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## **Weekly Newsgram - October 10th 2018**

### **Chaplain helps Jewish Soldiers celebrate their faith, holidays while in Afghanistan**

[BAGRAM AIRFIELD, Afghanistan](#)



Army Chaplain (Capt.) David Becker is on a special six-week temporary duty, or TDY, to Afghanistan to minister to Soldiers of Jewish faith and to celebrate the many Jewish holidays that fill the calendar from late August through early October.

Becker explained that the TDY request came from the Army's Chief of Chaplains office. "They sent a rabbi to theater to travel around this country to be specifically catering to Jewish Soldiers, which I've had the opportunity to do," Becker said, adding he has ministered here at Bagram Airfield, Kandahar Airfield, and in Kabul.

Back home, Becker is a pulpit rabbi and has served as a vice principal in Jewish day schools for the past 18 years. He is also assigned to the 640th Aviation Support Battalion, Combat Aviation Brigade, 40th Infantry Division, Army National Guard, Joint Training Base at Los Alamitos, California.

This trip allowed him the opportunity to merge both worlds in a different setting than back home.

"I have the opportunity to activate my patriotism and love for my country, which is deep and vast, along with my absolutely unfathomable spirit for Judaism and my fellow Soldiers in an environment where they would not necessarily get to have that opportunity," Becker explained. "Coupled with those feelings, it's unlike any mission that I've ever experienced outside of the Army. It fills me with a sense of awe and appreciation for the Army, for my country, and for my God."

Of great importance this time of year is Yom Kippur -- also known as the Day of Atonement -- when special prayers are made for repentance. It is the holiest of all Jewish holidays. It is a time of reparation to account for one's sins and a renewal of spirit to improve in life.

Another important holiday that was recently celebrated was Sukkot, also known as the Festival of Booths, which runs seven days in late September.

"It reminds us of the great comfort the Jewish people experienced while traveling in the desert. God provided for everything in a forlorn environment," Becker explained.

Today, Jewish people build booths outside their house to celebrate the festival and spend time in them, especially during meals, Becker said. The booths are symbolically considered to be God's shelter, providing for believers' every need, not only in biblical times but in current times as well.

"So you will find that the Jewish year is a re-creation, through its festivals and holidays, of the Jewish experience in the desert as they traveled for 39 years throughout the desert," Becker said.

Accompanying him in Afghanistan is Army Master Sgt. Capricia Turner, who has served for 18 years. She is a religious affairs non-commissioned officer, 38th Infantry Division, Indiana National Guard.

The pairing seems a bit odd at face value, as Turner is of Christian faith. As it turns out, this mission has been an eye-opening blessing in disguise.

"I think it's very interesting, and again I go back to it as a Christian. We learn that this is how Jesus worshiped," Turner said. "And I enjoy seeing and learning the different scriptures that people of the time would have worshiped and read. And, it's a lot of fun."

This is Turner's first trip to Afghanistan. She said the requirements for being in theater and assisting a Jewish chaplain are somewhat different than her duties stateside.

"One of the main things really have been preparing his services, preparing our air movement requests, and getting sent around the country accommodating his religious needs, as well as making sure we're abiding by those needs for other Soldiers," she said.

For one attendee at the services on Bagram Airfield, having someone minister during these Jewish holidays is always welcome, especially during Yom Kippur. "It's atonement, obviously reflecting on the past year in conjunction with the new year,

This trip, Becker said, has been like no other. "People are absolutely floored I'm here ... that the Army cares enough to provide a rabbi for their needs. And I come with a whole wealth of goodies, food, and ritual experiences," he said. "I put my whole heart and soul into building up our Soldiers."

full article [here](#)



## In Memoriam

### **Chaplain Benjamin Killian**

Lieutenant Colonel, United States Army, retired

deceased September 30, 2018

United Methodist

Landrum, South Carolina

## Executive Director's Notes

This past Thursday I was fortunate to be able to attend the Women Veterans' Summit in Knoxville, supported by [Vet to Vet Tennessee](#). V2VT is one of MCA's strategic partners with the Veteran/Military Friendly Congregation (VMFC) ministry. They along with along with the Episcopal Church's lay men's organization, [The Brotherhood of St. Andrew](#) (BSA) work together to help congregations across our land to be more military friendly



Fortunately, the key organizers for VMFC were both present, Ed Junod, the president of Vet to Vet Tennessee, and Everett Price, the VP/Military Outreach, of BSA. As well as presenting information on the VMFC program, I was also able to learn about new initiatives the VA is taking to support women veterans. I was surprised to hear that the VA has had a Women's' Call Center operational- since 2012. Remarkably, some of those in attendance from the VA were not aware of this until they heard about it at the conference.

This call center had more than one million calls this past year, and actively reach out to women service members as they transition from active or reserve component duty, calling them to ask

why they had not enrolled in the VA if the VA does not have an enrollment form. This is a remarkable initiative for the VA, and one they are taking very seriously. I was very impressed by what I heard and saw, and in the realm of women veterans' healthcare, the VA is moving out smartly to contact and provide services in a very intentional manner.

With the same intentionality, I trust that you will join us for our National Institute from 5 to 7 November at the Sheraton Arlington Hotel. I am working today on finalizing my presentation for those of you who may want to attend the VMFC workshop and will certainly enjoy helping to provide you with the tools you need to see if your local congregation would like to be a member of this remarkable outreach program.

And with that said, I will now get back to finishing my work to so that I can present it to you in a cogent and organized fashion!

**Fr. Razz Waff, DMin, BCC**

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## **94th AAMDC chaplain makes history**

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii - U.S. Army Col. Khallid M. Shabazz, the chaplain for the 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command was promoted to the rank of Colonel, which is the highest rank attained by a Muslim Chaplain, on October 4, 2018, at Hickam Officer's Club, here.

U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Michael T. Morrissey, Commander of the 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command, presided over the ceremony.

Khallid's path to this new rank was far from assured early on in his Army career. Shortly after converting to Islam, then-Sgt. Khallid Shabazz struggled to find his way while his devout Lutheran family and fellow Soldiers questioned his move. And with a few Article 15s for insubordination on his record, Shabazz, a field artilleryman at the time, wanted out of the military.

Then, one day while training out in the field, an Army chaplain approached him and struck up a conversation. "Honestly, it was like a revelation from God," Shabazz said. "When it hit my ears, I knew that was what I was going to do in life. It was incredible."

The Christian chaplain had told Shabazz, who was a teacher before he joined the Army, that he should consider being a Muslim chaplain. That way, the chaplain said, he could help other Muslim Soldiers in need of guidance.

Shabazz later became a chaplain, and proudly wore his uniform with the Islamic crescent moon stitched onto it. The career change was a catalyst for him, as he went on to achieve several other goals.

General Morrissey had the opportunity to share some kind words about the newly promoted Col. Khallid M. Shabazz. "For those of us who know Khallid, he is a force of nature, a force of personality, one of those unique types that I like to describe as someone you meet and you feel like you've known them your whole life," said Morrissey. "Troops naturally gravitate towards him."

Col. Khallid M. Shabazz has attained the highest rank by a Muslim Chaplain, which is a phenomenal achievement. Shabazz hails from Alexandria, Louisiana; he has obtained numerous degrees during his lifetime and is also a published author. Above everything, he cites his family as his greatest source of inspiration.

Shabazz shared much of his spotlight, with his partner in life, his wife Rhonda. "We've been doing this thing for 28 years and she is not my backbone, honestly, she's the gristle that holds my backbone together," Shabazz remarked. "I appreciate you and I love you."

The promotion ceremony included remarks by Brig. Gen. Michael T. Morrissey, the oath of office,



**Col. Khallid M. Shabazz, the Chaplain of the 94th Army Air and Missile Defense Command, stands in the middle of a prayer circle during the closing prayer of his promotion ceremony on Oct. 4, 2018.**

# MCA National Institute and Annual Meeting 2018

## *Chaplaincy in a Post Truth World*



**November 5, 6 and 7, 2018**  
**Sheraton Pentagon City, 900 S Omre Street, Arlington VA**

**November 5th -**  
**National Executive Committee Meeting all day**  
**Member Reception 1800**

**November 6th -**  
**Optional Seminars - 0900 - 1200**  
**Sustaining Members Luncheon - 1230 - 1330**  
**Plenary Presentations 1330 - 1700**  
**Awards Banquet 1800 - 2100**

**November 7th -**  
**Memorial Service - 0900**  
**Annual Meeting - 1030**  
**Key Note Address - 1100A**

***Meeting registration form on the MCA website soon***

***Note: the United States Army Chaplain Corps Regimental Association will be meeting at the Sheraton Pentagon City immediately following our meeting - for more see their website [here](#)***

### **MCA Hotel Registration**

**<https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/events/start.action?id=1808278715&key=20434C92>**

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If you missed the October 3rd edition of the Newsgram [click here](#)

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