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January 09, 2007

Judge won't block chaplain's discharge

By [Chris Amos](#)

Staff writer

A federal judge has refused to stop the Navy from discharging an evangelical chaplain convicted of disobeying a lawful order by wearing his Navy uniform to a press conference outside the White House last March.

On Jan. 4, U.S. District Court judge Harry H. Kennedy Jr. turned down a request for an injunction that would have kept Lt. Gordon J. Klingenschmitt in the Navy beyond Jan. 31, the date that the Navy has informed him he will be separated, according to Klingenschmitt's civilian lawyer, Bill Farley.

Farley said he was skeptical of the Navy's reason for discharging Klingenschmitt — its refusal to accept his endorsement from a new religious organization — because it allowed as many as 42 other chaplains to change endorsers.

But a Navy spokesman said the Navy was not obligated to accept new endorsers.

"Lt. Klingenschmitt's request to renew his contract under a new endorser was denied," said Lt. Tommy Crosby. "The determination was based on a review of his record to include his military record and performance as a naval officer. This review was initiated due to a withdrawal of his original [DoD-approved ecclesiastical] endorser and is standard procedure for any Navy chaplain who changes endorsements for any reason."

Klingenschmitt said he resigned from his previous endorser, the Evangelical Episcopal Church, shortly after his September court-martial, but that resignation was effective after a second endorsement by the Full Gospel Church became effective. Since there was no lapse in endorsement, Klingenschmitt said, Navy rules require that his new endorsement be accepted.

Farley said a separate lawsuit asks the Navy to remove all negative evaluations from Klingenschmitt's service record and to stop discouraging evangelical chaplains from praying in Jesus' name, as he claims it does.

No trial date has been set for the lawsuit.

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