



MILITARY RELIGIOUS FREEDOM
f o u n d a t i o n

Monday, October 19, 2015

ATTN: Lt. Col. Don Tasker, 436 FSS/CCA, Commanding
520 Main Gate Way
Dover Air Force Base
Dover, DE 19902

Sir,

On behalf of 14 U.S. Air Force members who are subordinate personnel of the squadron you command, and whom it now represents in the matter below, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) has been informed that a particular individual VERY close to you (and likewise under your command) in your organization has been using their official position and government authority to openly and willfully proselytize the evangelical Christian faith by endorsing and soliciting participation with the non-federal entities Central DelMar Operation Christmas Child (OCC) and Calvary Christian Academy (CCA).

On October 14th, Ms. Valencia M. Branch (GS-05), who is actually your PERSONAL Command Secretary/chief administrative assistant, sent an e-mail (**see attached addendum**) to the entirety of your military organization that included an absolutely unambiguous endorsement of OCC. In her message she described an upcoming event as a "GREAT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!!!" in flagrant violation of CFR 2635.702 – Use of public office for private gain, which reads in part:

Endorsements. An employee shall not use or permit the use of his Government position or title or any authority associated with his public office to endorse any product, service or enterprise except:

- (1) In furtherance of statutory authority to promote products, services or enterprises; or
- (2) As a result of documentation of compliance with agency requirements or standards or as the result of recognition for achievement given under an agency program of recognition for accomplishment in support of the agency's mission.

In the email, it is made explicitly clear that this event is an unsanctioned partnership between your organization and OCC. The completely unambiguous, Christian-specific

proselytizing purpose of this event is also made quite abundantly clear, and is clearly not aligned with the support of your agency's mission:

“Our goal is to fill 5,000+ shoe boxes to be sent around the world as a way to **show children in desperate situations that God loves and values them**. Many of these children have never received a gift before. **Many have never heard of God's incredible free Gift of Salvation through His Son**. But a simple gift, a shoebox packed and prayed for by you could give a child hope and eternal security. **Come, partner with us and CCA, be a ‘missionary’ filling shoebox gifts and praying over them with us”** (emphasis added)

Ms. Branch has made it indubitably lucid in her very public endorsement that the prime purpose of OCC and the partnership with CCA is to evangelize, proselytize, and otherwise spread her personally preferred version of the Christian religion to impoverished children under the overwhelmingly transparent guise of giving them gifts and, in an indisputable and shocking violation of regulations, has used her official Air Force position to do so.

You, sir, are her Squadron Commander and IMMEDIATE boss/supervisor and, thus, bear the ultimate responsibility for her illicit, unconstitutional actions. **She is YOUR personal Command Secretary/chief administrative assistant, for crying out loud, sir!** There is a Constitutionally permissible time, place and manner for any military or civilian member of the United States military to effusively express and proudly and peacefully practice their religious faith (or no faith). However, the deliberate and defiant actions of your personal head administrative aid, Ms. Branch, violate all three of these religious practice constraint conditions. Thus, it is YOU, Lt. Col. Tasker, who must follow the solemn oath you (and Ms. Branch) swore to support and defend the United States Constitution and take swift remedial action to fix this unconstitutional train wreck which has just transpired on your watch, sir.

Ms. Branch’s actions also blatantly strike directly against AFI 1-1 2.12, which reads in part:

“...leaders at all levels in the Air Force must ensure that their words and actions cannot reasonably be construed to be officially endorsing or disapproving of or extending preferential treatment for any faith, belief or absence of belief.”

Ms. Branch’s actions, as fully endorsed and ratified by YOU – her Commander and immediate supervisor and absolutely one of the “leaders at all levels in the Air Force” described per AFI 1-1 above – additionally clearly and brazenly violates the Joint Ethics Regulation (DoD 5500.7-R), which strictly prohibits the endorsement of non-federal entities (Section 3-209), and DoD Instruction 5410.19, which, likewise, prohibits the providing of a selective benefit or preferential treatment to any organization (Sections 6.7.1 and 6.7.2).

Members of the United States Air Force, to include all civilian government employees of the United States Air Force, must respect the often forgotten truth that public office is not a tool that can be permissibly or Constitutionally used to spread any particular religious belief or even lack of religious belief such as atheism, agnosticism, et al. When that public or, in this specific case, military office becomes such a manifestly dangerous tool, it could best be described as a radioactive wrecking-ball of surpassing hazard, disease and risk to the unit cohesion, good order, morale, discipline, military readiness, mission accomplishment, health and safety of any military or civilian subordinates unfortunate enough to serve under such sectarian command-directed leadership. I quite assure you, sir, that our 14 MRFF clients directly under your command can fully attest to the disastrous impact Ms. Branch's proselytizing e-mail has had on THEIR unit cohesion, good order, morale etc.

Should any participation in a searingly sectarian religious program such as OCC take place, it must ONLY be accomplished under the auspices of the Chaplain's Office and be made absolutely clear that it is SOLELY a chapel activity that is not in ANY cognizable way otherwise endorsed by the official military chain of command. In case you need any reminding, sir, YOU are the "official military chain of command" for all of those who received this constitutionally noxious e-mail from your PERSONAL Command Secretary.

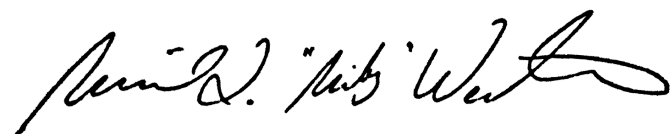
Therefore, the Military Religious Freedom Foundation demands that YOUR personal command endorsement of OCC be immediately and very publicly rescinded. MRFF further demands that appropriate and aggressive remedial actions of punishment be taken against Ms. Branch as well as any others either directly or indirectly involved (which may very well include you, sir, as her immediate supervisor and Squadron Commander) in this unscrupulous and pernicious coupling of church and state in the United States Air Force that so incontrovertibly constitutes textbook violations of CFR 2635.702, AFI 1-1, DoD 5500.7-R, and DoDI 5410.19.

FYI: In a very similar situation in February 2011 in which the National Prayer Luncheon (NPL) was being illicitly promoted and endorsed by the U.S. Air Force Academy's officer and cadet chains of command, MRFF took the Academy's illegal proselytizing promotion of NPL to Federal District Court in Denver, Colorado. In that instance, the situation was quickly remedied by the Air Force Academy before having to file an appeal from the Federal District Court to the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in order to go to trial. The Academy took the appropriate action of putting the NPL program permanently under the auspices of the Air Force Academy's Chaplain's Office rather than the command structure. Incidentally, later that same year in November of 2011 the Air Force Academy also permanently placed sponsorship and oversight of OCC itself under the auspices of the Academy's Chaplain Corps following outspoken public MRFF pressure and threats to litigate. Of course, our clients' prior lawsuit protesting NPL seemed to "encourage" the Academy to take these expeditious remedial steps towards Constitutional compliance.

In the event that you do not take an equally acceptable and timely course of remedial internal action, MRFF is prepared to likewise take this case to Federal Court, just as it did with the 2011 Air Force Academy NPL case. Will you, too, need Federal court litigation “encouragement” to do the right thing here, Lt. Col. Tasker, as did the U.S. Air Force Academy in February of 2011?

MRFF awaits your decision.

Sincerely,



Michael L. “Mikey” Weinstein, Esq.
Founder and President
Military Religious Freedom Foundation

CC:

Colonel Michael Grismer, Jr. – 436 Air Wing Commander
Colonel Donna M.G. Pike – 436 Mission Support Group
The Honorable Ashton B. Carter, Secretary of Defense
General Joseph F. Dunford, Jr. – Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
Deborah L. James – Secretary of the Air Force
General Mark A. Welsh III – Air Force Chief of Staff
Randal G. Mathis, Mathis & Donheiser P.C. – MRFF Lead Trial Counsel

SEE ADDENDUM ATTACHED BELOW

ADDENDUM

From: USAF Member's/MRFF Client's E-Mail Address Withheld
Subject: FW: //Another Volunteer Oportunity//OCC Public Packing Party - Shoeboxes
Date: October 19, 2015 at 9:52:41 AM MDT
To: Mikey Weinstein <mikey@militaryreligiousfreedom.org>

Mr. Weinstein,
I'm assigned to the 436 Force Support Squadron at Dover AFB in Delaware and I'd like to share the email below. The email was sent by my Commander's Secretary to all 400+ military and civilian employees in my unit. To me, this is clearly inappropriate, occurs far too often, and has me upset and outraged. This is overt proselytizing and in direct violation of Air Force Instruction and policy.

Respectfully,
(USAF Member's/MRFF Client's name, rank, title all withheld)

-----Original Message-----
From: BRANCH, VALENCIA M GS-05 USAF AMC 436 FSS/CCA
Sent: Wednesday, October 14, 2015 10:30 AM
To: 436 FSS Personnel Only
Subject: //Another Volunteer Oportunity//OCC Public Packing Party - Shoeboxes
Importance: High

Team FSS GREAT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!!!!!!

See info below -- Local Point of Contact: Our very own Mr Renee Valladeres in Civilian Personnel at 6774654

René B. Valladares
Media Volunteer
Central DelMar Operation Christmas Child (OCC)

Saturday, 24-Oct-2015. OCC Public Packing Party! Calvary Community Center, 1532 E. Lebanon Rd (DE Route 10, near Dover AFB). It starts at 8 a.m. We plan to pack a LOT of shoeboxes, 5000+! Bring a friend or bring a group (WE NEED YOU!). See attached flyer and feel free to share in your Christian circles.

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/1532+E+Lebanon+Rd,+Dover,+DE+19901/@39.120012,-75.501513,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m2!3m1!1s0x89c7631852b9c573:0xa5300f6c60da>

635c?hl=en

Saturday, October 24, 2015

Operation Christmas Child (OCC)

Community-wide Shoebox Packing Party

Calvary Community Center (CCA) 8 am - 2 pm

(1532 E. Lebanon Road, Dover, DE)

Our goal is to fill 5,000+ shoe boxes to be sent around the world as a way to show children in desperate situations that God loves and values them. Many of these children have never received a gift before. Many have never heard of God's incredible free Gift of Salvation through His Son. But a simple gift, a shoebox packed and prayed for by you could give a child hope and eternal security. Come, partner with us and CCA, be a missionary filling shoebox gifts and praying over them with us

Everyone is welcome!

There is nothing to bring and no charge to participate.

Bring your family, friends and neighbors.

For more information contact Central Delmar area coordinator Kathe Wagner

(410) 725-1260 or centraldelmarocc@gmail.com
<<mailto:centraldelmarocc@gmail.com>>

Monday, 16 November to Monday, 23 November 2015, OCC National Collection Week (for Shoeboxes). Drop off your shoeboxes at a local collection center. See attached flyer or go to the following website to find a location near you.

<http://www.samaritanspurse.org/operation-christmas-child/drop-off-locations/>
<http://www.samaritanspurse.org/operation-christmas-child/drop-off-locations/?utm_source=OCCFacebook&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=m_YOCC-15SM&utm_content=DropOffLocator2015FB>

** - OCC (www.samaritanspurse.org/what-we-do/operation-christmas-child/) is a

project of Samaritan's Purse ([samaritanspurse.org](http://www.samaritanspurse.org) <<http://www.samaritanspurse.org/occ>>). Ever wonder what that means? Well the stories below should help with, what Samaritan's Purse is all about.

René B. Valladares
Media Volunteer
Central DelMar Operation Christmas Child (OCC)



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**For more information contact –
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(410) 725-1260 or centraldelmarocc@gmail.com**