

# Chaplain Who Prayed 'In Jesus' Name' Convicted

Klingenschmitt jury now will consider punishment

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A military jury today convicted a Navy chaplain of a misdemeanor count of disobeying his commanding officer for wearing his uniform while delivering a prayer "in Jesus' name" at an assembly in front of the White House.

"But I had prior written permission to wear my uniform if it was a religious observance, (so) prayers are not a religious observance," Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt told WND after the military court-martial recessed for the night. "Therefore I disobeyed my commanding officer's order not to pray in uniform," he said.

Klingenschmitt, who raised immediate concerns with his superiors when the Navy issued a new order that prayers could only be "nonsectarian," also has alleged he was punished for raising those concerns, and later notifying Congress and President Bush of the situation.

Klingenschmitt told WND that his lawyer rested the case without calling any witnesses, one of whom was scheduled to be former Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, because of the biblical injunction in Isaiah, where the prophecy about Jesus says he "was oppressed and afflicted yet he did not open his mouth."

*Note from Pastor Kevin: The passage in Isaiah 53 is a prophecy about the coming Messiah, which was literally fulfilled during the trial of Jesus; it is not an "injunction" that Christians not open their mouths in defense during trials against our faith. If it were, then the Apostle Paul violated this "injunction" several times when brought before magistrates and kings (Acts 24).*

Klingenschmitt told WND that there is an appeal process that will be pursued, up to the U.S. Supreme Court if needed.

The five-officer military jury is scheduled to return to work tomorrow to determine what punishment, if any, Klingenschmitt should receive. "I do respect the verdict of my peers. I am a humble man and respect the authority of the jury. I do not respect the authority of the military judge who declared worshipping in public is not the same as public worship," he said.

Judge Moore, who lost his own job over his refusal to obey a federal judge's order that conflicted with constitutional authority and remove a Ten Commandments monument from the Alabama Supreme Court building, had been set to testifying about the White House assembly where he and Klingenschmitt were.

Moore, also a columnist for WND, said, "When the Legislature of Indiana or a chaplain in the Navy, Army or Air Force says a prayer in the name of Jesus, no religion is being established and no religious freedom is abused. On the contrary, the religious freedom enjoyed by all our people is being exercised in the finest American tradition."

Klingenschmitt had pleaded not guilty yesterday. As WND reported, Klingenschmitt was at the White House March 30 with Moore to protest Navy policy requiring non-sectarian prayers outside of worship services. Klingenschmitt had been ordered not to wear his uniform during media appearances without permission, unless he was conducting a "bona fide worship service." The chaplain, ordained in the Evangelical Episcopal Church, has said the March 30 event qualified. Klingenschmitt could forfeit two-thirds of his pay per month for one year and receive a reprimand as punishment.

The chaplain also is promoting a bill in Congress he says aims to overrule a policy passed by the secretary of the Navy that requires non-sectarian prayers. The Navy secretary, Klingenschmitt said, is "deliberately censoring the content of our prayers." This court martial, he said, was over that new Navy policy.

The judge, refusing Klingenschmitt's motion earlier this month to drop the case, concluded chaplains are protected only inside the chapel on Sunday morning. If ordered not to worship in public, and they disobey, chaplains can be punished at a criminal court martial.

"There is no more fundamental right than the inalienable right to worship our creator, and I pray in Jesus name," Klingenschmitt said. "For any government official to require non-sectarian prayers is for him to enforce his government religion upon me, to censor exclude and punish me for my participation."

Several dozen other chaplains also have joined in a civilian lawsuit that alleges the Navy hierarchy allows only those Christian ministers who advocate only non-sectarian blandishments to be promoted. Those with evangelical beliefs, they say, are routinely drummed from the Navy.

Janet Folger, president of Faith2Action told WND she couldn't even express the horror of such an outcome.

"If they can silence a chaplain, they'll come after you next," she told WND. "The Navy has ruled that chaplains have just one hour of freedom of religion on Sunday morning."

Folger, the author of "The Criminalization of Christianity," said what is incomprehensible is that the judge concluded that public worship is not the same and worshipping in public.

"While our soldiers fight for freedom abroad, our own chaplains are facing court martial for praying for them," said Folger. "Where does the Constitution say that freedom of religion is limited to one hour?"

## **PRAYER IN JESUS' NAME** **RESULTS IN \$3,000 FINE**

**Christian chaplain guilty of wearing Navy uniform at White House event**

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A jury of U.S. Naval officers has recommended a reprimand and a \$250 fine per month for a year for a Christian chaplain who was convicted of disobeying an order not to wear his military uniform for media appearances.

However, the jury also recommended the fine be suspended.

Chaplain Lt. Gordon James Klingenschmitt was convicted of the count, even though he charged that the White House appearance at which he prayed "in Jesus' name" was a bona fide religious event and he had written permission from his commander to wear his uniform at such events.

According to a report in the *Virginian-Pilot*, Cmdr. Rex Guinn said the government's case had been documented. "We are pleased with the results and justice is done," he said.

Klingenschmitt had faced a maximum punishment of a reprimand, restriction to base for two months and fines or forfeiture of pay of nearly \$42,000 – two-thirds of his annual salary, officials said.

Klingenschmitt's military lawyer, Lt. Tiffany Hansen, had told the jury that a conviction was enough. "There was no financial gain as a result of him doing what he did," she said. "Doing what he did," was to appear at a news conference at the White House with former Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, a WND columnist, to protest a new Naval directive that called for all prayers to be "nonsectarian."

Bush's spokesman, Tony Snow, today responded to a WND question about the issue, saying, "The president believes the chaplains ought to be able to be free to express to their religious beliefs, and he further believes in allowing the military

*Note from Pastor Kevin: Consider the following words from the book of Acts:*

Acts 4:17 "But so that it (*the message of the Gospel*) spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." 18 And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." (NKJ)