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The Voice for Chaplaincy - Chartered by Congress - Serving Since 1925

Weekly Newsgram - February 21st 2018

Cobra Gold 2018 **Chaplains Making a** **Difference**

Cobra Gold 18 is an annual exercise conducted in the Kingdom of Thailand and runs from Feb. 13-23 with seven full participating nations. Beginning in 1981, the United States has joined with Thailand every year since to further our friendship and combined capabilities.



Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Ian M Kinhead

As part of this year's exercise, Lieutenant Aroon Seeda (recipient of the MCA Distinguished Chaplain Award 2017), a Buddhist Navy chaplain from Victorville, California, was put on orders and included in the Marine Corps component of participants.

In 1988, then only 12 years old and a boy in Thailand, Chaplain Seeda was walking along the beach. He became enthralled by the action of watching Marines land as part of the Cobra Gold exercise. His interaction with the Marines that day inspired the young lad from the Rayong province of Thailand to learn English and eventually join the U.S. Navy as a chaplain. Now, many years later he is taking part in the same exercise.

This year, for the first time in the history of Cobra Gold, Seeda succeeded in arranging a meeting of U.S. and Royal Thai Armed Forces chaplains with the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, the country's top Buddhist leader, on Feb. 12, 2018.

The meeting included Seeda, Captain James Johnson, a Christian Navy chaplain from Lake Park, Minnesota, U.S. Navy personnel and an assortment of RTAF

chaplains. "This being the 37th iteration of Cobra Gold, every single one has built on the previous one, and this time we really made a jump by having Chaplain Seeda help us meet up with the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand for the first time," said Johnson. "So for this Cobra Gold we have started a new conversation between the U.S. and Thailand to further relations."

During the meeting, Johnson, Seeda and other Sailors greeted the Supreme Patriarch with gifts, spoke with him, asked questions and shared many laughs. Seeda said being welcomed by the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand will hopefully plant a seed of happiness and understanding within people from both countries, which is more important than anything else to build a strong relationship.

"The spiritual relationship was left behind for a while, but it is very important in Thailand, because the people respect the Supreme Patriarch," said Seeda. "Even the king himself bows to his holiness. This opens the door for us to have a deeper relationship with RTAF chaplains, which means we will be able to do better community relations projects." There are many ways to build a connection with allied countries, and this day a new road is paved between the U.S. and Thailand

"It is a whole new experience for the Thai Military and Chaplain division," said Royal Thai Army Captain Suchat Sommart, a chaplain from Kamphanget, Thailand. "I had a chance to learn and widen my point of view today. I am more connected to the U.S. chaplains now."

"An exercise of this magnitude throws all sorts of lines of communication across," said Johnson. "We are communicating with allies on so many different levels and religion is a critical line of communication."

We congratulate Chaplains Johnson and Seeda and their entire Religious Ministry Team as they have once again demonstrated the critical contributions of people to people engagement to include religious and spiritual connections.

full story from DVIDS [here](#)

Lyman Smith
Director of Communications



In Memoriam ***Chaplain Alvin B. Koeneman***

Rear Admiral, CHC, USN, Retired
Chief of Chaplains June 1988 - August 1991
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
born July 1, 1933
deceased February 20, 2018
MCA Life Member
Tucson, Arizona

Executive Director Note February 21, 2018



Over the next few weeks I will be sharing with you the work of the National Executive Committee from our meeting at Fort Jackson, SC on January 23rd. However, for this first column I want to enlist your assistance in one of the goals that we have: Re-starting and/or starting MCA chapters, especially at three locations to begin, and then expanding our footprint. Given the work being done by the MCA chapter in Columbia, SC, this would add significantly to our "public presence" in these areas, as well as provide a lively opportunity for fellowship and the exchange of best practices for our profession.

As the Air Force Chaplaincy school has moved back to Maxwell AFB, and the Navy school prepares to return to Newport, RI, it would be helpful to have chapters on the ground at these two locations to welcome new chaplains into our ranks as well as greet chaplains returning for additional training. If you are in one of these areas, please email me and let me know so that we can assist you in your support of MCA for the faculty, staff and students coming into those areas. Additionally, if you are in the metro DC area and can assist in creating a chapter there, that would clearly be a plus as well. Besides being the home of the Pentagon- where our three Armed Forces Chiefs of Chaplains reside- the metro DC area is also home to the National Defense University, Andrews and Bolling Air Force Bases, Ft. McNair, Joint Base Henderson-Myer and Fort Belvoir, as well as the Belvoir Community Hospital and Walter Reed National Medical Center at Bethesda. Clearly the DC area is a "Chaplaincy rich environment" and having an active and public presence there is an obvious location for a chapter as well. We are also looking at other locations as well, but want to start off where we know we will once again have a significant presence- Maxwell and Newport- and where we know we already have chaplains on the ground in the metro DC area.

Feel free to contact me directly by email at RazzW@aol.com or by phone at 847-269-9066. Also, if you have suggestions for other locations around the country, please feel to recommend locations as well. The NEC has a working list, however suggestions from there field where you work and live are critical to our success and long-term viability.

And for those of you in the Christian tradition who have recently entered the reflective season of Lent, may your Lenten devotions and practice lead you to be able to celebrate a glorious Easter.

Peace,

Fr. Razz Waff, DMin, BCC
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Executive Director
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President's Day and Religious Freedom

Earlier this week we celebrated President's Day - a holiday set aside by our Congress to remember the actions and the individuals who have served our great land as our elected leader. Far more than a time for mattress and car sales, this day can be a time of learning and reflection as we consider the actions of those who have led our nation and the impact it has on our service as chaplains today.

Always at the for front of presidents and their lasting legacy regarding liberty and accommodation are President's Washington and Lincoln. Here are two reminders of the actions taken by these two leaders which continue to affect how we serve today.

From Jews and Presidents Day - Feb 14 2018 - [the Jewish Exponent](#)

As president, Lincoln supported the rights of Jewish soldiers to have chaplains of their own faith, promoted Jews to important political and military positions, and quickly and vigorously overruled Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's infamous order expelling Jews from his military district.

The chaplain issue seems quaint today, especially in Philadelphia, home of Rabbi Bertram W. Korn at Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel. In 1975, Korn became a rear admiral in the Naval Reserve - the first Jewish chaplain in any branch of the military to become a flag officer. By contrast, when the Civil War began, federal law required that every chaplain be an "ordained minister of some Christian denom-

ination." This discrimination created a political issue in September 1861, when a Protestant visitor to a military camp complained that a Pennsylvania regiment, under the command of Col. Max Friedman, chose a Jew as chaplain.

In his annual message to Congress in December, Lincoln urged Congress to allow Jewish and Catholic chaplains. The next July, Congress passed the appropriate legislation, and Lincoln signed it.

Jewish officers served in the Army and Navy since the Revolution, but Civil War politics expanded opportunity. Noting that the administration "had not yet appointed a Hebrew," Lincoln intervened to secure a captaincy for one Jewish man. Many other Jews served as majors and colonels.

From the Mount Vernon website - [Touro Synagogue](#)

On August 18, 1790, congregants of the Touro Synagogue of Newport, Rhode Island, warmly welcomed George Washington to both their place of worship and their city. Washington's letter of response to the synagogue, delivered on the same day, has become famous for reinforcing the ideal of religious liberty in American life. Washington promised the synagogue more than mere religious tolerance, explaining that "It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights." [Mastromarino](#)

Women's Military Chaplain Training May 29-31 2018

The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces and the Military Chaplains Association are co-sponsoring the Women's Military Chaplain Training on May 29-31, 2018 at Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center, Marriottsville, Maryland. The focus of the training is Connect, Cultivate and Contextualize. Women serving as military chaplains in all components and all services are invited to attend. Unfortunately, chaplain candidates are not able to attend.

Those attending the training will increase networking skills, resilience and pastoral identity while decreasing isolation. Chaplain (Major General-Retired) Lorraine Potter, first woman Chief of Chaplains for the Air Force, will be the keynote speaker. She will address how to cultivate a network while increasing resilience. Chaplain Potter will also share her story as the first female Chief of Chaplains of the Air Force and provide mentorship and



modeling for those in attendance.

Registration is open through April 16th. Cost is \$150 per participant. This will cover all meals and lodging.

The Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center is at 1525 Marriottsville Road, Marriottsville, MD 21104, rcbonsecours.com 410.442.3120. Each room is a single room with a private bath providing toiletries and towels. The closest airport, the Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI), 7035 Elm Road, Baltimore, MD 21240, is 22 miles away.

All meals will be served in the dining room and two hospitality rooms will provide fresh fruit and beverages 24 hours a day. If you have special dietary needs, please fill out the appropriate form available at on-line [registration](#).

More information is available at NCMAF.net

Visit our [website](#). There you will be able to [update your contact information](#), [join](#), [pay your dues](#), [make donations](#), [file ministry reports](#), contact our supporters, [read The Military Chaplain](#) magazine and otherwise [connect to resources](#).

If you missed the February 14th edition of the Newsgram [click here](#)

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