



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS
2700 ARMY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON DC 20310-2700

February 9, 2009

Office of the Chief of Chaplains

Ms. Rebecca S. Kratz
Freedom From Religion Foundation
P.O. Box 750
Madison, Wisconsin 53701

Dear Ms. Kratz:

I have been asked to respond on behalf of Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates to your November 5, 2008 letter concerning alleged church-state violations occurring in current military operations in Iraq.

Let me first assure you that Secretary Gates, along with the entire Army Leadership, fully supports the right of all Soldiers to freely exercise their religious faith without prejudice or bigotry. Just as importantly, a Soldier's constitutional right not to be required to attend or participate in religious exercises or worship is fully protected. These rights are clearly documented and supported in military regulations, policies and practices.

In late October 2008 the Multi-National Corps Iraq (MNC-I) Command Chaplain was contacted by the 3D ESC Chaplain to advise him of a Soldier's complaint regarding the prayers being conducted during 3D ESC battle update assessments (BUA) and shift changes. The complaint was immediately forwarded to the MNC-I Staff Judge Advocate (SJA) Office where it was determined that the conduct of prayers during these assemblies, in its current form, was incorrect and it was recommended that the practice should stop. This ruling was forwarded to the 3D ESC Commander, who directed that the practice of praying at the BUA and shift changes would cease as of November 28, 2008.

Please be assured that we share your commitment to meet the diverse religious needs of our Army Family. Your concern for the welfare of our Soldiers is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Douglas L. Carver
Chaplain (Major General) US Army
Chief of Chaplains