



THE DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY GUIDELINES ON RELIGIOUS MINISTRY

Our nation encompasses a diversity of faiths and beliefs that are reflected within our Naval communities. In support of the religious freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States, Department of Defense (DoD) policy requires commanders to accommodate individual religious practices consonant with the best interests of the unit (DoDD 1300.17). For more than 230 years, mutual respect and tolerance have guided Navy policy, doctrine, and practice to recognize the individual rights of members to be observant of their personal faith, religious beliefs, and practices. In the sea services these rights must be balanced with the requirements of military necessity to provide Religious Ministry programs and opportunities.

Commanders shall provide a Command Religious Program (CRP) in support of the religious needs and preferences of members of their commands, eligible family members, and other authorized personnel. The CRP shall be supported with appropriated funds at a level consistent with other personnel programs within Department of the Navy. Other logistical support shall be made available consistent with military needs and resources.

Commanders are advised by chaplains in matters of morale, morals, ethics, and spiritual well-being. Chaplains also serve as the principal advisors to commanders for all issues regarding the planning and conduct of the CRP and the impact of religion on military operations. In providing religious ministry, commanders and chaplains shall strive to avoid activities or statements that suggest the establishment of religion, while still ensuring that free exercise rights are protected for all authorized personnel.

Chaplains are staff officers and as such have all privileges and responsibilities related to their military ranks and status. As religious ministry professionals, chaplains shall provide ministry to those of their own faith, facilitate ministry to those of other faiths, and care for all service members, including those who claim no religious faith. Chaplains shall respect the rights of others to their own religious beliefs, including the right to hold no beliefs. Chaplains shall not be compelled to participate in religious activities inconsistent with their beliefs.

By emphasizing mutual respect, cooperation, and inclusiveness in all aspects of the CRP, commanders and chaplains encourage recognition of values and virtues crucial to military life. When a CRP is planned and executed to take into account the needs of all members of the command in a context-sensitive manner, the CRP provides participants of different faiths the opportunity to practice their own faith and to support others in a mutually beneficial manner. This portion of command responsibility, successfully and thoughtfully implemented, models positive, ethical leadership and provides an example of this nation's rich heritage of strength through diversity.