



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL
1322 PATTERSON AVENUE SE SUITE 3000
WASHINGTON NAVY YARD DC 20374-5066

IN REPLY REFER TO:

5800
Ser 01
October 6, 2010

Mr. Dan Baker & Ms. Annie Laurie Gaylor
Co-Presidents
Freedom From Religion Foundation
P.O. Box 750
Madison, WI 53701

Dear Mr. Baker and Ms. Gaylor:

Thank you for your letter of September 9, 2010, regarding nightly prayer aboard the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72) and other Navy ships. I am responding on behalf of the Secretary of the Navy.

Pursuant to Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 1304.19 (June 11, 2004), military commanders are required to provide comprehensive religious support to all authorized individuals within their area of responsibility. The Navy governs implementation of this requirement primarily through Secretary of the Navy Instructions 1730.7D, Religious Ministry within the Department of the Navy (August 8, 2008) and 1730.8B, Accommodation of Religious Practices (October 2, 2008).

Department of the Navy policy is for commanders to provide command religious programs which support the religious needs of members of the naval service while also avoiding the establishment of religion. Sailors may be required to be present when prayers or other religious elements are included in command functions, but unlike participants involved in most of the judicial cases usually cited in discussion of this topic, the men and women of today's Navy are not compelled to participate.

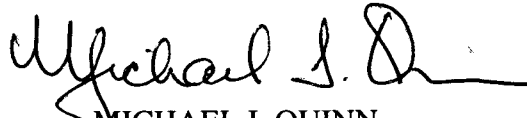
Prayer at sea has been a Navy tradition and custom since the earliest days of our Republic; prayer aboard ship was provided for in the law establishing the U.S. Navy in 1799, and was reinforced by President Thomas Jefferson in Navy Regulations published in 1802. When included in the ship's daily schedule, it connects Sailors to a routine that has been part of seafaring tradition throughout our Nation's history. Any inconvenience resulting from a brief pause in routine operations for evening prayer is minimal at best, and no one is required to recite, bow his or her head or otherwise participate in prayer in any manner other than permitting others to do so if they wish. Considering Navy ships operate while underway at an extremely high tempo, 24-hours per day, and the crew maintains diverse work schedules to maintain that 24-hour operability, the evening prayer permits commanders to safely and efficiently offer religious services to crewmembers who choose to participate in the prayer.

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The Navy's position is that an evening prayer properly balances the commander's duty to provide religious services to crewmembers who desire to freely exercise their religion while at the same time avoiding the establishment of religion.

Thank you for your interest regarding this issue, and for your continued support of the men and women of the United States Navy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael I. Quinn". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

MICHAEL I. QUINN
Captain, JAGC, USN
Assistant Judge Advocate General
for Civil Law