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WORLDNETDAILY EXCLUSIVE

WND AT THE WHITE HOUSE

McClellan skirts chaplain freedom question Despite reports Bush will meet with Rumsfeld on issue of prayer

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By Les Kinsolving
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Despite news reports stating President Bush will meet with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld about the brewing controversy over the freedom of military chaplains to pray in public according to their own faiths, presidential press secretary Scott McClellan today commented only generally on the issue, noting the "important contributions" of armed forces clergy.

The Washington Times reported yesterday a "deal" had been struck between Rep. Walter B. Jones, R-N.C., and the White House wherein the administration would pressure the Pentagon into loosening any policies, like the Navy's, that encourage or require generic prayers when chaplains pray during public events.

The report stated Bush would "take up the issue personally"



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with Rumsfeld.

"With regard to reports of the president meeting with Secretary Rumsfeld, considering the just concluded fast of an Episcopal Navy chaplain, why hasn't the president, as commander in chief, ordered the United States Navy to stop any action whatsoever against Christian chaplains who mention Christ, Jewish chaplains who mention God, and Muslim chaplains who mention Muhammad?" asked WND.

Responded McClellan: "I don't know that I agree with your characterization. I think you ought to look at what the Department has said about this very issue.

"And look at what I said about this just a couple – I think two or three weeks ago. We strongly support the ability of our men and women in uniform to worship as they choose. And we support military chaplains; they provide a lot of important contributions to our men and women in uniform, and those are important contributions."

[As WorldNetDaily reported](#), Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt went without food for 18 days in protest of the Navy's guidelines on prayer.

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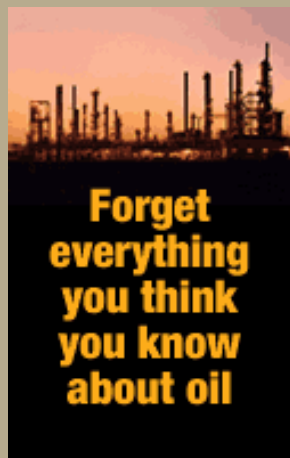
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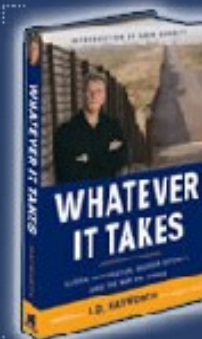
[Les Kinsolving](#) is WorldNetDaily's White House correspondent and a talk-show host for WCBM in Baltimore. His show can be heard on the Internet 8-10 p.m. Eastern each weekday.

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