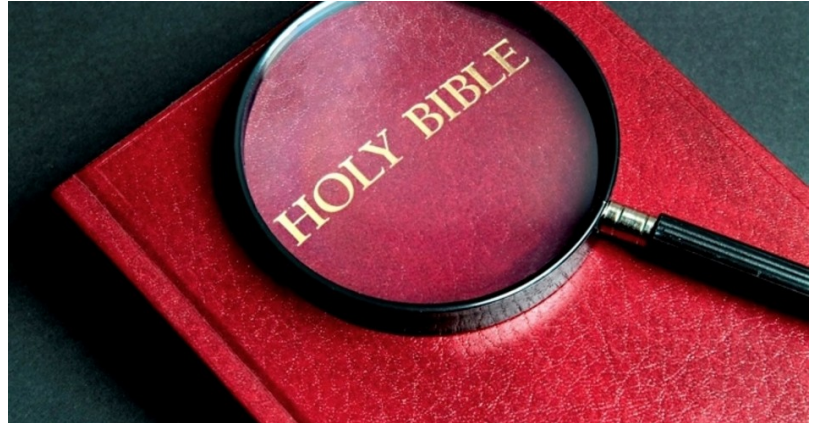




Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 1, 2012

Bibles to Stay in Air Force Lodging — Sort of ...

Responding to pressure from a group called the [Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers](#) (MAAF), the Air Force has dropped a policy that directs housekeepers at lodging on Air Force bases to make certain there are Bibles in the rooms they make up for guests. While the atheist group had wanted the Air Force to ban the Bibles, placed there for free by the [Gideons](#), from the room altogether, after deliberation the Air Force Services Agency decided instead to simply remove the question, “Is a Bible provided?” from the lodging check list housekeepers go through in making up the rooms.



According to the [Air Force Times](#), Air Force spokesman Mike Dickerson “said after a legal review, the Air Force Services Agency determined that there was no legal reason to have the question on the lodging checklist. The checklist is used to ensure that lodging standards at all Air Force Inns are being met and maintained. The question will be removed when the checklist is updated in September.”

Dickerson said, however, that the Air Force was not prepared to sanitize Scripture from rooms entirely, as the atheist group had desired. “The Air Force has not directed the removal of Bibles from Air Force Inns lodging rooms at this time,” Dickerson said. “We continue to review the situation and weigh our multiple First Amendment responsibilities and obligations.”

According to the MAAF, last February a pilot staying in lodgings at an Air Force base in Japan complained when he found a Gideon’s Bible the room. “Because the Air Force is a government agency, there should be neutrality toward religion rather than a special privilege for Christianity,” insisted the MAAF. “After inquiries from the Military Association of Atheists & Freethinkers and a legal review, Air Force Services Operations has promised to end their Bible requirement” — ie., officials decided to allow the Bibles to remain in the rooms, but stop requiring that lodging managers check on their presence.

Col. Ron Crews, executive director of the [Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty](#), told Focus on the Family’s CitizenLink that the Air Force’s seemingly small concession to the atheist group could be step one to meeting the group’s larger demand to get rid of Bible from the lodging altogether. “That is a symptom of the larger problem,” Crews said. “It just seems that the Air Force is caving at every point. Any time there’s a threatened suit, they just take another step back instead of defending the religious liberty of military personnel.”

Meanwhile, Air Force Services Agency spokesman Michael Dickerson insisted to [The Patriot](#), the newspaper for Robins Air Force Base in Georgia, that while the Bible question had been removed from the lodging checklist, the Bibles will remain — for now. “We communicated a legal opinion that there is no requirement” to have Bibles in the rooms, he said. “The only thing that was communicated to [the atheist group] was that the question would be removed from the checklist. That’s it.”

Former Navy chaplain Dr. Gordon Klingenschmitt, director of the [Pray in Jesus Name Project](#),



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suggested that the ease with which the Air Force bowed to outside pressure makes it complicit in the attack on religious liberty in the military. “I don’t know if they’re removing the Bibles,” he said, “but at least they’re removing [them] from the checklists, [so that] whoever cleans the rooms is no longer required to check whether the Bible is in place. “So if somebody steals one of those Bibles or if they’re confiscated by atheist complainers or put in the trash, then sadly Christian people will not have access to read the Bible at night.”

Nor, one might add, will the non-Christian individual desperately seeking answers have access to the truth of Scripture — which, ultimately, is the reason the Gideons place their Bibles in public places.



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