



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on February 9, 2012

Army Censored Military Archbishop's Letter Condemning Obama Contraception Mandate

In the latest controversy over President Obama's infamous "contraception mandate," the administration is coming under attack for attempting to prevent military chaplains from reading a letter from Timothy Broglio (left), Archbishop for the Military Services, U.S.A., warning Catholic military personnel about the government's attack on their religious freedoms. According to CNSNews.com, the U.S. Army's Office of the Chief of Chaplains determined that Catholic priests serving as Army chaplains were not to read the archbishop's letter from the pulpit.



In the letter, which is similar to epistles from diocesan bishops read in hundreds of Catholic churches across the nation, Archbishop Broglio recalled that Obama, through the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), had decreed "that almost all employers, including Catholic employers, will be forced to offer their employees health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs, and contraception." He added that health insurers "will be forced to include those immoral 'services' in the health policies they write. And almost all individuals will be forced to buy that coverage as a part of their policies."

Broglio told Catholic military personnel that the move was "a heavy blow to almost a quarter of those people — the Catholic population — and to the millions more who are served by the Catholic faithful." And, he added to Catholic soldiers, "It is a blow to a freedom that you have fought to defend and for which you have seen your buddies fall in battle."

The military bishop declared that, in issuing its decree, "the Administration has cast aside the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, denying to Catholics our Nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty." He warned that "unless the rule is overturned, we Catholics will be compelled to choose between violating our consciences or dropping health coverage for our employees (and suffering the penalties for doing so)."

Most objectionable to the Obama administration was Broglio's statement that "[w]e cannot — we will not — comply with this unjust law."

In an [official statement](#), Broglio's office explained that after the archbishop had sent the letter to Catholic chaplains with instructions that it be read from the pulpit at all military Masses on January 29, the Army's Office of the Chief of Chaplains e-mailed senior chaplains "asking" them not to follow the archbishop's directive. Instead, "the letter was to be mentioned in the Mass announcements and distributed in printed form in the back of the chapel," recalled Broglio's statement.

Continued the statement: "Archbishop Broglio and the Archdiocese stand firm in the belief, based on legal precedent, that such a directive from the Army constituted a violation of his constitutionally



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protected right of free speech and the free exercise of religion, as well as those same rights of all military chaplains and their congregants.”

Broglio’s office went on to relate that in subsequent discussions the archbishop and Secretary of the Army John McHugh agreed “that it was a mistake to stop the reading of the Archbishop’s letter.” However, it was also agreed that the line, “We cannot — we will not — comply with this unjust law,” would be removed in the reading “over the concern that it could potentially be misunderstood as a call to civil disobedience.”

While the head of Army chaplains asked for the change to the letter, the Archbishop’s missive “was read verbatim at Masses served by Navy and Air Force chaplains around the world,” reported CNSNews.com.

A statement from the U.S. Army confirmed that its chief of chaplains, Major General Donald Rutherford, had asked the Catholic chaplains to refrain from reading the letter, but insisted that a request was as far as Rutherford went. “At no time did the chief of chaplains offer any judgment, statement or opinion as to the appropriateness of the letter’s opposition to a specific federal policy, only his concern that a single line might run counter to proper military order and discipline,” said Colonel James Hutton, the Army’s chief of media relations. “Any suggestion that he or the Army were attempting to censor the clergy is not supported by the facts.”

However, as veterans of military service will confirm, a request from a superior is tantamount to an order, disregarded at the professional peril of the recipient. Ron Crews, executive director of the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty, said that the “request” went too far. “Chaplains represent their faith groups, and they must not be muzzled,” he said. “They must not be told to *not* represent their faith group.”

Meanwhile, one of the nation’s most influential evangelical leaders has added his strong statement of righteous defiance to those issued by the Catholic Church over the Obama mandate. Dr. Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s [Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission \(ERLC\)](#), told [LifesiteNews.com](#) that with regard to the mandate, which violates the Christian convictions of Catholics and Protestants alike, “Our responsibility is to stand and say, ‘We will not comply with this. We want the law changed, or else we’re going to write our letters from the Nashville jail, just like Dr. King wrote his from the Birmingham jail.’ We will not comply.” (The headquarters for the Southern Baptist Convention is located in Nashville.)

In a recent op-ed, Land and Barrett Duke, ERLC’s vice president for public policy, wrote that the Obama contraception mandate is “a clear violation of our nation’s commitment to liberty of conscience and a flagrant violation of our constitutional protection to freedom of religion. For many people of faith, this requirement is abhorrent. It forces them to choose between their religious convictions about when human life begins and providing health care for themselves, their families, or their employees.”

The Baptist duo declared that Obama’s “brazen determination to force all Americans to pay for abortions is an affront to our nation’s core commitment to liberty of conscience.” They added that the President “has declared war on religion and freedom of conscience. This must not stand. Our Baptist forebears died and went to prison to secure these freedoms. It is now our calling to stand in the gap and defend our priceless First Amendment religious freedoms.”

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