

Pentagon Backpedals on Court-Martial for Christian Soldiers Who Share Jesus

Alliance Defending Freedom filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request Wednesday for records related to a Pentagon statement issued Tuesday that indicated members of the military could be subject to court martial for “religious proselytization.”

The Department of Defense spokesperson who made the comments backtracked in a new statement Thursday that explains, “Service members can share their faith (evangelize), but must not force unwanted, intrusive attempts to convert others of any faith or no faith to one’s beliefs (proselytization).”

“Members of our military should not be denied the very freedoms they fight to defend. Freedom of religion and speech are paramount among those freedoms,” says legal counsel Joseph La Rue. “We appreciate the Pentagon’s clarification, but little or no evidence exists of coercive proselytization in the military, so we are still troubled over what motivated the original comments.”

“We wish to ensure that the Pentagon does not deny members of the armed services the basic freedoms that the Constitution guarantees all Americans,” La Rue adds. “For that reason, Alliance Defending Freedom is serious about investigating this gross error.”

On Tuesday, Fox News reported that Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen issued a statement on behalf of the Pentagon that said that “religious proselytization is not permitted within the Department of Defense” and that “court martials and non-judicial punishments are decided on a case-by-case basis.”

The Alliance Defending Freedom FOIA request asks for copies of all communications between Christensen and others on the matter.

“Because we provide legal representation to a number of individuals who stand to be negatively impacted if this policy is enforced, we seek to determine the authority under which LCDR Christensen made the above-referenced statements,” the request states.