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December 13, 2005

Navy Chaplain Told to Stop Praying in the Name of Jesus

from staff reports

He may be fired for sticking to his beliefs.

Navy Chaplain Gordon Klingenschmitt is facing the end of a 14-year career because his commanding officer wants him to stop using the name of Jesus.

He said his commanding officer told a Navy board that, as a chaplain, he overemphasizes his own faith.

"He was talking about my sermons and prayers," Klingenschmitt said. "He specifically cited the chaplain school director who told him that I was an immature chaplain because I pray in Jesus' name."

A 1998 regulation mandates that Navy Chaplains are not allowed to pray in the name of Jesus. But Klingenschmitt says it's really a battle over First Amendment rights and religious freedom.

"You know our soldiers and sailors, they go overseas to promote religious freedom for other people," he said, "but here in America, they can't even hear the diversity of religions from their own chaplains."

Jim Backlin, legislative director of the Christian Coalition, said he hopes President Bush will take note of the case.

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"The president will see that there is great support for these Chaplain Klingenschmitts of the Navy and in the Air Force and do something about it," he told Family News in Focus. "We do need an executive order protecting the First Amendment rights of military chaplains and other members of the military to pray according to their faith."

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