

GUIDELINES. THESE GUIDELINES ADDRESS SOME KEY AREAS: RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION; PUBLIC PRAYER OUTSIDE OF VOLUNTARY WORSHIP SETTINGS; INDIVIDUAL SHARING OF RELIGIOUS FAITH IN THE MILITARY CONTEXT; THE CHAPLAIN SERVICE; EMAIL AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS; AND, GOOD ORDER AND DISCIPLINE. THEY DO NOT PROVIDE ALL THE ANSWERS. RESOLUTION OF PARTICULAR ISSUES WILL BE FACT-SPECIFIC, REQUIRE COMMON SENSE, AND WILL OFTEN BENEFIT FROM THE ADVICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL, THE CHAPLAINCY, AND THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE.

A. RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION.

(1) IT IS AIR FORCE POLICY THAT REQUESTS FOR ACCOMMODATION SHOULD BE APPROVED EXCEPT WHEN PRECLUDED BY MILITARY NECESSITY. THEY SHOULD NORMALLY BE APPROVED UNLESS APPROVAL WOULD HAVE AN ADVERSE IMPACT ON MILITARY READINESS, UNIT COHESION, STANDARDS, OR DISCIPLINE. WHEN REQUESTS ARE PRECLUDED BY MILITARY NECESSITY, COMMANDERS AND SUPERVISORS SHOULD SEEK REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES. COMMANDERS AND SUPERVISORS AT ALL LEVELS SHOULD ENSURE THAT REQUESTS FOR RELIGIOUS ACCOMODATION ARE DEALT WITH AS FAIRLY AS PRACTICABLE THROUGHOUT THEIR ORGANIZATIONS.

(2) BASIC GUIDANCE FOR RELIGIOUS ACCOMODATION IN MANY AREAS, INCLUDING WORSHIP SERVICES, HOLY DAYS, SABBATH OBSERVANCES, DIETARY REQUIREMENTS, MEDICAL ISSUES, AND APPAREL, IS INCLUDED IN DOD DIRECTIVE 1300.17. THIS GUIDANCE IS IMPLEMENTED THROUGH AF INSTRUCTIONS, INCLUDING AFI 36-2706, CHAPTER 8; AFI 36-2903, TABLES 2.6 AND 2.9; AND AFJI 48-110, PARA 13. COMMANDERS AND SUPERVISORS SHOULD BECOME THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH THESE POLICIES, AND INCLUDE THEM IN STAFF AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING.

(3) COMMANDERS CANNOT ANTICIPATE EVERY REQUEST FOR ACCOMMODATION, BUT, WHERE PRACTICABLE, AVOIDING SCHEDULING CONFLICTS WITH MAJOR RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE DAYS CAN BUILD UNIT CONFIDENCE IN LEADERSHIP AND ENHANCE UNIT EFFECTIVENESS.

(4) ABOVE ALL, COMMANDERS MUST ENSURE THAT THEY CREATE A CLIMATE WHERE INDIVIDUALS BELIEVE THAT REQUESTS FOR ACCOMMODATION ARE WELCOMED AND WILL BE FAIRLY CONSIDERED.

B. PUBLIC PRAYER OUTSIDE OF VOLUNTARY WORSHIP SETTINGS.

(1) PUBLIC PRAYER SHOULD NOT USUALLY BE INCLUDED IN OFFICIAL SETTINGS SUCH AS STAFF MEETINGS, OFFICE MEETINGS, CLASSES, OR OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED ACTIVITIES SUCH AS SPORTS EVENTS OR PRACTICE SESSIONS.

(2) COMMON SENSE--AND MUTUAL RESPECT--SHOULD ALWAYS BE APPLIED AND EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES MAY DRIVE EXCEPTIONS. (NOTE: For example, there may be extraordinary circumstances where the potential benefits for the welfare of the command outweigh the potential of causing discomfort. These circumstances might include mass casualties, preparation for imminent combat, and natural disasters.)

(3) CONSISTENT WITH LONG-STANDING MILITARY TRADITION, A BRIEF NON-SECTARIAN PRAYER MAY BE INCLUDED IN NON-ROUTINE MILITARY CEREMONIES OR EVENTS OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE, SUCH AS A CHANGE-OF-COMMAND, PROMOTION CEREMONIES OR SIGNIFICANT CELEBRATIONS, WHERE THE PURPOSE OF THE PRAYER IS TO ADD A HEIGHTENED SENSE OF SERIOUSNESS OR SOLEMNITY, NOT TO ADVANCE SPECIFIC RELIGIOUS BELIEFS. MILITARY CHAPLAINS ARE TRAINED TO DEAL WITH SUCH EVENTS.

(4) IN ADDITION, A MOMENT OF SILENCE FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION DOES NOT REQUIRE THE SAME CONSIDERATIONS AS PUBLIC PRAYER AND MAY BE APPROPRIATE IN OFFICIAL SETTINGS.

C. INDIVIDUAL SHARING OF RELIGIOUS FAITH.

(1) IN OFFICIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, PARTICULARLY SITUATIONS WHERE SUPERIOR/SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS ARE INVOLVED, INDIVIDUALS NEED TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE POTENTIAL THAT PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS MAY APPEAR TO BE OFFICIAL EXPRESSIONS. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE WHEN SUBORDINATES ARE PRESENT AS PART OF THEIR OFFICIAL DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS.

(2) THE MORE SENIOR THE INDIVIDUAL, THE MORE LIKELY THAT PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS MAY BE PERCEIVED TO BE OFFICIAL STATEMENTS. THE MORE SENIOR THE LEADER, THE MORE RESPONSIBILITY HE OR SHE HAS TO SEND THE MESSAGE THAT WE ARE A TEAM BASED ON TRUST, RESPECT, AND A COMMON MISSION TO DEFEND OUR NATION AND THAT WHAT IS EXPECTED OF ALL OUR PERSONNEL IS TO LIVE UP TO OUR OATHS, EMBRACE OUR SHARED AIR FORCE CORE VALUES, AND DO OUR DUTY.

(3) NOTHING IN THIS GUIDANCE SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD TO LIMIT VOLUNTARY, PEER TO PEER DISCUSSIONS.

D. THE CHAPLAIN SERVICE.

(1) AIR FORCE COMMANDERS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO ENSURE THAT THE PEOPLE UNDER THEIR AUTHORITY HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO OBTAIN SPIRITUAL CARE. CHAPLAINS ASSIST COMMANDERS IN MEETING THIS RESPONSIBILITY.

(2) CHAPLAINS ARE COMMISSIONED TO PROVIDE MINISTRY TO THOSE OF THEIR OWN FAITHS, TO FACILITATE MINISTRY TO THOSE OF OTHER FAITHS, AND TO PROVIDE CARE FOR ALL SERVICE MEMBERS, INCLUDING THOSE WHO CLAIM NO RELIGIOUS FAITH. IN THESE VARIOUS ROLES, THEY SHOULD RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHERS TO THEIR OWN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO HOLD NO BELIEFS. THEY MUST BE AS SENSITIVE TO THOSE WHO DO NOT WELCOME OFFERINGS OF FAITH, AS THEY ARE GENEROUS IN SHARING THEIR FAITH WITH THOSE WHO DO. IN ADDITION, THEY MUST REMAIN SENSITIVE TO THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERIOR RANK, AND THEY SHOULD RESPECT PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS WHERE MANDATORY PARTICIPATION MAY MAKE EXPRESSIONS OF RELIGIOUS FAITH INAPPROPRIATE.

(3) CHAPLAIN SERVICE GUIDANCE INCLUDES AFPD 52-1 AND AFI 52-101.

E. EMAIL AND SIMILAR COMMUNICATIONS.

(1) GENERAL RULES FOR USE OF GOVERNMENT COMPUTERS APPLY TO RELIGIOUS MATTERS AS THEY DO FOR OTHER MATTERS IAW AFI 33-119, AFI 33-129, AND 33-112.

(2) INDIVIDUALS WILL TAKE THESE GUIDELINES INTO ACCOUNT IN THEIR OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS. AS IN OTHER AREAS OF EXPRESSION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO AVOID THE REASONABLE PERCEPTION THAT ANY OFFICIAL E-MAIL OR COMPUTER POSTING IMPLIES THAT THE AIR FORCE SUPPORTS ANY ONE RELIGION OVER OTHER RELIGIONS, OR THE IDEA OF RELIGION OVER THE CHOICE OF NO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION.

F. GOOD ORDER AND DISCIPLINE.

NOTHING IN THESE GUIDELINES RELIEVES COMMANDERS OF THE RESPONSIBILITY TO MAINTAIN GOOD ORDER AND DISCIPLINE IN THEIR COMMANDS.