

July 2011

Military's "Unofficial Policy" Prohibiting Leader-Led Prayers & Chaplains from Praying in Jesus' Name

A new effort has appeared on the horizon, both from within the Obama Administration, particularly in the Pentagon, and from well-funded outside groups like the ACLU, to forbid any unit-led prayers by military commanders and by imposing an **"unofficial policy"** against praying in the name of Jesus Christ or in Jesus' name by chaplains.

First Principles spent four years from 2001-2005 defending the right of cadets to pray at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI). That case went to an *en banc* hearing before the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond Virginia which deadlocked 6-6. The case went on to the supreme Court, which declined to hear the case formally, but issued a remarkable and very unusual sixteen page opinion that concluded by declaring, **"there was no injunction blocking prayer at the Virginia Military Institute."** Our brief included an official appendix with an extensive historical background of Christian prayer in the United States Military (1643-1986). And most importantly, **VMI is still praying!**



The Pentagon, June 2011
Washington D.C.

During our extensive research for the VMI case, we uncovered in the Library of Congress and other libraries, 67 military prayer books from as early as 1643 to 1986, printed and distributed at government expense. These official American military prayer books were distributed to U.S. fighting forces largely during times of war and national crisis, with a significant majority of the prayers concluding in Jesus' name.

A retired Chaplain and friend, who lives in South Carolina confirmed the **"unofficial policy"** forbidding prayer in Jesus name among chaplains at Fort Jackson, South Carolina where Army, Navy and Air Force chaplains are trained. We plan to meet at Ft. Jackson in August of this year with chaplains who are looking for guidance and would like to be able to know how to use these historic prayers prayed by some of our nation's greatest military heroes in Jesus' name.

The only official document we have been able to find placing strict limitations on leader or chaplain led prayer is *The Army Lawyer* from the Headquarters of the Department of the

Army, November 1998. It specifically states “these prayers should not reference divinity by any sectarian name (Jesus, Allah) but rather use ‘generic’ terms.”

The second principles of the Armed Forces enacted by Congress November 1775, call for prayer and Divine services at least twice a day.

ART. 2. “The Commanders of the ships of the Thirteen United Colonies are to take care that divine service be performed twice a day on board, and a sermon preached on Sundays, unless bad weather or other extraordinary accidents prevent it.”

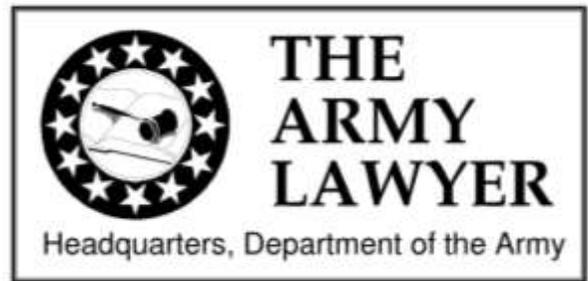
It remains the duty of all public officials to ensure that American Military Forces, including Service Academies, both state and federal, fully prepare future officers for the rigor and peril of combat – which must always include frequent chaplain and/or leader-led unit prayer. America’s Declaration of Independence recognizes the “Creator” as the source of law and liberty as “the Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” established a fixed standard, a higher discipline – a battle-tested standard – to restore and uphold against years of disturbing reports of multiple military crises arising from moral relativism and undemocratic changes contrary to America’s first military principles of virtue, honor, patriotism and subordination, called “Exemplary Conduct.”

Daily prayer recalls to all military and civilian leaders that, as John Adams said, “Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.” This is not the time to leave the field to “domestic enemies” who would have the temerity to urge Congress to force our soldiers to fight “without a prayer”. Leader-led military unit prayer remains an unbroken historic military necessity throughout American history and continues as essential to combat effectiveness and training of future military leaders for the 21st century.

“Prayer for the common good and acknowledgement of Divine Providence is a central, official and historical tenet of the combat leadership preparation of the American Military, particularly officer training in times of national peril or war.”

Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, USN

To learn more about leader and chaplain led prayer, the importance of prayer in America’s Armed Forces or to support First Principles efforts visit: www.firstprinciplespress.org or mail your donation to First Principles Press, P.O. Box 1136, Crestwood, KY 40014. We have recently created a short video presentation on military prayer which can be viewed at the First Principles website under the Multimedia section.



Leader-Led Prayer Prohibited in *The Army Lawyer*

Quoting from *The Army Lawyer*, November 1998, p. 17:

Prayers at ceremonies should be relatively short and non-denominational. These prayers should not reference divinity by any sectarian name (Jesus, Allah) but rather use “generic” terms (Father, Almighty, Source of Goodness).

Commanders should let chaplains give invocations and benedictions. Chaplains are the experts and are the most likely to use the appropriate language. In addition, a soldier is less likely to feel “pressured” by a chaplain than by a line officer who is giving a prayer. If an event is not large enough to merit attendance of a chaplain (for example, a staff meeting), then a prayer is probably not appropriate.

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