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Documents confirm DoD taught that Catholics, Evangelicals, Jews, Mormons are religious ‘extremists’ like Al-qaeda

WASHINGTON — More than 1,500 pages of documents delivered to the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty Monday confirm that the Department of Defense classified Catholics, Evangelicals, Jews, and Mormons as religious “extremists” similar to Al-qaeda in training materials. The documents, obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request, also reveal that the military considered the Southern Poverty Law Center’s “hate group” list a “reliable source” for that conclusion.

“Men and women of faith who have served the military faithfully for centuries shouldn’t be likened to those who have regularly threatened the peace and security of the United States,” said Chaplain (Col.) Ron Crews, USAR retired, executive director of the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty. “The materials we have received verify that the military views the Southern Poverty Law Center as a ‘reliable source’ for Equal Opportunity briefings even though it has engaged in a pattern of labeling evangelical Christians, Catholics, and other conservative and orthodox faith groups as ‘extremists.’ The documents demonstrate that the Department of Defense has chosen to rely on these biased SPLC materials to train Equal Opportunity Officers in the military.”

Earlier this year the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty uncovered a U.S. Army Reserve Equal Opportunity [training brief](#) that expressly pronounced “Catholicism,” “evangelical Christianity,” and “Mormonism” as examples of “religious extremism” like Al-qaeda, Hamas, and the Klu Klux Klan. After obtaining the training slides, the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty filed a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain all materials relating to the military training materials, including the Army’s reliance on the SPLC list of supposed “hate groups.”

“The materials we obtained establish that the U.S. military violated its appropriate apolitical stance and engaged in a dishonorable mischaracterization of multiple faith groups. Its actions harm and threaten the rights of the countless men and women defending our country who are members of these various faiths,” said Crews. “The Chaplain Alliance calls on the military to ensure that no future training briefings, or any other military actions or publications, rely on materials provided by SPLC or any other similar group that categorizes these faith groups as the equivalent of documented extremist and terrorist groups.”

The Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty is an organization of chaplain endorsers, the faith groups that provide chaplains for the U.S. military and other agencies needing chaplains. The endorsers in the Chaplain Alliance speak for more than 2,000 chaplains serving the armed forces.

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