

Artist Accuses Pentagon of Censoring Religious Artwork

A print of Christian artist Ron DiCianni's "Blessed Are the Peacemakers" artwork has been removed from a military base due to a complaint regarding its religious content.

DiCianni's Tapestry Productions recently became aware of the decision made by officials at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Elmore, Idaho, responding to a complaint about the art, company officials said. It was part of a collection to honor the heroes who responded to the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

The Pentagon reportedly authorized the removal of the print, which features a modern-day policeman standing in front of a medieval knight. The flag held in the hand of the knight morphs from a medieval coat of arms into the flag of the United States. The word "Integrity" is stenciled over the image, and the verse referenced is Matt. 5:9, which says, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be named sons of God."

Mikey Weinstein, founder and president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, called the Pentagon after receiving the complaint reportedly from a non-commissioned officer at the base. Within an hour, the artwork was removed.

"We are deeply saddened as we receive more information about  this incident to see the apparent hostility of Pentagon leadership to a message that is clearly in keeping with the foundation of this country, the Air Force and whose communication is clearly protected by the First Amendment," said Tapestry Productions President Grant DiCianni, the artist's son.

"It is our belief that this message is one that the modern-day

military should be proud to embody—the idea of integrity in the service of peace,” he added. “Every war fought has been to pave the path back to peace. The military is an embodiment of the ultimate peacemaker, a pursuit blessed in Scripture. It would seem this is a message that the Air Force should be willing to foster, not censor.”

Grant DiCianni noted that Tapestry Productions has not yet been contacted by Pentagon or Mountain Home Air Force Base officials in regard to the issue despite repeated requests.

Ron DiCianni has won several Gold Medallions from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association for his book covers—which include the original designs for Frank Peretti’s *This Present Darkness* and *Piercing the Darkness* (both Crossway). DiCianni’s work has appeared on a wide range of prints and accessories, from Bible covers and bookmarks to mugs and models, as well as on scores of books.