

**BY ORDER OF THE
SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE**

AIR FORCE POLICY DIRECTIVE

52-2

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Chaplain



**ACCOMMODATION OF RELIGIOUS
PRACTICES IN THE AIR FORCE**

COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY

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This Policy Directive implements Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1300.17, *Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services*. It establishes Air Force policy for accommodation of religious practices. This publication is applicable for all uniformed members of the Regular Air Force, Air Force Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Academy, and Reserve Officer Training Corps cadets. Ensure all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Instruction 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, and disposed of in accordance with the Air Force Records Disposition Schedule located in the Air Force Records Information Management System. Refer recommended changes, questions, or conflicts between this and other publications to the Air Force Chief of Chaplains Office, Plans and Programs Division (AF/HCX) on Air Force Form 847, Recommendation for Change of Publication, through the appropriate functional chain of command. This directive may not be supplemented.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This publication has been substantially revised and must be completely reviewed. It adds pre-accession religious accommodation responsibilities and authorities. It also adds responsibilities and authorities for the Chief of the Air Force Reserve, the Director, Air National Guard (NGB/CF), and the Judge Advocate General of the Air Force.

1. Policy.

1.1. **It is Air Force policy to place a high value on the rights of Air Force members to observe the tenets of their respective religions or to observe no religion at all.** Through this policy, the Air Force maintains an environment in which people can realize their highest potential.

1.2. **The Air Force has a compelling government interest in mission accomplishment and will take this into account when considering Air Force members' requests for accommodation of religious practices.** This interest includes military readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, or public health and safety for both the individual and unit levels.

1.3. **The Air Force expects commanders and supervisors to permit individual expressions of sincerely held beliefs (conscience, moral principles, or religious).** Commanders may impose limits on such expressions when there is a real (not theoretical) adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, or public health and safety for both the individual and unit levels. Any imposed limitations will employ the least restrictive means possible on expressions of sincerely held beliefs.

1.4. **The Air Force will consider Air Force members' requests for religious accommodations from military policy, practice, or duty.** The Air Force will approve an individual request for accommodation unless the request would have a real (not theoretical) adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, good order, discipline, or public health and safety. Approving authorities must make decisions in a timely manner. Until approval of their requests, Airmen will continue to comply with directives, instructions, and lawful orders. However, Airmen have a temporary exemption from compliance in the cases of medical practices or immunization while the request is pending.

1.5. **Commanders, Chaplain Corps personnel, medical providers, judge advocates, and other subject matter experts work as a team, as applicable, to determine the effect the request for accommodation of religious practices would have on the specific military policy, practice, or duty.** The team will consider impact on mission accomplishment to include military readiness, unit cohesion, good order, discipline, public health and safety, or other military requirements.

1.6. **An Airman's expression of sincerely held beliefs may not be used as the basis for any adverse personnel action, discrimination, or denial of promotion; and in so far as practicable, may not be used as a basis for making schooling, training, or assignment decisions.**

1.7. **The Air Force will inform Airmen of approved requests for accommodation of religious practices, to include specific elements of the approval.** New requests for the same accommodation are not necessary upon new assignment, transfer of duty stations, or other significant changes in circumstances, including deployment. Approved accommodations will continue unless the Airman's commander determines a compelling government interest exists requiring a temporary or permanent withdrawal of the approval.

1.8. **Air Force policy does not preclude disciplinary or administrative action when an Airman requesting religious accommodation engages in conduct prohibited by Title 10**

United States Code Chapter 47, *Uniform Code of Military Justice*, including actions and speech that threaten good order and discipline.

1.9. The Air Force will allow qualified individuals intending to enter service to submit a pre-accession request for religious accommodation exception to policy for dress and personal appearance standards and receive a decision before entry. Qualified individuals may also request accommodation of religious practices to include diet and worship and receive a decision before entry.

2. Roles and Responsibilities.

2.1. The Chief of Chaplains (AF/HC).

2.1.1. Develops policy, guidance, and advises leadership for management of requests for the accommodation of religious practices.

2.1.1.1. Coordinates with the Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel, and Services (AF/A1) on religious accommodation policies and guidance regarding apparel, grooming, personal appearance, worship practices, and dietary practices.

2.1.1.2. Coordinates with the Surgeon General on religious accommodation policy and guidance regarding medical practices.

2.1.2. Develops policies and guidance for the accommodation of chaplains' religious beliefs.

2.1.3. Coordinates on pre-accession religious accommodation requests from chaplains with AFRS/CC, AFRCRS/CC, or NGB/A1Y, as appropriate.

2.2. Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services (AF/A1).

2.2.1. Serves as the approval authority for all requests for accommodation for religious practices pertaining to wear of religious apparel, grooming and personal appearance standards, and dietary restrictions not otherwise delegated by AF/A1.

2.2.2. Unless delegated, makes final determinations on all recommendations to disapprove dress and appearance religious accommodation requests from regular Air Force Airmen; coordinates with AF/RE and NGB/CF, as appropriate, prior to final decision to disapprove religious accommodation requests from Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard Airmen. Obtains Office of the Judge Advocate General (AF/JA) legal reviews prior to decisions on religious accommodation requests.

2.3. Commander, Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS/CC). Serves as the approval authority for regular Air Force pre-accession religious apparel requests; coordinates pre-accession requests from chaplains and judge advocates, as noted in [paragraphs 2.1.3](#) and [2.9.2](#)

2.4. Commander, Air Force Reserve Command Recruiting Service (AFRCRS/CC). Serves as the approval authority for Air Force Reserve pre-accession religious apparel requests except pre-accession requests from chaplains and judge advocates, as noted in [paragraphs 2.1.3](#) and [2.9.2](#)

2.5. Air National Guard Recruiting and Retention (NGB/A1Y). Serves as the approval authority for Air National Guard pre-accession religious apparel requests; coordinates pre-

accession requests from chaplains and judge advocates, as noted in [paragraphs 2.1.3](#) and [2.9.2](#)

2.6. Director, Air National Guard (NGB/CF). Makes final determinations on all recommendations to disapprove dress and appearance religious accommodation requests from National Guard Airmen and serves as the approval authority for all dress and appearance requests not delegated to lower levels; coordinates with AF/A1 prior to final decision to disapprove religious accommodation requests from National Guard Airmen. Obtains legal reviews from NGB/JA (coordinated with AF/JA) prior to decisions on religious accommodation requests.

2.7. Chief, Air Force Reserve (AF/RE). Makes final determinations on all recommendations to disapprove dress and appearance religious accommodation requests from Air Force Reserve Airmen and serves as the approval authority for all dress and appearance requests not delegated to lower levels; coordinates with AF/A1 prior to final decision to disapprove religious accommodation requests from Air Force Reserve Airmen. Obtains legal reviews from AFRC/JA (coordinated with AF/JA) prior to decisions on religious accommodation requests.

2.8. The Surgeon General (AF/SG).

2.8.1. Serves as the final appeal authority for all denials of requests for accommodation for religious practices pertaining to occupational health requirements and medical practices. AF/SG may delegate this authority no lower than the Air Force Medical Operations Agency commander.

2.8.2. Develops policies and guidance for the exemption of specific medical duties based on medical providers' religious beliefs.

2.9. Office of the Judge Advocate General (AF/JA).

2.9.1. Advises the Secretary of the Air Force and the Air Staff, with the General Counsel as appropriate, on religious liberty and religious accommodation policy.

2.9.2. Coordinates on pre-accession religious accommodation requests from judge advocate candidates with AFRS/CC, AFRCRS/CC, or NGB/A1Y, as appropriate.

2.9.3. Nothing in [paragraph 2.9](#) or its subparagraphs is inconsistent with Headquarters Air Force Mission Directive (HAFMD) 1-14, *General Counsel and The Judge Advocate General*.

2.10. Immediate commanders may resolve requests for accommodation of religious practices that do not require a waiver of policies regarding the wearing of military uniforms, the wearing of religious apparel, or Service grooming, appearance, or body art standards.

BARBARA M. BARRETT
Secretary of the Air Force

Attachment 1

GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

References

Title 10 United States Code Chapter 47

DoDI 1300.17, *Accommodation of Religious Practices Within the Military Services*, 10 February 2009

HAFMD 1-14, *General Counsel and The Judge Advocate General*, 29 December 2016

AFI 36-2903, *Dress and Appearance of Air Force Personnel*, 7 February 2020

AFI 48-110, *Immunizations and Chemoprophylaxis for the Prevention of Infectious Diseases*, 16 February 2018

AFMAN 36-2032, *Military Recruiting and Accessions*, 27 September 2019

AFI 33-322, *Records Management and Information Governance Program*, 23 March 2020

Prescribed Forms

None.

Adopted Forms

AF Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*