

Airmen Say Air Force Is Punishing Evangelical Christians

The gay agenda's bullying tactics have escalated in the military. Evangelical Christians at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, are being persecuted for their position on gay marriage and, in some cases, are being ordered to support it.

Steve Branson, pastor of Village Parkway Baptist Church in San Antonio, told Fox News' Todd Starnes that there is "an atmosphere of intimidation at Lackland" and that "commanders and officers are pushing their agenda on the airmen."

Branson recently held a private meeting at his church, attended by at least 80 airmen, to allow the airmen to voice their concerns about their religious freedom.

"The religious persecution is happening," Branson told Starnes. "It's getting bigger every day. Gay and lesbian airmen can talk about their lifestyle, but the rest have to stay completely quiet about what they believe. There is a culture of fear in the military, and it's gone to a new level with the issue of homosexuality."

The Lackland situation comes on the heels of the possible court-martial of U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Phillip Monk, who has been persecuted for his stance on homosexuality to the point of being accused of lying about his commanding officer's actions in an interview with Starnes. Monk's commanding officer is a lesbian.

Monk was relieved of his duties after he refused his commanding officer's order to disclose his personal opinion about gay marriage.

Monk, a 19-year Air Force veteran who Starnes says has a spotless military record, attended Branson's meeting. He is the only airman who is willing to go on the record about his stance on gay marriage. Others are fearful of retribution but have spoken off the record about their feelings.

"All the guys who are active say they want to speak, but they are still afraid because they see what happened to Phillip," Branson told Starnes. "Guys who are good men are afraid to do anything because it will hurt them, cost them their career."

One airman said he was told even thinking homosexuality is a sin is a discriminatory action and was chastised in front of other airmen for his stance.

"A commander told him, 'Don't you understand discrimination—that your thought process is discrimination?'" Branson told Starnes. "The commander actually pulled up the definition of *discrimination* on Wikipedia and read it to him in front of everyone so he would understand what it was."

During basic training, one 19-year-old Christian airman was ordered to disclose his religion. When he answered "Christian," he was forced to repeat basic training.

Branson said another Christian airman told him he was written up for having his Bible out in the open, while a Muslim was allowed to publicly display a prayer rug. A colonel informed the pastor that officers are being ordered to publicly affirm and promote homosexuality.

Branson said Monk is a "good, strong man" who is "willing to pay the price."

"They picked on the wrong guy with Monk," Branson told Starnes. "Monk will be a casualty of war. He's a good-hearted person with a strong sense of right and wrong—not a religious zealot. He told me that he was taking a stand because he wanted his sons to see 'a man who stands upright and stands

for integrity.'”

A two-star general called Branson and urged him to “keep stirring the stick.”

“The general fears the persecution is going to get worse,” Branson said.