



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
UNITED STATES ARMY TRIAL DEFENSE SERVICE
BAGRAM FIELD OFFICE
BAGRAM, AFGHANISTAN
APO AE 09354



AFDR-TDS

28 January 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDER, 311th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary),
Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan, APO AE 09355

SUBJECT: Rebuttal for General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand: Chaplain (1LT)
Christopher J. Antal

1. I am the Senior Defense Counsel for the U.S. Army Trial Defense Service, Bagram Field Office. CH (1LT) Antal sought legal counsel and advice from me regarding his Memorandum of Reprimand issued by you. Based upon the information below, I respectfully request that you rescind your Memorandum of Reprimand or in the alternative, file it in his local Military Personnel Records.

2. **Context.** Prior to graduating from the Chaplain Basic Office Leadership course in 2009, CH (1LT) Antal had no previous military experience. Since 2009, his entire exposure to Army has been through the New York Army National Guard (NYARNG). His first time on Title 10, Active Duty status began in August 2012, only four months before the posting of his religious Confession on his denomination website. Filing the Memorandum of Reprimand in his Official Military Personnel File is inappropriately severe given that (1) he is an inexperienced, junior officer, (2) the Army Regulation (AR) 15-6 Investigation was flawed, and (3) he is an important asset to his unit.

a. **CH(1LT) Antal is a Junior Officer.** This is CH (1LT) Antal's first deployment. This is his first exposure to the Active Duty Army. He has been a First Lieutenant for less than two and half years. He is new to his role as an Army Chaplain and an Army Officer. CH (1LT) Antal believed that his intentions in posting his Confession on a religious website were proper. He believed he was fulfilling his role as an Army Chaplain pursuant to AR 165-1, Chaplain Corps Activities, para. 3-3: "Chaplains, in performing their duties, are expected to speak with a prophetic voice and must confront issues of...moral turpitude in conflict of Army Values." His Confession is not statement of policy or politics. His Confession was a religious expression through a website which was approved by the NYARNG public affairs officer. In hindsight, the manner in which he expressed himself could have been more measured. Moreover, he should have consulted a more senior chaplain before posting his Confession given that his title and a photo of him in uniform accompanied the Confession. However, he is a First Lieutenant. As a First Lieutenant, he cannot be expected to be perfect.

b. **AR 15-6 Investigation was Flawed.** The AR 15-6 Investigation ignored key pieces of evidence, used the investigation as a fishing expedition, and misconstrued regulatory information.

AFDR-TDS

SUBJECT: Rebuttal for General Officer Memorandum of Reprimand: Chaplain (1LT)
Christopher J. Antal

i. Despite the conclusions of the IO, CH (1LT) Antal has not been deceptive to his chain of command. The only time he withheld information from his chain of command was protect to clergy-client privileged information pursuant AR 165-1, para. 16-2. Even the Command Judge Advocate of 3d Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) concluded in his legal review of the Article 15-6 Investigation: "Chaplain Antal may have avoided identifying the service member who needed his counsel to order to protect that other minister's privacy. That possibility should be taken into account when viewing Chaplain Antal's conduct in context." Despite information to the contrary, the IO erroneously construed CH (1LT) Antal's protecting privileged information as deception.

ii. The IO violated COL Greg Dreisbach's instructions. COL Dreisbach made it clear that he did not want CH (1LT) Antal's "Confession" to be circulated within his unit. However in direct contravention to COL Dreisbach's order, the IO showed the "Confession" to members of 101st ESB and casted it in a negative light. It was the IO who tainted CH (1LT) Antal's image within the unit.

iii. The IO misinterpreted military regulations. The IO misconstrued AR 670-1, para 1-10, because he failed to comprehend that CH (1LT) Antal's Confession was not political. It was a religious statement in accordance with what CH (1LT) Antal believed was his duties as a chaplain. Furthermore, AR 360-1, para. 6-8(d) and Joint Ethics Regulation, para. 2-207 are inapplicable because CH (1LT) Antal had prior approval from a NYARNG public affairs officer to post material on CH (1LT) Antal's church website and he was not being paid for his writing.

c. **CH(1LT) Antal is an Asset to His Unit.** CH(1LT) Antal's Memorandum of Reprimand must not hamper his military career, and he should not be released from Active Duty. He must continue to serve a vital role in the unit counseling and take care of the needs of his Soldiers. Despite the fact that most of the Soldiers in his unit are Catholic and CH(1LT) Antal is Unitarian, Soldiers have found him to be understanding and encouraging. CH (1LT) Antal has counseled more than 200 Soldiers in individual and group settings. CH (1LT) Antal has personally performed more than 60 worship services and spiritual fitness trainings. CH (1LT) Antal provides a weekly Unitarian Universalist Service Sunday mornings at KAF, and has provided Collective Christian Communion Services at four of the five out-sites that he has visited. In addition to those worship services, CH (1LT) Antal currently provides five services on a weekly basis. Since the first week of November, CH (1LT) Antal provided a class in meditation every Saturday at 0600 in the Fraise Chapel at KAF. Approximately, two months ago, CH (1LT) Antal began supporting a Strong Bonds Group for men in committed relationships on Friday evenings at 1900 at Camp Hudson. CH (1LT) Antal hosts a Chaplain's Tea on Sunday afternoons at 1500 at Camp Hudson. CH (1LT) Antal coordinates a couple of service projects like Platelet Donations for the ROLE 3 Hospital and recycling around Camp Hudson. Each week CH (1LT) Antal coordinates volunteers from the 101st ESB to serve local Afghan children at the Bazaar Boys School. CH (1LT) Antal also provides religious and spiritual resources to Soldiers. CH (1LT) Antal has distributed the following: 600 inspirational pocket stones, more than 200 multi-cam bandanas with Psalm 91 imprinted on it, more than 100

AFDR-TDS

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religious books from Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and other traditions, hundreds of greeting cards, and hundreds of “dog tags for kids” to parents in the unit. CH (1LT) Antal has also represented the 101st ESB during more than eight Dignified Transfer Ceremonies and continues to mentor a chaplain candidate assigned to the 101st ESB rear detachment.

3. **Conclusion.** In my seventeen years as a Judge Advocate, I have never been inundated by so many letters of support for a client. CH(1LT) Antal has impacted the lives of people around the world both military and civilian. He has integrity and a good heart, and he did not intend to create a controversy. He only wishes to serve his Country and his Soldiers. I am confident that he has learned a valuable lesson from this incident. Please allow CH(1LT) Antal to continue to serve honorably by rescinding your Memorandum of Reprimand and in the alternative, file it in his local Military Personnel Records.

//original signed//
SEAN S. PARK
MAJ, JA
Senior Defense Counsel