



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF CHAPLAINS  
WASHINGTON DC



8 January 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR ALMAJCOM-FOA-DRU

FROM: HQ USAF/HC  
1380 Air Force Pentagon  
Room 4E260  
Washington, DC 20330-1380

SUBJECT: Chaplain Corps Guidance on Religious Resolution Teams

References: AFI 1-1, 7 Aug 2012, *Air Force Culture*  
AFI 36-2903, 13 Jul 2018, *Dress & Personal Appearance of Air Force Personnel*  
AFPD 52-2, 17 Feb 2016, *Accommodation of Religious Practices in the Air Force*  
*Religious Freedom & Religious Accommodation Communication Card*, 6 Nov 2014  
*The Military Commander and the Law*, 2017, <http://www.afjag.af.mil/library>

I would like to provide clarity and direction on the Religious Resolution Team (RRT) process when advising leadership on two specific matters: religious accommodation requests by Airmen and religious freedom inquiries by non-federal entities (NFEs). I direct all Chaplain Corps leaders to employ the following guidance in their advice to leadership.

Commanders and supervisors at all levels must fairly consider requests for religious accommodation. If it is necessary to deny free exercise of religion or an accommodation request, the decision must be based on the facts presented; must be founded on a compelling government interest of military readiness, unit cohesion, good order, discipline, health and safety, or mission accomplishment; and must be by the least restrictive means necessary to avoid the cited adverse impact (AFI 1-1).

Commanders, Chaplain Corps personnel, medical providers, judge advocates, and other subject matter experts work as a team, as applicable, to determine the effect the request for accommodation of religious practices would have on the specific military policy, practice, or duty in terms of mission accomplishment including military readiness, unit cohesion, good order, discipline, health and safety, or other military requirements (AFPD 52-2). **The RRT is the tool by which the Air Force meets the commander's need for expertise in the religious accommodation decision-making process.**

**RRT Membership.** Upon receipt of a religious accommodation request or religious freedom inquiry, commanders should constitute an RRT to solicit sound advice and assist in the successful resolution of the issue. RRTs exist at every level of command: Installation (tactical), MAJCOM (operational), and HQ USAF (strategic). At a minimum, the RRT should include HC, JA, and PA. The commander may add additional subject matter experts such as A1, SG or Legislative Liaison in accordance with the needs of the situation.

RELATIONSHIPS ★ RESILIENCE ★ RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ★ RELEVANCE ★ RESPECT

**RRT Process for Religious Accommodation Requests.** Upon receipt of a request for religious accommodation, the installation or MAJCOM commander should consult the RRT before approving or denying requests, or recommending approval or disapproval to final approval authorities according to AFPD 52-2 and its foundational publications. Prior to approving or denying requests for religious accommodation, approving authorities should consult their respective RRTs as an essential part of the adjudication process.

**RRT Process for Religious Freedom Inquiries by Non-Federal Entities, Advocacy Groups or media.** Religious freedom inquiries directly to installations from interest group advocates (including lawyers) are on the rise and are likely to continue into the foreseeable future. The RRT is the commander's primary resource for responding appropriately to such inquiries. Chapter 6 of *The Military Commander and the Law*, provided by the Air Force Judge Advocate General and the *Religious Freedom and Religious Accommodation Communication Card* provided by AF/PAX empower commanders and RRTs with sound advice regarding such inquiries. Upon receipt of a religious freedom inquiry from an NFE, it is highly recommended Chaplain Corps members advise their leadership with the following:

**Thank the inquiring person/organization for bringing the matter to the attention of leadership.** Do not make any promises or statements indicating you or anyone else will investigate the matter, or take some action within a specific timeframe.

**Following the inquiry, form the RRT and notify MAJCOM PA, SJA, and HC.** MAJCOM PA, SJA, and HC should immediately notify their HQ USAF functional counterparts of the inquiry. Allow the process time to provide a solution.

**Avoid the inclination to rush to judgement or response.** Religious freedom inquiries are never emergencies, only inquiries. Bear in mind that what may seem to be a sound tactical-level decision may, in fact, have significant strategic-level outcomes. RRTs can help recognize potential second and third order effects.

**Commanders should refrain from directly contacting the complainant.** If a commander believes a follow-up response is necessary, it is preferable for them to personally disengage, notify the RRT, and allow another individual to provide the appropriate response.

As Chaplain Corps members are "*Inspiring Readiness*" in Airmen and their families, my expectation is that we will continue our tradition of providing the very best advice to leadership, efficiently and effectively. Thank you for all you do to empower relationships, resilience, respect, relevance, and most of all, religious freedom in our Air Force family!



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Chief of Chaplains