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**The Chaplain as Religious Liaison
in the Global War on Terror (GWOT)**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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ABSTRACT

Joint doctrine identifies the chaplain as a potential liaison with foreign religious officials. Many of these religious officials carry authority beyond that of church doctrine as they often wield power essential to stabilizing a given region. Chaplains need to understand this liaison role and train to it in order to make their expertise available to the operational commanders in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). In this way, chaplains can minimize inter-religious friction while maximizing inter-cultural understanding during conflict and post-conflict operations. Chaplains in this liaison role can be a factor in removing the issue of “religion” from insurgents while caring for the needs of the indigenous population through local religious leaders and nongovernmental agencies (NGOs). Chaplains can, and must be used to assist the Operational Commander in stabilizing a region where military forces are currently employed without violating the chaplain’s unique role as a non-combatant.

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INTRODUCTION

In the past decade or so there has been a tremendous resurgence of religion in societies all over the world. . . . Nowhere has religion become more important in shaping identity than in the world of Islam, and the Islamic resurgence is a major development in our world.¹

Samuel P. Huntington

The roles of military chaplains are as varied as the organizations they serve.

Chaplains are noncombatants in a culture of combatants, givers of peace in a world of warriors. This dichotomy is often one of great tension for chaplains. The chaplain's role is one of "service" and as such chaplains often find themselves searching for ways to serve. This passion naturally leads the chaplain toward human assistance and humanitarian concerns. Their religious ethic drives them to find compassion in all aspects of the warfighter's world.

The current Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) has strangely affected chaplains as they find themselves confronted with questions of religion in relationship to the current conflict. Operational Planners understand that the war has a distinctive religious context that is often misunderstood and quite frequently misrepresented. Words like *fundamentalist*, *Islamist*, *zealot*, and *fanatic*, usually applied only to religious issues, are now being used to describe terrorist insurgencies around the world. Experts like Douglas Johnston of the International Center of Religion and Diplomacy suggest "with appropriate training, the role of military chaplains could be expanded to include peacebuilding and conflict prevention."² This statement is extremely important in light of the current GWOT where religious, political, and community leaders are often one and the same. As David Smock, Director of

¹ Samuel P. Huntington, "Religion, Culture, and International Conflict After September 11, A Conversation with Samuel P. Huntington," interview by Michael Cromartie. 17 June 2002.

<http://www.eppc.org/programs/religionandmedia/publications/pubID.1537,programID.37/pub_detail.asp> [27 January 2006].

² Douglas M. Johnston, *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 25.

the United States Institute of Peace, Religion and Peacemaking Initiative recently stated; “Given the necessity of a faith-based/secular partnership, peacemaking can be particularly effective when some key persons hold both secular and religious authority.”³

Chaplain today find themselves in the crossroads of service in more dynamic ways than ever before. As commanders strive to “shape” their respective areas of operations (AO), it is this unique relationship of religious expert and noncombatant that gives chaplains their unique potential. In the current Joint Task Force arena, Operational Commanders must leverage the skills of their chaplains as religious liaisons and staff planners within their command to assist in stability operations in the GWOT.

CHAPLAIN AS LIAISON IN DOCTRINE

The role of chaplains at the strategic level of military planning is the greatest area of growth in [terms of their total] responsibilities. The way the world has evolved, it has become crucial to better understand the religious and cultural histories of peoples involved in conflicts.⁴

**Admiral Charles Abbot, Deputy
Commander-in-Chief, USEURCOM [sic], 1999**

To clearly understand the role of the chaplain one must first understand the doctrine that allows the chaplain to exist. Title 10 of US Code states that a chaplain is “an officer” who “may conduct public worship according to the manner and forms of the church of which they are member.”⁵ This simple declaration states the primary function of the chaplain within the confines of the armed forces. One must go to the succeeding doctrinal documents to get more descriptive responsibilities as applied to each respective service.

³ David R. Smock, “Religious Contributions to Peacemaking, When Religion Brings Peace, Not War,” *Peaceworks* (Washington D.C., United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 36.

⁴ Douglas M. Johnston, “We Neglect Religion at Our Peril,” *Proceedings*, January 2002. <www.usni.org/proceedings/articles02/projohnston01.htm> [27 January 2006]. As quoted in address to U.S. European Command Military Chiefs of Chaplains Conference.

⁵ General Military Law, *U.S. Code, Title 10* sec. 6031 (2003).

Joint Publication, 1-05, “Religious Support in Joint Operations,” clearly defines the chaplain’s non-combatant status: “Chaplains, as noncombatants, shall not bear arms and should not participate in combatant activities compromise their noncombatant status.”⁶ The noncombatant role of the chaplain is dynamic in the area of liaison as it potentially allows chaplains to relate to leaders, both religious and interagency, in a non-threatening way. This understanding allows for open communication between all parties (military and non-military) that can be a decisive point in assisting in stabilization operations in a given AO.

While this joint publication is clear as to the chaplain’s noncombatant role, it is in the area of commander’s tasks that is enlightening:

By recognizing the significance of religion, cultural sensitivities and ideology held by allies, coalition partners, and adversaries, commanders may avoid unintentionally alienating friendly military forces or civilian populations that could hamper military operations.... Commanders and their staffs may also consider religion, other cultural issues, and ideology while developing schemes of maneuver and rules of engagement or planning civil-military operations, psychological operations, information operations, and public affairs activities.⁷

Chaplains as well are given specific missions beyond the purely religious aspects of worship to include “providing commanders with professional advice regarding the dynamic influence of religion and religious belief” as well as advising the commander “on the religious dynamics of the indigenous population in the operational area.”⁸

It is clear in this revision that the Joint Staff understands the influence of religion in the current war and see the chaplain as a critical resource for the operational commander. The Joint Force Chaplain is specifically tasked to “provide relevant information on the

⁶ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Religious Support in Joint Operations, Joint Publication (JP) 1-05 (Washington, D.C.: 2004), viii.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., I-1.

religions of coalition partners and the adversary...”⁹ Another requirement for the Joint Force Chaplain is the preparation of the Religious Support Annex for the COCOM [Combatant Commander].¹⁰ This annex advises the commander on the religions, culture, and ideology within the operational area which may influence planning and future operations. Although Navy and Army doctrine for chaplains is in the process of being revised, current service doctrine does not focus on this important religious advisement role of the chaplain. This shortfall will hopefully be corrected. Until then chaplains in all services are left without clear guidance as how they should operate in this dynamic and critical arena as they seek to advise commanders regarding religion in the GWOT.

Joint Doctrine directs as well that Joint Force Chaplains should play a critical role in Phase IV operations as they are directed to “assist the staff in developing an engagement strategy”¹¹ in working with NGOs and International Organizations (IOs). Most importantly, it also directs that the Joint Force Chaplain, after careful consideration and approval by the Joint Force Commander, “may serve as a point of contact to host nation civilian and military religious leaders, institutions, and organizations” within the Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC).¹² This emphasis does not stop there as the new doctrine recommends that a Joint Task Force (JTF) assessment team include a chaplain as it prepares for interagency coordination.¹³ This team is tasked with deciding the humanitarian needs that must be accomplished in the AO as well as type of force required to accomplish the mission.

Yet one aspect is lacking; the specific integration of the Joint Force Chaplain in planning Joint Doctrine. It can be questioned why the chaplain is not specifically tasked in

⁹ Ibid., II-2.

¹⁰ Ibid., II-6.

¹¹ Ibid., II-3.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., II-6.

assisting in the drafting of Annex G (Civil Affairs) and Annex V (Interagency Coordination) of the COCOM's Campaign Plan within JP 1-05. It is clear that the chaplain could have a unique and dynamic role in assisting with these annexes. Yet the only the mention of chaplain involvement with any planning annex is found only in the JTF Master Training Guide, CJCSM 3500.05A, which mentions the chaplain's role in Annex G development but contains no mention of interagency coordination.¹⁴ The role of the chaplain as a noncombatant could and should be leveraged in their liaison role with IOs and NGOs throughout the AO, with the approval of the Operational Commander.

THE "TENSIONS WITHIN"

This newly expanded role for chaplains is not met with universal acceptance by all chaplains. Among those who actively resist the change one finds a variety of reasons to explain their concerns. Some say, "*Title 10 does not directly task the chaplain with this function.*" While Title 10 does not mention the role of "religious liaison," it is clear that chaplains serve the armed services and as such follow the guidance and direction clearly laid out by service doctrine. While the Army Field Manual 1-05, "Religious Support," mentions the new chaplain tasks of religious liaison and coordination role with NGOs/IOs, Navy and Marine doctrine (Navy SECNAVINST 1730.7B, Marine MCRP 6-12) does not.¹⁵ The next service revisions will reportedly address the issue in greater detail.

Other chaplains argue that they have not been endorsed by their faith group to provide this liaison function. This statement must be understood in light of the fact that all chaplains must be "endorsed" by a recognized religious body before being allowed to serve as

¹⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Task Force Headquarters Master Training Guide, Manual (CJCSM) 3500.05A (Washington, D.C.: 2003), 3-II-261.

¹⁵ Army Department, Religious Support, Field Manual (FM) No. 1-05 (Washington, D.C.: 2003), 2-5.

chaplains.¹⁶ In many instances this objection reflects the personal opinion of the individual chaplain and not the position of their endorsing agency.

Finally some chaplains may object to the liaison function because they do not feel “called” to perform the task. This position is held by those chaplains who see their ministry only in terms of providing pastoral care for U.S. service personnel. Again, this opinion would not be prevalent among experienced chaplains but might be found in those new to the military. Training and strict recruiting standards are the key to addressing this issue. Chaplains must always be made aware that they serve within the confines of the military institution, and must therefore adapt their ministries to be effective. The additional tasks of religious liaison, applied in proper context, complements the chaplain’s primary function of providing ministry to the uniformed members they serve by assisting in stabilizing a command’s AO via their liaison role with the local populace.

Concern is legitimately expressed regarding the chaplain’s role in relation to Civil Affairs (CA). This tension is even more valid today with the lack of qualified CA Officers within the services. It is easy for the commander to desire that the chaplain fill this much needed role at the Strategic, Operational, and Tactical Levels. Again, extreme care must be taken to preclude compromising the chaplain’s role as noncombatant. Religious leaders and humanitarian organizations must see the chaplain as a peacemaker in every aspect of his work not as agents for intelligence collection. Once that line has been crossed, any hope of leveraging the chaplain in the field (i.e. tactical level) is forever removed.

¹⁶ Defense Department, Appointment of Chaplains for the Military Services, (DoDD) Directive Number 1304.19 (Washington, D.C.: 1993), 2.

CHAPLAIN AS LIAISON

In Practice – Vietnam

Much has been said in the western media and in various political arenas suggesting that the current GWOT is a “re-make” of Vietnam. While this paper does not compare the two conflicts, there is much to be learned from the role of chaplains in Vietnam. Navy chaplains were active throughout the Vietnam conflict performing “traditional ministry” as well as serving in “non-traditional” roles.

From the very beginning of Marine involvement in Vietnam, chaplains played a direct role in Civil Affairs (CA, then called Civil Action). For example, Chaplain Leroy E. Muenzler, Jr. was assigned by his commander to serve as the director of humanitarian efforts on the civic action council.¹⁷ Coordination with local religious leaders was authorized and actively pursued as Chaplain Muenzler reported:

I went to Hue and met the [Vietnamese] Archbishop, who in turn introduced me to the Roman Catholic Priest living and serving in the area. . . . The same method was employed in meeting Buddhist religious leaders and laity. . . . I toured their facilities in the area, including an orphanage, and saw a number of areas where we could be of help.¹⁸

Chaplains often found themselves as overall coordinators of civic action programs as well as Combined Action Platoon (CAP) ministry. One unique aspect of the CAP program was its work with refugees. Religious Offering Funds received during worship services were used solely for humanitarian purposes within local villages in CA. Coordination of projects was handled through the office of the American Consul General providing the State Department with a clear understanding of community needs and how individual chaplains

¹⁷ Herbert L. Bergsma, Chaplains with Marines in Vietnam 1962-1971 (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, USMC), 21.

¹⁸ Ibid., 22.

were meeting them.¹⁹ Chaplains serving in Vietnam recognized the tension of being associated with CA units (i.e., CAP) but contented that their ministries were extended through CAP as large numbers of personnel willingly participated in CAP sponsored projects.²⁰

Navy chaplains also became active conduits between the military and NGOs serving in Vietnam, a large number of which were religious in nature. The NGOs provided the chaplains with a wealth of cultural knowledge and assisted chaplains with cultural sensitivity training.²¹ This leveraging of the chaplain's knowledge would later become known as the Personal Response Program and would become the norm in Marine units as the chaplain's role was expanded to include using them to provide cultural training to all arriving personnel. The main friction point for chaplains serving in this capacity was the extensive time requirements to fulfill this new role that took the chaplain away from their "primary" task of providing for their unit's religious needs as Chaplain Peter McLean wrote:

Often our talk centered upon our relationships with the Vietnamese people. For the most part, our older Marines were not emotionally equipped for a counter guerrilla - counter insurgency type of warfare. This one area alone took up more time than any other during the first months [in country].²²

Chaplains also identified humanitarian projects after accompanying their units on patrols to Vietnamese villages. These projects were coordinated with CA in order to meet the physical needs of the local population. Unique individual acts of kindness and charity were constant as Marines identified with the local populace. One such example was a poor Vietnamese child who suffered from a severe cleft-lip. Marines identified the need to their chaplain and surgery was soon arranged. This ministry blossomed into a program where one

¹⁹ Ibid., 23.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 28.

²² Ibid., 35.

child a week was given this life changing operation.²³ The process of expanding an individual chaplain's ministry into a larger program was multiplied again and again according to the final history:

The chaplain was concerned to relieve distress and suffering whenever he found it. But the end result of his charitable activity was precisely the result considered militarily essential to the eventual pacification of the Vietnamese people and their homeland. Consequently, the pattern of the chaplain's activity was taken over and applied to the pacification formula in I Corps in the hope that a principle which traditionally worked well in isolated circumstances and on a small scale would produce equal results on a massive scale. Thus both the chaplain and his methods became a part of an I Corps-wide program of indigenous public relations.²⁴

The Personal Response Program and the chaplain's training program did not come without cost or exist without tension.

Chaplains working in close association with the project [Personal Response].... often found themselves at cross purposes. This was largely due to the still highly subjective and idealistic philosophy of Personal Response, and the unfamiliarity of many line officers with such newly explored fields as the behavioral sciences. And to complicate things further many chaplains still suspected that their spiritual ministry was being diluted by involvement in the program they saw as essentially sociological.²⁵

Further tension was caused by the lack of doctrinal support for the program; specifically, the Marine Corps refused to recognize the Navy policy letter outlining the chaplain's role in the Personal Response. This frustration was expressed by Chaplain Neil Stevenson (who would become the 16th Navy Chief of Chaplains) as he "felt constrained by the lack of any succinctly worded command directive which in essence supported his billet."²⁶ The lack of doctrinal support for the chaplain's role in Personal Response continued to grow as Chaplain Stevenson would later write:

²³ Ibid., 36.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 183.

²⁶ Ibid.

What is his (the chaplain's) mission, task function? The non-structure organizational inertia contributes to the program becoming more and more involved with ideological warfare... than with human concerns or any form of reconciliation ministry. Commands will interpret Personal Response in relation to their pragmatic needs to exploit tactical situations. This is perfectly legitimate from a military standpoint, but questionable in ministry.²⁷

Concerns were also expressed that chaplain's should not be giving their limited time to a program that could be "intentionally distorted by those who used and saw it as a vehicle for intelligence gathering."²⁸ However, aversion to the program was overcome by its overall success.

The 3rd Marine Division statistically proved the effectiveness of Personal Response as more and more booby traps were reported by local Vietnamese. Many lives were saved as a result of the rapport that was established with the local people through Personal Response education.... Personal Response was never intended to serve intelligence gathering; it was legitimately aimed at effecting cooperation and mutual respect for the values of two different cultures.²⁹

The Marine Corps would maintain the Personal Response Program for the remainder of the war and fortunately the U.S. Military did not forget its significance. The lessons learned would assist the Navy with the race relations problem experienced in the 1970s as well as Community Relations projects within the United States.³⁰

The humanitarian efforts of chaplains in Vietnam are almost too numerous to mention: gifts to refugee children at Christmas and Tet observances, health and comfort kits for ARVN wounded, parties for children, medical supplies for people in the neighboring villes, personal kindnesses to individual, solicitation of clothing and other supplies from churches and organizations in the States. . . . It is impossible to measure the extent to which chaplains have given outstanding example of genuine Personal Response.³¹

²⁷ Ibid., 184.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 185.

³¹ Ibid., 187.

Chaplain as Liaison

In Practice – Today

Many of the experiences of the Vietnam era are being relearned today by chaplains serving in a new century. Chaplain Roger Boucher's experience with an Amphibious Readiness Group (ARG) to East Timor show striking similarities to those of his counterparts who served in Vietnam.

While en route to the mission destination, Chaplain Roger Boucher had attended mission briefs based on what he discovered was outdated or inaccurate information that mischaracterized the religious and political situation of the area. The chaplain's religious knowledge and expertise enabled him to inform all the parties involved that the residents of East Timor were not the "enemy" but the victims, and that they deserved the support of outside democracies like the United States. In the chaplain's view, this information brought about a significant change in how the ARG personnel related to the local NGO, the Diocese of East Timor, and the general population.³²

The military is even now collecting data on the chaplain's impact in Iraq and Afghanistan. In a soon to be published work regarding chaplains serving in the GWOT, Chaplain George Adams states that "chaplains are in a unique position to relate with indigenous religious leaders in a way that no other military member can. Their position as a spiritual leader tends to create a deeper and more immediate bond between them and civilian religious leaders."³³

The case study review of Chaplain Adams contains a running theme regarding the unique potential of the chaplain as Religious Liaison in both Iraq and Afghanistan. A great example is found in the experience of Chaplain Brain Waite during the battle for An Nasiriyah in Iraq. During the early portion of this battle the battalion captured a school; however, some innocent civilians had been killed in the process. The battalion commanding

³² Paul McLaughlin, "The Chaplain's Evolving Role in Peace and Humanitarian Relief Operations," *Peaceworks* No. 46, September, 2002 (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2002), 22.

³³ George Adams, "Chaplains as Liaisons with Religious Leaders: Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan," (Unpublished Research Paper, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C.: 2005), 25.

officer told Chaplain Waite, “since he was the ‘people’ person, he needed to resolve the problem with the local populace while the colonel continued to lead the battalion in its combat operation.”³⁴ The chaplain along with his Religious Program Specialist and translator met with the community leader as a large crowd of angry citizens converged on their location. The chaplain explained that the Marines were there as liberators and that those who were killed were used as human shields by the Fedayeen. According to Chaplain Waite:

The tension lessened as local eyewitnesses corroborated the account and the crowd began to understand the circumstances of their neighbors’ deaths. The people wanted a proper burial for these two members of their community before sundown... Once it was decided that the burial would occur at the school, Chaplain Waite helped dig the graves. He believed that it was important to demonstrate in a concrete way to the local people and the young marines that the U.S. military genuinely cared for the Iraqi people. ... This successful negotiation of the burial on the first day of the battle was crucial because it established a unique bond between the chaplain and the community leader that continued throughout the battalion’s presence in the city. During that week, the chaplain met daily with the community leader to discuss the needs of the people, which mostly were for food, water, and medical care. The leader would tell the chaplain what the requests were and the chaplain would work with him to try and meet those needs. ... As a result of these and other acts of goodwill from the marines, information flow into the battalion increased considerably. In one instance, a [Iraqi] lawyer came forward and gave information to the battalion that Private Jessica Lynch was being held by the Fedayeen in a local hospital. He did so, in part, due to the level of trust that had been established between the marines and the local community.³⁵

As in Chaplain Waite’s example, today’s chaplains offer unique skills to operational commanders as they struggle with the reality of Phase IV stabilization operations. Like in the Vietnam era, today’s military must capture lessons and apply them in an innovative ways in order to maximize the chaplain’s liaison role.

³⁴ Ibid., 8.

³⁵ Ibid., 9.

LESSONS LEARNED

Vietnam demonstrated that the chaplain's humanitarian ministry can be exploited for intelligence purposes thus compromising the chaplain's non-combatant status. In addition, the ministry can detract from the direct provision of ministry to authorized (uniformed) personnel.

Chaplains are in the front line of conflict which places them in the unique position to work with religious leaders to solve problems, as Chaplain Adams discovered in his research:

As chaplains engage religious leaders, it must be remembered that in contrast to expert state-sponsored negotiators, chaplains function more as liaisons, which means they serve as links or channels of communication between the military and local religious leaders. This distinction between the role of a negotiator and liaison is important to keep in mind with regard to chaplains.³⁶

Understanding this liaison concept has become difficult as the need of "capturing" resident knowledge before the chaplain rotated back to the U.S. was problematic at best.³⁷ Too often chaplains today (as in the Vietnam era) are forced to re-learn the same practical lessons their predecessors had already experienced through the school of "trial and error".

RECOMMENDATIONS

Among the assets we already have at our disposal that could be brought to bear in more helpful ways are the chaplain corps of the U.S. military services... With additional training and expanding rules of engagement they could significantly enhance their command's ability to deal with the religious dimension of military operations.³⁸

Douglas M. Johnston

³⁶ Ibid., 30.

³⁷ Ibid., 34.

³⁸ Douglas M. Johnston, *Religion & Security: The Nexus in International Relation*, eds. Robert A. Seiple and Dennis R. Hoover (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2004), x.

Doctrine

The most pressing need is clear and concise guidance in service doctrine for the liaison task. Joint and service doctrine should delineate what chaplains and operational commanders should expect from the liaison role of chaplains. This guidance will be of tremendous assistance to tactical chaplains who often operate in isolation without the benefit of close supervision.

The current Chaplain Corps Career Progression Plan limits JPME, interagency training, and training for coordination with NGOs/IOs to Captains (O6) only.³⁹ However, recent experience in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrates that junior chaplains are most often tasked to liaise with foreign religious officials. To be truly effective all chaplains should have some level of training in these liaison areas and this must be reflected in service doctrine as well as the Career Progression Plan.

Since resources follow requirements, the Navy Tactical Task List (NTTL) should reflect all the recommended changes within the Career Progression Plan so appropriate funding will be made available for training. Leadership often desires to effect change within the Chaplain Corps without understanding the proper procedures required to fund new innovations. The use of NTTL will reflect true requirements in funding new chaplain core competencies.

Training

The Navy Chaplain Corps post graduate (PG) education program could be “tailored” to meet the pressing needs of the Navy and Marine Corps (as Navy chaplains care for both

³⁹ Navy Department, Request to Establish and Revise Chaplain Corps Navy Officer Billet Classifications (NOBCS) (Washington, D.C.: 2005), Encl (11).

services as well as the Coast Guard). Currently the PG program allows a select group of chaplains the opportunity to attend one year of graduate education at first class universities around the country. Relevant issues such as Islam and cultural issues in the GWOT should be the focus of the PG studies.

The Army chaplain service sends five chaplains a year to study world religions with an obligated pay-back tour to joint, doctrine, or educational billets. These highly trained chaplains are expected to provide continual resources to the Army at large and they are a trusted resource for all issues related to religion due to their specialized expertise. The Navy should consider a realignment of its post graduate program to receive the same return on its investment by placing these highly-trained individuals in strategic/operational billets around the Navy and Marine Corps.

Another possible innovation in training would be the use of the Olmstead scholarship for one motivated chaplain each year. The Olmsted Scholarship is a Department of Defense supported scholarship program that allows military officers a two-year graduate internship at a foreign university. Participants are allowed to study in a language other than English and interact with the culture of a host country by living on the local economy and traveling widely within the host nation. The current program is only open to line officers but should be explored for use by chaplains. Individuals completing this course of study could be assigned to a joint training billet so they could share their expertise with chaplains from all services. Olmsted and World Religion trained chaplains would be uniquely qualified to teach operational chaplains in their religious liaison role.

Due to the Base Closure and Realignment Commission (BRAC) all chaplain service schools will be collocated and a Joint Center of Excellence for Religious Training and

Education will be created.⁴⁰ The obvious benefit of this relocation is the sharing of resources from Olmsted scholars as well as resource pool of world religion experts. Because of the Chaplain Corps Career Progression Plan, chaplains will attend training at the Joint Center at various times throughout their career progression. It is here that chaplains must receive the required core competencies related to world religions, CA, and interagency coordination.

Finally, the Chaplain Corps should establish a clear policy regarding Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) phase I. In an October 2004 “White Letter,” Navy Chief of Chaplains, RADM Louis Iasiello wrote that a key component of the new Doctor of Ministry program should be JPME. In the letter Chaplain Iasiello states: “While the Goldwater-Nichols Act does not require military chaplains to complete Joint Professional Military Education, the realities of today’s joint world, coupled with our current global war on terrorism demand that chaplains gain an appreciation and knowledge for joint systems, theories, and doctrines.”⁴¹

Today, chaplains serve on a variety of Combatant Command and JTF staffs. With that in mind, JPME phase I should be required for all mid-grade chaplains. An additional requirement should include JPME phase II for all Strategic/Joint Chaplains as they should develop their skills along with their peers in the line communities. Justification for this additional requirement would be the need to prepare senior chaplains for assisting in planning Annex G and Annex V as well as the Religious Support Annex of the COCOM’s Campaign Plan.

⁴⁰ Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission, 2005 Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission Report (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2005), 183.

⁴¹ Louis V. Iasiello, “Navy Chief of Chaplains - White Letter #6: Doctorate in Military Ministry,” November 2004. <<https://www.nko.navy.mil>> [27 January 2006].
A letter to Navy Chaplain Corps.

CONCLUSION

Given the religious component of so many of today's hostilities, chaplains can and should play a larger role in peace making and conflict prevention.⁴²

Douglas M. Johnston

While many of the lessons learned in Vietnam were lost due the upheaval of society and its reaction to anything related to that war, one can only hope that the lessons re-learned in the GWOT will see a new resurgence in doctrinal guidance and practical training for religious liaison within the Chaplain Corps. An argument can be made that due to the establishment clause in the 1st Amendment that chaplains should not participate in any form of service beyond facilitating for authorized personnel. Yet this is a shortsighted “Americanized view” of the role religious leaders play and it does not allow for the possibility of leveraging qualified resources for the operational commander. Chaplains should be placed and function in positions to advise in all levels of planning where their moral influence will bring balance to the warfighter. Ignoring the chaplain in stabilization operations, when history has recorded their effective use time and again in history, is a glowing failure to learn the lessons from our past and an indictment of our American approach to the GWOT.

Chaplains properly trained and backed by supporting doctrine, can effectively bridge gaps in joint planning and operational execution in all phases leading to and including stabilization operations.

⁴² Johnston, “We Neglect Religion at Our Peril.”

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