

Praising Chaplains on the Army's 240th Anniversary

This year marked the 240th birthday of the Army Chaplain Corps. The military chaplain is an indispensable tool for our soldiers. Far too often their work goes unnoticed, but these selfless heroes provide spiritual guidance and ministry for our men and women in uniform. I urge you to join me in thanking our military chaplains for their vital role in keeping our nation safe and our troops grounded. In connection with this anniversary and the #FaithitForward initiative, I'd like to tell you a short story about retired Army Chaplain Harold T. Carlson and what a military Chaplain can provide for our service men and women. While serving in Alaska in 1991, a unit where Carlson was stationed was in the middle of an exercise. To say it was cold is a great understatement. These troops were operating in 70-degrees-below-zero conditions as a C-130 Hercules was landing. The nose of the plane came in too low and the plane, with 18 crew members on board, crashed. The temperature, though brutally cold was actually in favor of those involved, as jet fuel doesn't explode in temperatures colder than 42 degrees below zero. As the soldiers who were on board were being brought in for treatment, Carlson dutifully did his part to help. He began to minister to those involved and praying for the best of outcomes. Interestingly, as he approached one of the victims, a Canadian who only spoke French, Carlson was faced with a bit of a language barrier. Carlson had taken some French in high school and college but was not fluent. Mustering up as much as he could remember from those basic courses, Carlson simply began repeating "God loves you" in French. The incident happened late in a bitter winter evening and unfortunately took the lives of nine soldiers. Though late, and despite all grim reminders of the ultimate sacrifice, Carlson stayed through the night into the early morning hours to provide

grief counseling for soldiers and their families. Carlson is a shining example of the selfless service and support chaplains provide for the brave men and women who protect this nation. I am humbled by his service and proud to have had him serve at our own Fort Leonard Wood, where he retired in 2005. *Rep. Vicky Hartzler, R-MO, is a congresswoman from Missouri.*