



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 4, 2010

Why Was Graham Disinvited From Pentagon Prayer Event?

Evangelist Franklin Graham said the Obama White House was behind the decision to bar him from speaking at a National Day of Prayer event at the Pentagon because of his comments about the Muslim religion. After the 9/11 attacks, Graham called Islam a "very evil and wicked religion." More recently, the Associated Press reported, he has said he finds Islam offensive and wants Muslims to know that Jesus Christ died for their sins. U.S. Army spokesman Col. Tom Collins said on April 22 that Graham's remarks were "not appropriate."



"We're an all-inclusive military," Collins said. "We honor all faiths.... Our message to our service and civilian work force is about the need for diversity and appreciation of all faiths." In an interview with Newsmax.TV, Graham said he discussed the matter with President Obama last week when the President paid a visit to the North Carolina home of his father, the renowned evangelist Billy Graham.

"He said he didn't know anything about it until two days prior to that meeting," Franklin Graham told Newsmax. "And I would certainly believe him. I don't think that he would say something that wasn't true, so I believe what he said." But, Graham added, "I certainly believe that it was people in his administration that said no.... I don't think the Pentagon would say no on an invitation like this without consulting the White House."

The invitation to Graham did not come from the Pentagon but from the Colorado-based National Day of Prayer Task Force, which works with the Pentagon chaplain's office on the annual prayer event, Collins said. The Task Force had chosen Graham as honorary co-chairman and main speaker for the event. Since the Army announced Graham would not be welcome, the task force decided it would not participate. Its leader, Shirley Dobson, wife of radio preacher Dr. James Dobson, denounced the Pentagon decision, saying it reeked of "political correctness."

"Enough is enough," said Dobson. "We at the National Day of Prayer Task Force ask the American people to defend the right to pray in the Pentagon."

Graham participated in a Good Friday prayer service at the Pentagon in 2003, despite the objections of some Muslim groups. But the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, which raised the objection this year, said Graham should never have been invited.

"I want to say this is a victory," the foundation's Mikey Weinstein told the Associated Press when the Army announced its decision, "but in a way it's a Pyrrhic victory because it shows how far this got. We're not exactly doing cartwheels."

Nihad Awad, national executive director of Washington-based Council on American-Islamic Relations, said having Graham at the Prayer Day event would send "entirely the wrong message" at a time when American troops are stationed in Muslim nations. "Promoting one's own religious beliefs is something to be defended and encouraged, but other faiths should not be attacked or misrepresented in the process,"



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Awad said.

Graham told Newsmax his view of the Muslim religion is based on his decades of travel and ministry in the Middle East, where he has seen evidence of religious violence and the mistreatment of women among Muslim peoples. He said the Obama administration has been excusing or overlooking human rights abuses in Islamic nations.

"It seems as though Muslims are getting a pass," Graham told Newsmax. "And you look at the violence that they have portrayed against women. It's just horrific. If you just take women alone.... And I just don't understand why the president would be giving Islam a pass."

In an interview on the Cable News Network last December, Graham said: "True Islam cannot be practiced in this country.... You can't beat your wife. You cannot murder your children if you think they've committed adultery or something like that, which they do practice in these other countries." He told Newsmax he considered revocation of his invitation to the Pentagon event "a slap at all evangelical Christians" and warned of a growing hostility in government toward conservative Christianity.

"And I don't know if it's exactly from President Obama," Graham said in the interview. "But I'm certain that some of the men around him are very much opposed to what we stand for and what we believe."

Newsmax noted that earlier this year an invitation to Family Research Council leader Tony Perkins to speak at a prayer luncheon at Andrews Air Force Base was rescinded after he criticized Obama's call to allow avowed homosexuals to serve in the Armed Forces. A year ago Georgetown University, a Jesuit institution, covered over a crucifix above the podium where Obama was to speak, reportedly at the request of the White House. Graham predicted that religious speech will soon be restricted in the United States as in England, where a British street preacher was arrested for publicly stating that homosexuality is a sin.

"Oh, no question. It's coming," Graham said. "I think when you preach that Jesus Christ is the way the truth and the life, I think we're going to see one day that people will say, 'This is hate speech, because you're being so narrow and you're excluding other people.'"

President Obama will sign a proclamation for the National Day of Prayer, but is not scheduled to participate in any of its activities. The Justice Department has said it will appeal U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb's ruling that a government-proclaimed National Day of Prayer violates the First Amendment ban on an "establishment of religion."

Photo of Rev. Franklin Graham: AP Images



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