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Military training materials: Catholics, evangelicals are religious ‘extremists’

WASHINGTON — The Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty together with the Archdiocese for the Military Services recently uncovered a U.S. Army Reserve Equal Opportunity [training brief](#) that expressly identified “Evangelical Christianity” and “Catholicism” as examples of “religious extremism” like al-Qaida, Hamas, and the Klu Klux Klan.

“Men and women of faith who have served the Army faithfully for centuries shouldn’t be likened to those who have regularly threatened the peace and security of the United States,” said Col. (Ret.) Ron Crews, executive director of the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty. “It is dishonorable for any U.S. military entity to allow this type of wrongheaded characterization. It also appears that some military entities are using definitions of ‘hate’ and ‘extreme’ from the lists of anti-Christian political organizations. That violates the apolitical stance appropriate for the military.”

According to an investigation and reply from the Army Chief of Chaplains office, the training in question appears to have been an isolated incident not condoned by the Department of the Army. The Chaplain Alliance and the Archdiocese explained that the Army can and should take steps to prevent such incidents in the future.

“The Army can require that a corrected brief be given to the affected Reserve units. That would help fix the gross distortions presented in the materials,” said Crews. “Second, all religious issues of this sort in the U.S military should be channeled first through the Chiefs of Chaplains offices for review.”

An event next week is glaringly at odds with the training materials. On April 11, President Obama will award the Medal of Honor to Army Chaplain (Captain) Emil J. Kapaun for conspicuous gallantry. Kapaun, a Roman Catholic priest, will receive the Medal of Honor posthumously for his extraordinary heroism while serving with the 3d Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division during combat operations against an armed enemy at Unsan, Korea and as a prisoner of war from Nov. 1-2, 1950.

“It is hard to understand how a priest like Chaplain Kapaun can be honored in one breath while his faith-group is dishonored in another,” said Crews. “I hope the DoD will reconcile this extraordinary discredit to Catholics all over the world.”

The Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty is an organization of chaplain endorsers, the faith groups that provide chaplains for the U.S. military and other agencies needing chaplains. The endorsers in the Chaplain Alliance speak for more than 2,000 chaplains serving the armed forces.

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