



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on January 22, 2010

## Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition

On Friday, a Michigan-based supplier of advanced optical gun sights for use on military weapons announced that it was discontinuing its practice of engraving the side of the sights with references to the chapter and verse of scriptures from the New Testament.

Given the timing of the decision, it stands to reason that the primary impetus for this policy shift began with the backlash brought on after [reports of the sights thus engraved were published by abcnews.com](#) earlier in the week.



According to the series of reports, Trijicon was recently awarded a \$660 million multi-year contract to provide the United States armed forces with the high-tech sights and to date had delivered hundreds of thousands of them. The Bible-verse quoting sights were being used by soldiers and Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan. Not only American soldiers and Marines were issued the sights, however, for Trijicon had delivered thousands of its Advanced Combat Optical Gunsights (ACOG) to the armed forces of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

In the days following the first abcnews.com article, complaints from predictable corners began bellowing. First there was the Muslim Public Affairs Council, followed by the Council on Islamic-American Relations. Both groups expressed outrage that guns engraved with messages about Jesus were being used to kill Muslims. Such a practice, they claimed, would encourage the view shared by many Muslims that the armies of the West were no more than modern-day crusaders and not the liberators they claim to be. Apparently, even the passive buttressing of this opinion by the inclusion of coded references to verses of the bible engraved in tiny script on the side of a scope on a high-powered weapon that would be unlikely to ever be seen much less understood by an enemy combatant would so enrage and embolden the foe, so as to greatly increase the danger faced by the American military in Iraq and Afghanistan.

A familiar gadfly buzzing around anything with even a whiff of religion mixed with military is the Military Religious Freedom Foundation. Although a spokesman for the group, Michael Weinstein, claims that many of its active-duty members have complained to commanders about the inclusion of the bible verses on its materiel, there is nothing in the news archives on the organization's website that would reveal any such outcry.

[In a statement](#) that is so melodramatic that it comes across as farcical, Weinstein calls Trijicon's scripture engravings unconstitutional and warns that use of the engraved sights "allows the Mujahedeen, the Taliban, al Qaeda and the insurrectionists and jihadists to claim they're being shot by Jesus rifles." Curiously, Weinstein doesn't similarly decry the undeniable fact that all of the rifles (and probably the very computer he used to compose the press release) were purchased with money inscribed with the words "In God We Trust."



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Beyond the band of usual suspects, on Monday an influential voice joined the chorus of condemnation — General David Petraeus, the commanding general of United States Central Command, the unit in charge of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. On Friday morning, General Petraeus addressed the Institute for the Study of War, a D.C.-based think-tank wherein he described Trijicon's policy of engraving weapons with bible verses as "disturbing" and "a serious concern." He assured the audience that the bigwigs at the Department of Defense had "considerable discussions" with the sight makers.

Within hours of Petraeus's public denouncement, Trijicon's President and CEO, Stephen Bindon, released a statement announcing the removal of the references from all future sights and the delivery of hundreds of kits for the removal of engraved sights already in use in the field. "Trijicon has proudly served the U.S. military for more than two decades, and our decision to offer to voluntarily remove these references is both prudent and appropriate," reads the press release. Bindon goes on in the letter to thank the Department of Defense for its patience and reassures its biggest benefactor that the removal kits are being sent out posthaste.

For its part, the Pentagon predictably praised Trijicon for its timely and "voluntary" capitulation that thus quelled the controversy. Defense Department spokesman Geoff Morrell reminded the world that it was not the "policy of the Department of Defense to put religious references of any kind on its equipment."

However, it is still the policy of the Treasury Department to put religious references on our money. Thank heaven.

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