

Get to Know Your Chaplain Corps

Military Chaplaincy Review

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A Discussion with the U.S. Army Europe and Africa (USAREUR-AF) Office of the Command Chaplain (OCHAP)

Tell us about the mission and purpose of your element

The USAREUR-AF Chaplain section is responsible for Army Religious Support and Advisement across unified land operations (ULO), advises the Army Service Component Command commander (and on order, the commander of the Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command) on religion and its impact on all aspects of ULO, and exercises technical supervision over subordinate chaplain sections (CSs) and unit ministry teams (UMTs). In addition, OCHAP ensures UMT readiness and provides annual Theater-wide professional development training for all subordinate and tenant command CSs and UMTs, as well as facilitates Allied/Partner interoperability RS in support of the Sustainment warfighting function.

The OCHAP has three priorities that align with the Commanding General's Lines of Effort: Ministry, Readiness, and Interoperability. The OCHAP's most essential task is to empower chaplains down to the lowest echelon to minister to and care for Soldiers and their Families. Second, we ensure readiness for all UMTs and Chaplain Sections through personnel management, training and operations integration. Finally, OCHAP builds partnerships with allies and partners by applying the principle of multinational religious support interoperability (MRSI) with NATO allies' and partners' chaplaincies.

What's one thing you'd like the rest of the Chaplain Corps to know about your element?

In May 2024, Fr. (Maj) Phillip "Pip" Smith joined the OCHAP team as part of the Military Personnel Exchange Program (MPEP) with the British Royal Army Chaplains Department (RACHD). He comes to us from the First Battalion of the Irish Guards (1IG) and serves as a Deputy Operations Chaplain in the USAREUR-AF OCHAP. Padre Smith is the first international Army Chaplain to serve as an MPEP. His presence highlights the need for interoperability daily. Dialogues about perspectives and

capabilities foster greater understanding about each nation's mission and chaplaincy. Operating as a team builds trust and encourages dependence on each other.

Get to know our new teammate

Padre Smith was borne in South London not far from the Wimbledon Tennis grounds. He felt called to the Catholic priesthood at the age of 14 and after finishing a bachelor's degree in theology, he entered formation for the Priesthood at St. John's Seminary in Womersley. After ordination, Pip served under a Parish Priest who was a British Army Chaplain in the 1970s and 80s. Through hearing his mentor's stories during this time, God stirred in him a burden to serve Soldiers. Pip initially commissioned as a reservist Chaplain until 2013 when he entered full-time service as a Chaplain in the Army. He has ministered in multiple and diverse units as well as a variety of locations such as Estonia, Germany, and Canada. He states: "It has been the greatest privilege to serve as a Chaplain to so many soldiers and officers during all the highs and lows of their lives." After applying for and being selected for the MPEP, Pip joined the OCHAP Team in June 2024. As for goals during this two-year assignment: "My own Chief of Chaplains is keen for me to not only learn about the U.S. Chaplaincy but also understand how U.S. Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists work. On a personal level, I am looking forward to making friendships that will last long into the future."

Tell us about a project your element has been working on

The implementation of the USAREUR-AF command LOE "Build Partnerships and Interoperability" is being accomplished through applying the principle of MRSI. This leads to shared training, and serving as the proponent for, and participating, in multinational assessment, and planning committees studying religious support in land formations during large-scale combat operations (LSCO). The most important of those activities are the following:

- Working with the Armed Forces of Ukraine Military Chaplaincy Services (AFU MCS) in establishing a training initiative for Ukrainian Military Chaplains.
- Serving as the proponent for the NATO Land Forces Chaplains Consultative Committee (NLFC3) consisting of representatives from 14 NATO member Chiefs of Chaplains and Chaplains General.
- Serving as the office of primary record (OPR) for the US European Command (USEUCOM) Religious Affairs office's State Partnership Program (SPP) for participating European countries and State JFHQ Religious Affairs offices.

Why is your element so crucial to the mission of the Chaplain Corps?

With the Russian invasion of Ukraine, USAREUR-AF OCHAP, as well as all NATO member chaplaincies, are observing LSCO in the 21st century for the first time. Those observations are contributing to substantive collaborations enhancing readiness for the very real threat of the expansion of the war in Ukraine by refining and developing doctrine and sharing training with allies. Those lessons learned are important to the Chaplain Corps because they are applicable in all theaters.

Members of the UAREUR-AF OCHAP team

USAREUR-AF Command Chaplain—Chaplain (Colonel) Thomas S. Helms

USAREUR-AF Chief Religious Affairs NCO—Sergeant Major Faustin Desir

USAREUR-AF Deputy Command Chaplains—Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) John L. Craven

USAREUR-AF RS Mobilization & Interoperability Officer—Rev. Dr. J. Matt Woodbery

USAREUR-AF Plans and Ops Chaplain—Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) K. Loren Aderhold

USAREUR-AF OP-ADOS Deputy Operations Chaplain—Chaplain (Major) Brad E. Beier

USAREUR-AF Deputy Operations Chaplain—Father (Major) Phillip “Pip” Smith

USAREUR-AF RA Training, Plans and Ops NCOIC—Staff Sergeant Lauren C. Baldwin

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