



Written by [James Murphy](#) on February 2, 2022

Air Force Chaplain Reprimanded for Seeking a Religious Exemption for COVID-19 Vaccine

An as-yet unnamed Air Force chaplain — with the rank of major — has received a formal letter of reprimand from superior officers for not yet taking an experimental COVID-19 vaccine. The chaplain had been seeking a religious exemption to opt out of taking any of the vaccines currently being offered, all of which have been linked to either blood clots or heart inflammation issues.

The major requested that the [letter of reprimand](#) be rescinded, but that request has been denied. As the chaplain's attorney, Davis Younts, told Just the News, "Letters of Reprimand are often used for things like - Sexual Harassment, Cruelty and Maltreatment, False Official Statements, and Dereliction of Duty."



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But now, apparently, today's military members can receive letters of reprimand for making personal health-care decisions that superior officers disagree with.

"You failed to obey a lawful order to receive the COVID-19 Vaccine. This failure violates Article 92, UCMJ (Failure to Obey Order). Specifically, on 4 January 2022, I provided you with the attached written order to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine in accordance with SECDEF and SECAF's orders (referred to therein). You were directly ordered to do this no later than 10 January 2022, and you failed to do so," the letter to the chaplain scolded.

The active-duty major previously had sought a religious exemption in order to opt out of the vaccination. That exemption was denied. The chaplain then went through appropriate channels to appeal the denial, but the appeal was [denied](#) by the Pentagon.

"The Department of the Air Force has a compelling government interest in requiring you to comply with the COVID-19 immunization requirement because preventing the spread of the disease among the force is vital to mission accomplishment. Specifically, in light of your circumstances, your present duty assignment requires intermittent to frequent contact with others and is not fully achievable via telework or with adequate distancing," the appeal denial states.

According to the major's attorney, the chaplain believes that the vaccine requirement is an unlawful order and could even disqualify him from being a pastor in the future. Therefore, he is obliged by both his conscience and his faith to refuse the order.

"He believes that submitting to an unlawful order would violate his oath to support and defend the Constitution and would make him disqualified to serve as an ordained pastor in the future," Younts said. "Despite the fact that he is facing punishment and discharge, he believes that he must take this stand



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for his faith and for all the Airmen he has ministered to. He does not believe that he could ever preach to military members or any congregation again if he compromised his faith and was not a voice for the voiceless.”

President Joe Biden and the Pentagon first mandated military personnel to receive the experimental COVID-19 vaccines in August. According to the president, the military needs to remain on a wartime footing, and “being vaccinated will enable our service members to stay healthy, to better protect their families, and to ensure that our force is ready to operate anywhere in the world.”

The military does offer religious exemptions, but, [MilitaryTimes reports](#), those exemptions have been hard to obtain.

A December 19 piece explains: “The services, urgently trying to keep the coronavirus pandemic in check by getting troops vaccinated, are now besieged with exemption requests they are unlikely to approve. Meanwhile, troops claiming religious reasons for avoiding the shots are perplexed because exemptions are theoretically available, yet seem impossible to obtain.”

According to the unnamed chaplain, the Air Force, in particular, has simply been issuing blanket denials for religious exemptions to the vaccines, instead of evaluating each case individually. Air Force Reserve Lieutenant Colonel [Brandi King](#) also complained about the branch’s seemingly universal religious-exemption denials and has filed a discrimination complaint, claiming that she lost a plum assignment due to her vaccine stance.

“Our military is being purged of those who dare to be faithful to their Heavenly Creator and Savior over the earthly authorities within the government and military,” Younts, who also represents King, said. “This information should wake up anyone who believes their God-given, constitutionally recognized freedoms will continue to be protected by our military.”





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