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Weekly Newsgram - June 20th 2018

[Kentucky Guard Chaplains and Djibouti religious leaders strengthen their partnership](#)



CAMP LEMONNIER, Djibouti -- As part of the State Partnership Program (SPP), Kentucky National Guard Chaplain Col. Yong K. Cho, state command chaplain and Chaplain Lt. Col. Bill Draper, senior state support chaplain, visited Djibouti, Africa, in May during Ramadan.

Lt. Col. (Chaplain) Bill Draper and Col. (Chaplain) Yong Cho visit with two KBR employees attending the Iftar on Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, Africa May 21, 2018.

The trip marks a first for the Guard Chaplaincy Corps yet Cho hopes it will not be the last. "We are grateful to the AFRICOM chaplain office, CJTF-HOA religious affairs team and our Kentucky State Partnership program director and senior leaders for the opportunity to visit Djibouti during their holy season of Ramadan."

During the visit the chaplains attended two separate Iftars, the evening breaking of the fast celebrated by Muslims during the month of Ramadan. The first was held at the home of U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti Ambassador Larry André and his wife. The second event was held on Camp Lemonnier and supported by the AFRICOM Command Chaplain's Office and the Combined Joint Task Force -- Horn of Africa Religious Affairs Office.

"The importance of our visit cannot be under-estimated. The potential to form lasting relationships between the Kentucky Guard chaplain corps and religious leaders in Djibouti will help in the overall strategic goal of bringing our two nations closer together," said Draper. "This partnership can increase our efforts to earn the trust and respect of all Djiboutians thus strengthening our ability to be an effective state partner."

In addition to attending the Iftars, Cho and Draper visited a local orphanage supported in part by the Catholic Church in Djibouti. This visit was helpful to learn how connecting with the people of Djibouti via humanitarian efforts might increase the partnership and lasting relationships together.

The SPP is a joint Department of Defense security cooperation program managed by the National Guard Bureau in support of combatant commanders' objectives and ambassadors' integrated country strategies. Through the program, a state's National Guard is partnered with a country to promote enduring, mutually beneficial security relationships. Kentucky has partnered with Djibouti since 2015.

Executive Director Notes



This week I will make two observations that at first glance have nothing to do with each other, yet are indeed linked:

The first is what seems to be a local groundswell to reinvigorate local chapters. This past week I traded emails with a chaplain for whom I have the utmost respect, and worked with on institutional chaplaincy accreditation, Chaplain Jim Taylor. Jim lives in the metro Tampa area and is more than happy to see if he can be the catalyst for a metro Tampa chapter. Tampa is not one of the "focus" cities that the National Executive Committee (NEC) has looked at. However, if a viable group of chaplains are energized and want to join Jim in his efforts, that would be absolutely outstanding. This follows a number of emails from chaplains in the metro Asheville area who have emailed and called me about doing the same thing. Time will tell if either or both are successful. After my return from Malaysia and Singapore I'll be checking back in with folks in Western North Carolina and we'll see what we can do on our end.

My second observation has to do with St. Andrew's Cathedral (Anglican) in Singapore. I visited the cathedral grounds yesterday and the history of the cathedral is remarkable. More remarkable, perhaps, is how it survived Japanese occupation after the fall of Singapore in February, 1942.

Rather than being closed for worship, it stayed open, and the Bishop of Singapore was able to continue to make pastoral visits. The reason for this was a young Japanese officer, Lieutenant Andrew Ogawa. Lt Ogawa had been sponsored for his graduate education at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania from 1929 to 1931 by the Brotherhood of St. Andrew (Episcopal Church) and himself was a member of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai, the Anglican Church in Japan. This background proved to have a remarkable trajectory for the cathedral and the Anglican diocese. More specifics about this relationship can be found at www.cathedral.org.sg/courier-online/single/transcending-enemy-lines-andrew-ogawa

Here is the connection between Jim Taylor and Lt Ogawa: Often - and I have stated it before - one person can make a remarkable difference. How can each of us make a difference for the better today? I would say that while not all of us will be making the sort of difference that Lt. Andrew Ogawa made, the example set by Jim Taylor and those who have nudged me to start a chapter are do-able.

What is a "do-able" thing that you can do today?

Executive Director
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Top Marine celebrates Ramadan at a Baltimore mosque

The top Marine was a guest at a Baltimore mosque June 7 where he stopped by for an Iftar dinner - the evening breaking of fast by Muslims celebrating the holy month of Ramadan.



The Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Robert B. Neller, center right, attended an Iftar dinner at a Baltimore mosque on June 7. (Mansoor Shams)

The Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Robert B. Neller was invited to the Masjid Bait-us-Samad just over a month ago by Marine veteran Mansoor Shams, who also founded muslimmarine.org. In an email to the top Marine, Shams said, "By you coming to the mosque, not only will you be sending a powerful message to anyone who is a Muslim in the Marine Corps, but also the rest of the armed forces."

After arriving at the Iftar dinner, Neller was given a tour of the mosque and even showed the women's section, Shams said. "We wanted to educate him, bridge the gap, and break any myths out there," Shams said.

Neller also gave a speech that evening discussing his own Catholic faith, his time in the Corps and inclusiveness of the military. "I think this was a very powerful event, it was unprecedented," Shams said about Neller's attendance at the Iftar dinner.

Shams has put together other initiatives and talks to help educate U.S. veterans and military folks about Muslim communities.

In the 29/29 initiative, Shams arranged for 29 veterans to spend the night at 29 Muslim families' homes across the United States over 29 days during Ramadan. The veterans can attend evening worship services, break the daylong fast with their host families, and then spend the night and share morning meals before fasting resumes at daybreak.

Shams coordinated the event with his friend Scott Cooper - a former Marine EA-6B Prowler pilot who now serves as the director of national security outreach for Human Rights First, an independent advocacy group. Cooper participated in the event, spending a night at Shams home.

Cooper deployed five times to Iraq and twice to Afghanistan, and also worked as a contractor in Egypt. During those deployments, he experienced first-hand the "hospitality of the Muslim faith."

"I got really close to a number of officers in the Egyptian military. I hosted some in the United States and would take them to the mosque," Cooper said. "I got a really close view of their traditions and some just really aren't that different than other religious practices, like communion in the Catholic faith."

Both men hope the 29/29 Ramadan initiative will inspire more Americans to reach out to their local Muslim communities.

[Full Article](#)



World Trade Center Health Program

PLEASE PASS THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ALONG TO: 9/11 CHAPLAINS/DISASTER SPIRITUAL CARE PROVIDERS

When 9/11 occurred, hundreds of colleagues from NYC, New York State and around the country came to my beloved neighborhood in lower Manhattan to provide disaster spiritual care in The Pit, TMORT, the various Family Assistance Centers (FACS), DMORT, on the boats with the families, at various memorial services and in so many different locations. Not only did you respond in NYC, but also in DC and PA.

I was blessed to have been the first responding officer setting up and then overseeing the American Red Cross Disaster Spiritual Care Response in New York City and then I oversaw the long term response starting later in the year. In New York City, over 800 chaplain/disaster spiritual care colleagues volunteered. More responded in NJ, DC and PA.

For many, there was and still is a significant long-term toll for responding. Physical, emotional and spiritual.

Each and every single 9/11 chaplain/spiritual care responder should and must be part of the [9/11 World Trade Center Health Program](#).

I only recently enrolled in the program. I have known about the program for years but did not feel comfortable applying. Then a 9/11 family member spoke with me. She chewed me up and spit me out for not being part of the program! She stated in no uncertain terms how outraged she was that I, someone who provided her family and friends with so much support when they needed it, was now not taking advantage of the support being offered to me which they had worked so hard to get the government to provide to the responders. She refused to let go of the issue until I finally applied and was accepted into and starting participating in the program.

Now it is my turn. 9/11 Chaplain/Disaster Spiritual Colleagues - you MUST enroll in the [9/11 World Trade Center Health Program](#).

- Enroll in the program as a form of self-care.
- Enroll in the program for your family.
- Enroll in the program to support our profession.
- Enroll in the program to be part of the many research projects that are looking at the long term impact of responding.

If you responded with American Red Cross in New York City, I have access to records so I can document your participation.

Please apply today!

Peace/Paz/Pax/Shalom/Salam
Chaplain Stephen Roberts, MBA, BCC

[Application for World Trade Center](#)

The Military Chaplains Magazine 2018 Themes and Submission Deadlines

Summer Issue - *Chaplains and World War 1*

Articles to be submitted by June 30

Publication July 23

Fall Issue - *Religious Accommodation in 2018*

Articles to be submitted by September 30

Publication September 24

Winter Issue - *Chaplaincy and Religion in a Post-Truth World*

Articles to be submitted by November 30

Publication December 21

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