



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 18, 2011

## U.S. Ambassador to Malta Criticized in New State Dept Report

The U.S. Ambassador to Malta, Douglas Kmiec, believes that a new report by the State Department indicates that it is intolerant of religious expression.

In a [41-page report](#) released on April 7, the State Department accuses the Pepperdine University law professor and friend of President Obama of being an outspoken Catholic, rebuking him for spending too much time writing and speaking on subjects such as abortion and religious beliefs. The report concludes that Kmiec spends far more time on his religious writings than on his duties as an Ambassador.



Kmiec is declared to be far too focused on “outside activities” that “have detracted from his attention to core mission goals” in the Mediterranean island nation, to include promoting maritime security and American business. The report adds, “The ambassador should focus on embassy priorities and refrain from outside activities, including writing and speaking engagements that do not pertain directly to strengthening maritime security, promoting U.S. trade and investment and other mission goals.”

While the report accuses Kmiec of spending several hours per week on his religious writings, it does not include any particular comments from him.

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*The Blaze* notes,

[The report] acknowledges the wide respect for Kmiec in the conservative, Roman Catholic country of Malta, but notes that his articles distract him and his embassy officials by forcing them to carefully review his writing.

Kmiec eventually responded to the criticism in the report:

I must say that I am troubled and saddened that a handful of individuals within my department in Washington seem to manifest a hostility to expressions of faith and efforts to promote better interfaith understanding. Our constitution proudly protects the free exercise of religion — even for ambassadors.

According to *The Blaze*, Kmiec is no stranger to controversy:

His support of Obama has made him a target of conservative Catholics. In the past, he has even been denied Communion by one priest. According to *First Things*, he was heavily criticized in 2008 for saying, “I do not understand Senator Obama to be pro-abortion.”

In fact, Kmiec has admitted that he felt it was “especially odd” that he was targeted, particularly because of his friendship with Obama. He claims that it was in fact his shared sentiment that “too much



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of politics had been used to divide us, sometimes by excluding people of faith” that solidified his friendship with the President.

The Associated Press adds that the report is the second “critical assessment of a politically appointed ambassador this year and illustrates the pitfalls that presidents can face when they appoint noncareer diplomats to ambassadorships, often as a reward for their political support.” The AP continues:

A February report blasted the 14-month tenure of Cynthia Stroum, a big Obama donor who became Ambassador to Luxembourg. It described her service as fraught with personality conflicts, verbal abuse and questionable expenditures on travel, wine and liquor. Things were so bad in the wealthy European nation that some staff requested transfers to Iraq and Afghanistan, the report said. Stroum resigned effective Jan. 31, just days before the scathing assessment was made public.

Some believe that the report released by the State Department on Kmiec is not related to his religious writings, but may in fact truly be a healthy criticism of his work. Jack Smith of the Catholic Key blog said of the coverage of the story by the AP:

The Associated Press gives the impression that Kmiec is being rebuked for a forthright presentation of his “pro-life” views, when he was doing nothing of the sort. I don’t think the president is at all upset with the way Ambassador Kmiec has presented his views on abortion; it’s why Kmiec got the appointment in the first place.

Smith offers another theory, instead: Perhaps Hillary Clinton is considering a presidential bid and does not want Kmiec to “campaign” for Obama.

An updated report from the Associated Press indicates that Kmiec announced on April 16 that he will [resign his post](#). In letters addressed to both President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Kmiec indicated that he would step down from his position as Ambassador to Malta on August 15.

The State Department has not issued a comment on Kmiec’s announcement.

*Photo: Kmiec being sworn into office as [United States Ambassador to Malta](#) by Justice Samuel Alito*



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