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**With Carl Limbacher and NewsMax.com Staff**  
*For the story behind the story...*

Tuesday, Feb. 14, 2006 12:24 a.m. EST

### **Air Force Religion Policy Under Attack**

The U.S. Air Force's controversial new policy dealing with religious tolerance is being blasted by a member of Congress and a Navy chaplain who say the policy will ban chaplains from using the name of Jesus when praying at official gatherings.

"I'm very disappointed that they're still trying to censor the content of our prayers," Navy chaplain, Lieutenant Gordon Klingenschmitt told the New York Sun.

According to the Sun, while the new Air Force guidelines issued just last week do not explicitly ban sectarian prayers at military ceremonies, a Jewish chaplain told the Jewish Week newspaper that such prayers would be banned. The rules indicate that it may be appropriate to offer "non-denominational, inclusive prayer, or a moment of silence."

*Story Continues Below*

"To me the word non-denominational is a code word for no Jesus," said Lieutenant Klingenschmitt, an Episcopal priest who the Washington Times reports once mounted a brief hunger strike over the issue at the White House last year. "I have to pray a Muslim, Christian, Jewish prayer at the same time. I don't know how to do that," he complained.

Not only chaplains are upset by the new policy. Rep. Walter Jones, R-N.C., said he too is troubled by such recent incidents where chaplains have been asked not to mention Jesus in public prayers. He added that he has urged Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to set a military-wide policy allowing chaplains to deliver whatever prayers they see fit.

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Asked by the Sun if the Air Force rules should be adopted by the other services, Jones said, "I would hope not."

Rep. Jones, who led a petition drive by 74 members of Congress to allow chaplains to pray as they wish, called the guidelines "a step in the right direction," but also said: "I think more progress can be made in assuring that Christian military chaplains can pray in the name of Jesus Christ and all military chaplains can pray according to their faith."

"They should be able to pray as their faith and tradition calls upon them," he told The Sun.

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The Rev. Chip Harper, a San Antonio minister told the San Antonio Express-News that he had recently gone to a local Air Force base to offer the invocation at an old friend's retirement.

"Everything was in place — America's finest in dress uniforms," he told the Express-News. "Flags. Tears. Salutes. Talk of duty, honor, and country. I loved it. Of course, one reason I was called to do the invocation was because my friend and I are close. The second — he's Christian and wanted a Christian prayer. An Air Force chaplain can't render that. It's prohibited by Air Force policy.

"This is how things have changed for Air Force chaplains these days; even if they are Christian, they are prohibited from invoking the name of Jesus Christ in public prayer," Rev. Harper told the newspaper. "Think about that. Christian ministers prohibited — by Air Force policy — from praying as they were trained."

If the Navy is subjected to the same rules as the Air Force policy requires, Lt. Klingenschmitt pledged he will go to court.

"I will definitely sue," he told the Sun.

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