



2000 Airmen, Guardians are Denied COVID-19 Vaccine Religious Exemptions

Description

Setting a dangerous precedent, the US Military is outright denying religious exemptions for COVID-1984 jabs, a fundamental constitutional right. We are witnessing the greatest purge of people of faith and conscience the West has seen in centuries.

Air Force and Space Force commands have turned down more than 2,000 requests for religious accommodations to the COVID-19 vaccine mandate, while not approving any, the Department of the Air Force announced Dec. 22.

Airmen and Guardians whose religious accommodation requests are denied by their major command or field command can appeal the decision to the Surgeon General of the Air Force. But so far, no appeals have been successful—DAF has turned down 135, approving none.

Those whose appeals are denied may separate or retire, if able. After that, those who still refuse the vaccine “will be subject to the initiation of administrative discharge.”

While 2,130 requests have been denied, there are still 8,636 Airmen and Guardians across the Active-duty, Reserve and Guard who still have religious accommodation requests pending with their MAJCOM or FLDCOM, as well as 152 pending with the Surgeon General. But “based on the number of disapproved accommodation requests at this point,” service members are “encouraged to consider that operational requirements could result in requests for religious accommodations being denied,” the Air Force said in a statement.

According to [Department of the Air Force Instruction 52-201](#), a Religious Resolution Team of commanders, chaplain corps personnel, medical providers, judge advocates, and other subject-matter experts [work to evaluate](#) religious accommodation requests before making a recommendation to the commander. As part of that process, a chaplain conducts an interview with the person seeking the exemption.

DAFI 52-201 contains a checklist for chaplains to consult as part of that interview, asking chaplains to evaluate whether the person’s beliefs “seemed honestly, consistently, and sincerely held” based on

five factors:

- Requestor is credible (consistently keeps tenets, practices, etc.).
- Requestor's demeanor and pattern of conduct are consistent with the request.
- Requestor participates in activities associated with the belief(s).
- Other persons supporting the claim are credible.
- Request is supported by letter(s) of verification or endorsement from an organization espousing the beliefs, which are the basis for the claim.

The checklist also calls for the chaplain to discuss "alternate means of accommodating the practice" and to decide if the requestor "identified the substantial burden" of the Air Force rule that he or she feels infringes upon religious freedom.

However, the interview with the chaplain isn't the only factor in determining whether to grant a request.

"Although the chaplain may advise the member's belief is sincere, MAJCOM and FLDCOM commanders have to balance that member's interests against the overall impact on operational readiness, health and safety of members and good order and discipline within the unit," Undersecretary of the Air Force Gina Ortiz Jones said in a statement.

by Greg Hadley

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