

Bush Disagrees with Preacher's Remarks about Islam

President Bush is distancing himself from Franklin Graham after the preacher and close ally of the Bush family recently called Islam "wicked and violent." According to NBC News, Graham reiterated his comments on Nov. 16, the first day of Ramadan, the holiest season of the Muslim year.

Graham, president of the Christian relief agency Samaritan's Purse and son of evangelist Billy Graham, was quoted just after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks as saying: "I don't believe [Islam] is a wonderful, peaceful religion. When you read the Quran and you read the verses from the Quran, it instructs the killing of the infidel, for those that are non-Muslim."

The son of Billy Graham and the designated successor of the longtime evangelist's ministry, Franklin Graham is considered one of America's most powerful Christian leaders. He delivered the benediction at Bush's inauguration, and his father has counseled a long list of presidents.

Clarifying his statement to NBC News, Franklin Graham repeated his charge that Islam, as a whole, was evil. "It wasn't Methodists flying into those buildings. It wasn't Lutherans," he said. "It was an attack on this country by people of the Islamic faith."

However, the White House disagreed with Graham's remarks,

saying that President Bush

“views Islam as a religion that preaches peace,” and that the terrorists do not represent what Islam teaches.

Bush, eager to improve America’s reputation in the Muslim world, welcomed numerous ambassadors from Islamic countries for a traditional meal and prayer at the White House on Monday, Nov. 19 to mark Ramadan. It is believed to be the first time that Muslims participated in a formal ceremony in the official home of American presidents. In another unprecedented event on Nov. 15, the Muslim chaplain of Georgetown University officiated at the opening prayers of the House of Representatives on Capitol Hill.

Graham’s “very harsh words for the Muslim faith” are causing the most negative attention for the Bush administration, NBC News said. “A presidential friend and supporter now finds himself at odds with both the Muslim world and the message from the White House,” a network commentator observed.

Following the NBC report, Graham said: “It is not my primary calling to analyze Islam or any other religion, though I recognize that all religions have differences. In the past, I have expressed my concerns about the teachings of Islam regarding the treatment of women and the killing of non-Muslims, or ‘infidels.’” Graham said he did not intend to comment further.

-Eric Tiansay