



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON, RM 5E270
WASHINGTON, DC 20350-2000

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Ser N097/17U-146160
17 August 17

Colleagues:

Many of you have encountered Service members who have requested, or who wish to request, an exemption from policy based on moral, ethical, or religious beliefs; some of you have dealt with applicants for conscientious objector status. Given the depth and diversity of beliefs represented in our sea services, we can expect requests for both religious accommodation and conscientious objector status to continue, even increase. I therefore thought it would be helpful to review the various authorities, our respective roles, and what is expected of us in these two processes. I also want to call your attention to the attached guidance for both religious accommodation and conscientious objector requests.

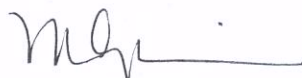
We continue to await the revised Department of Defense Instruction 1300.17, "Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services." Meanwhile, the Navy is guided by SECNAVINST 1730.8B and the 2014 update to DoDI 1300.17. The Marine Corps follows Marine Corps Order P1020.34G, CH 1-5 and MARADMIN 2017/13 for requests addressing uniform and grooming issues, and SNI 1730.8B for all others. Religious accommodation in the Coast Guard is governed by COMDTNOTE 1300 (07 Feb 2014).

DoDI 1300.17 made the Secretary of the Navy the approval authority for religious accommodation requests by Sailors and Marines. For the Navy, the Secretary of the Navy, pursuant to a June 6, 2013 Action Memo, delegated this approval authority to Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Manpower, Personnel, Training and Education (DCNO (N1)); for the Marine Corps, this authority went to the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC M&RA) (see Action Memo dated October 18, 2012). The Coast Guard approval authority varies according to the nature of the request, with final appeal to Assistant Commandant for Human Resources (CG-1). CG-1 will consult with the Chaplain of Coast Guard prior to final decision; the Chaplain of the Coast Guard requires a memorandum from the interviewing chaplain. DC M&RA does not request chaplain input.

There is a unique feature to the Navy package worth noting. DCNO (N1) expects the application to contain a memorandum from a chaplain who has interviewed the applicant and is therefore in a position to attest to the applicant's sincerity of belief. (Current instructions do not have either the interview or the memorandum). Further, DCNO (N1) asks that I submit a memorandum recommending approval or disapproval of the request. The chaplain's memorandum forms the basis of my recommendation and, by extension, is an integral part of N1's decision.

Regarding conscientious objection, all three services require a chaplain interview and written opinion as to the nature and basis of the member's sincerity and depth of conviction (see, MPM 1900-020 §10; MCO 1306.16F §4.d.(3); COMDTINST 1900.8 §7.c.). The chaplain's memorandum enables me to make an informed recommendation to the approval authority, should they ask.

Because of the importance of the chaplain's memorandum in resolving religious accommodation requests in the Navy – and conscientious objector requests in all naval services – and the need for consistency and professionalism, my office has generated the enclosed guidance for conducting the interviews and writing the memoranda. Please be thorough and disciplined in your use of these resources, ever-mindful of the value of our unique voice in these deliberations.



M. G. KIBBEN
Rear Admiral, CHC, U.S. Navy
Chief of Chaplains

- Enclosures:
1. Religious Accommodation Interview Checklist
 2. Religious Accommodation Memorandum Template
 3. Guidance for Interviewing Prospective Conscientious Objector