationally.

The confusion and impression that the NDP Task Force event run by Shirley Dobson (wife of [Focus on the Family](#) head James Dobson) is the official government observance of the day is no doubt intentional. Indeed, the Dobson Task Force disingenuously presents itself in such a way as to appear to be an officially sanctioned entity running an officially sanctioned government event.

Additionally, an active duty U.S. Army chaplain, Lt. Col. Wayne Brittan, is also fully confirmed and scheduled to participate.

Why is MRFF objecting to these matters so effusively on behalf of its over 37,000 active duty sailor, soldier, marine, airmen and veteran American military clients, approximately 96% of whom are devout practitioners of the Christian faith themselves?

Mr. Secretary, sir, please let me be clear. The planned participation by uniformed U.S. military personnel in this private fundamentalist Christian religious event, run by a non-federal entity, is an unequivocally clear violation of the plethora of DoD regulations and instructions listed below. So, too, is the very public appearance of an active duty U.S. Army chaplain, should he appear as anticipated at this private religious event wearing his U.S. Army uniform, as other U.S. armed forces chaplains have sadly done at past NDP Task Force events.

As of this date, the NDP Task Force has not yet announced its speaker for the "Military Remarks" section of its program. However, if history is any indicator, as it so often is with respect to the NDP Task Force, this year's speaker (just like U.S. Coast Guard Rear Admiral William D. Lee [did last year](#) in his infamously unconstitutional, proselytizing screed of brazen, fundamentalist Christian supremacy and exceptionalism) will presumably be an active duty U.S. Military officer who will most assuredly appear in his/her official uniform, in shockingly blatant and defiant violation of the same DoD regulations and instructions listed below:

1. Joint Ethics Regulation (DoD 5500.7-R) regarding the strictly prohibited DoD endorsement of any non-federal entity, such as the NDP Task Force (Section 3-209);
2. DoD Instruction 5410.19, Section 6.7.1, which, likewise, prohibits DoD endorsement of any non-federal entity, such as the NDP Task Force;
3. DoD Instruction 5410.19, Section 6.7.2, which prohibits the providing of a selective benefit or preferential treatment by the DoD to any non-federal entity, such as the NDP Task Force.

Any U.S. military participation in this event is a crystal clear violation of the above regulations and instructions for the simple reason that the NDP Task Force is incontrovertibly a non-federal entity, and cannot, therefore, be endorsed by or provided a selective benefit by the U.S. Military.

There is more, Mr. Secretary, and it is quite shocking. To wit, this May 1st National Day of Prayer event is despicably discriminatory as the NDP Task Force comprehensively and quite unapologetically bars and excludes any non-Christians from participation in the running of its events. In fact, all NDP Task Force volunteers are required to provide on their applications their "testimony" of their "personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

Furthermore, the National Day of Prayer website (<http://nationaldayofprayer.org/about/theme-and-verse/>) gives the following description of the event's purpose: *"Our theme for 2014 is One Voice, United in Prayer, emphasizing the need for individuals, corporately and individually, to place their faith in the unfailing character of their Creator, who is sovereign over all governments, authorities, and men. To further highlight our theme, we've chosen Romans 15:6 as our Scripture for this year: 'So that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'"*

The only Jews permitted to participate in the NDP Task Force's so-called "Judeo-Christian" events are [Messianic Jews](#) -- Jews who have personally accepted Jesus Christ as their lord, savior, and messiah, and share the NDP Task Force's goal of converting all disbelievers by proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to their fellow Jews and people of all other non-fundamentalist Christian religions.

As stated in DoD Directive 5410.18, Section 4.2.4.2, *"Providing support at events sponsored by non-Federal entities by Military Service members in uniform performing in a military band, choral group, or portion*

thereof, is particularly inappropriate because they convey in that context a strong visual appearance of a DoD endorsement of the non-Federal entity, its event, or its goals."

The NDP Task Force, of course, has every right as a proselytizing private Christian religious organization to organize exclusively Christian National Day of Prayer events. Likewise, it is free to prohibit the participation of non-Christians in such events. In stark contrast, however, the U.S. military absolutely cannot endorse these searingly sectarian events by its public participation in them. Indeed, such prospective DoD participation would categorically convey "a strong visual appearance of a DoD endorsement of the non-Federal entity, its event, or its goals," (see DoD Directive 5410.18, Section 4.2.4.2 immediately above); the very same goals which, in the case of the NDP Task Force, are the universally and overtly discriminatory factional religious goals of fundamentalist Christian triumphalism.

Therefore, Mr. Secretary, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation hereby respectfully demands forthwith that all participation by uniformed U.S. Military personnel in the NDP Task Force's National Day of Prayer event at the United States Congress' Cannon House Office Building on Thursday, May 1, 2014 be immediately cancelled (if already scheduled) or strictly prohibited (in the case of the yet to be announced "Military Remarks" speaker).

Further, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation respectfully demands that you aggressively investigate and appropriately punish any of the individuals and/or organizations that would have allowed for uniformed personnel to participate in this sectarian spectacle.

Very sincerely,



Michael L. "Mikey" Weinstein, Esq.
Founder and President
Military Religious Freedom Foundation

CC:

President Barack Obama
John M. McHugh - Secretary of the Army
Ray Mabus - Secretary of the Navy
Deborah Lee James - Secretary of the Air Force
General Martin E. Dempsey - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Admiral James A. Winnefeld Jr. - Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
General Raymond T. Odierno - Chief of Staff of the United States Army
Admiral Jonathan W. Greenert - Chief of Naval Operations
General Mark A. Welsh III - Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force
General James F. Amos - Commandant of the Marine Corps
Randal G. Mathis, Mathis & Donheiser P.C. - MRFF Lead Trial Counsel