

Testimony of

# Mr. Paul Rogers

October 14, 2003

October 12, 2003

U. S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary

Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security

224 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

From: Paul E. Rogers, President of the American Correctional Chaplains Association

Re: Testimony for hearing on "Terrorism: Radical Islamic Influence of Chaplaincy of the U.S. Military and Prisons."

Dear Chairman Kyl and Honorable Committee Members:

Allow me to address the prison chaplaincy side of this issue.

I am Paul Rogers, President of the American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA) and Staff Chaplain at Wisconsin Department of Corrections Dodge Correctional Institution, Waupun, WI.

I have with me today, Imam A. J. Sabree, Treasurer of the American Correctional Chaplains Association and past Chair of the ACCA Certification Committee and Assistant Manager of Chaplaincy Services for the Georgia Department of Corrections.

I would also like to direct your attention to the letter for the record of this committee that has been separately submitted by Chaplain Gary Friedman, Chairman of Jewish Prisoner Services International and ACCA Communications Committee Chair.

The American Correctional Chaplains Association (ACCA) represents correctional chaplains across the country from all different faith groups. As the very first professional affiliate (1886) of the American Correctional Association, we share in the mission of protecting society by safely securing and hopefully rehabilitating inmates.

Let me begin by stating that vast majority of chaplains - including Islamic chaplains- support the goal of providing homeland and national security.

With over 2 million men and women incarcerated across the country, terrorist recruitment in prisons and jails is indeed a potentially serious concern for the country. The religious climate in prisons today reflects that of our society with some very important distinctions. The religious diversity found across the United States is indeed seen in prisons. We certainly have well known, 'mainstream' religions represented in our prison populations but we also encounter the lesser known minority faith groups. We come in close contact with representatives of all these faith groups or religions. A distinction to be made is that since prison society is lived in a closed community, we see first hand how many faiths respond to members who are

prison. We know our local faith communities and their leaders and consult them to meet the religious requirements of their members. Equity demands that we treat all religions fairly. It may be because of prisons being isolated and closed communities that minority faith groups may appear more prominent in the general prison population than they do in the rest of society. Another reason is that racial minorities are found in prison at a greater percentage, so those racial minorities with a particular faith have greater numbers in prison.

Religious programs in prison are very active. Professional staff chaplains administer programs to respond to the religious needs of all inmates. Of civilians who choose to participate in various prison activities, the vast majority is Religious Program volunteers. While this may be true in most jurisdictions, there are areas of the country where those religious needs or even rights may be ignored or unmet due to lack of resources, distance from religious service providers, and poor administration. It is when inmates feel that they are not being treated fairly that disturbances may occur. Not all inmates may seek administrative or judicial relief to address perceived wrongs. This is one of the reasons why having a professional correctional chaplain is essential to good correctional management.

Regarding reports of prisons being infiltrated by terrorists or terrorist organizations via prison religious programs, these have been blown way out of proportion. Yes, some relatively minor situations have been identified but they were stopped before escalating to dangerous levels. Nonetheless, what should concern us are conditions that can allow these kinds of things to happen.

Unqualified chaplains and/or inadequate supervision of programs and volunteers allow opportunities for abuse of religious programs. When these conditions are present, you have the potential for problems. The most effective way to counter such conditions is to employ certified correctional chaplains to administer religious programs. Why is this not being universally done?

There are 50 states, the federal prison system and thousands of regional, county and local jurisdictions; all with differing ideas on what chaplaincy is and a variety of job requirements for chaplains. The American Correctional Association (ACA) has clear standards for what is required of a chaplain. What is a correctional chaplain?

"Much like our colleagues in the military and at hospitals, correctional chaplains provide pastoral care to those who are disconnected from the general community by certain circumstances - in this case to those who are imprisoned, as well as to correctional facility staff and their families when requested. Where permitted, we also minister to the families of prisoners.

Each correctional chaplain is also a representative of his or her faith community and is required to be endorsed by their denominational body in order to qualify as a chaplain.

Correctional chaplains are professionals, with specialized training in the unique dynamics of the corrections world. Most serve as full-time correctional facility employees or part-time contract employees." [1]

Professional chaplains also agree to abide by the ACCA Code of Ethics (attachment hereto.) Several departments of corrections across the country already subscribe to this code of ethics. For example, the New York City Department of Corrections recently adopted it for their own chaplains.

Another difficulty in having qualified correctional chaplains is that many states are experiencing serious budget deficits and have been eliminating or cutting back on their chaplains or replacing them with volunteers. If this were such a great idea, we wonder why this approach is not used in the legal departments; having volunteer lawyers from the community would save many departments of corrections much money!

By having unqualified volunteers operate in prisons without proper supervision can possibly lead to terrorist infiltration. A good correctional chaplain is familiarity with the faith groups and volunteers within the community, even minority faith groups. It is this personal knowledge of community religious resources, which is of benefit to not only inmates but the institution as well. Additionally, properly trained chaplains can distinguish between things that may be done in houses of worship in the community but are not appropriate in a correctional setting. If a correctional chaplain observes or witnesses anything in a worship service or a religious study that in anyway appears to be a threat to the institution, he or she is obligated to report it. Unfortunately, however, this is not the case in facilities that utilize unqualified chaplains or volunteers to oversee religious programs.

To fight terrorism, we must all be vigilant against our enemies wherever they might be. We, professional chaplains, can assist this cause by being an effective partner with all jurisdictions.

The American Correctional Chaplains Association has already proven its ability to support the correctional needs with its long-standing affiliation with the American Correctional Association. The American Correctional Chaplains Association now stands ready to further help by promoting the certification of all chaplains in prisons across the United States.

## AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL CHAPLAINS ASSOCIATION CODE OF ETHICS

Members of the American Correctional Chaplains Association are available for ministry to all prisoners and staff in jails, prisons, and other institutions in which they serve. Such ministry and outreach will be extended to all regardless of race, cause of confinement, sexual identity, creed, or religious belief.

The following are areas in which members are available to assist:

1. Identify and utilization of the person's spiritual resources
2. Clarification of their ethical standards and guidance for behavior in harmony with their spiritual values.
3. Guidance in deepening their sense of personal worth
4. Enhancement of their relationship to their deity, to their family, and to society.

## PRINCIPLE I

### PERSONAL CONDUCT AND ETHICS

All members are spiritual leaders, other than inmates, who participate in ministry to the incarcerated.

All Association members, volunteer or employed by the institution, uphold the highest personal conduct. Unethical conduct that clearly violates the explicit agreement to abide by the acts of discipline described in this Code shall be grounds for disassociation by the members of this Association.

## PRINCIPLE II

### PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

All members practice their ministry task as pastoral care providers through various religious activities.

Chaplains function as religious professionals within the correctional setting and do not undertake roles that are contrary to that of pastoral care provider. They are empowered by their religious judicatory to administer ordinances and/or sacraments, to counsel, and to provide worship and religious services for youth or adults in detention and correctional settings.

All members make use of their skill and training to maintain the integrity and enhance the image of religious ministry in a correctional setting.

### PRINCIPLE III

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is respected by all members. Oral and written communication is received with the expectation that such remains confidential and not divulged to others. An exception may be made where the content of such communication reveals danger to staff or prisoners and the prisoner is informed of the need for disclosure.

Religious faiths hold that confidentiality by their clergy or those with parallel designation is a sacred trust. The Seal of the Sacrament of Confession and parallel requirements by all faith groups in matters of confidentiality are recognized and respected.

### PRINCIPLE IV

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Members continue professional development in personal growth, education, spirituality and understanding of correctional issues. This development includes participation in meetings and training opportunities provided by this Association.

### PRINCIPLE V

#### FAITH GROUP RELATIONSHIPS

Members meet and maintain requirements set by their particular faith groups. Members maintain ties with their religious faith groups for purposes of support, vocational identity, accountability, evaluation, and fellowship.

Chaplains are those members who are ordained or have parallel designation, or otherwise vocationally identified, for correctional chaplaincy by their religious judicatory or its designated endorsing body representing the faith group. Chaplains are thus authorized for religious ministry within jails or prisons as designated representatives the faith group.

Volunteers, lay and ordained or who have parallel designation, have approval from their religious judicatory or appropriate religious superior in the faith group to serve as a volunteer representing the faith group in a jail or prison.

Members participate in a network or adherents to other faith groups for purposes of common concerns of correctional chaplaincy, sharing of training opportunities, informing the community of needs and objectives of correctional chaplaincy, and fellowship.

## PRINCIPLE VI

### INTERDISCIPLINARY RELATIONSHIPS

Members relate to and cooperate with persons from other professional disciplines in their work environment and community. The welfare of an individual may be enriched and enhanced by consultations and referrals by members to professionals from other disciplines.

## PRINCIPLE VII

### COMPETENCY

Members are responsible for effective ministry within the institution they serve, whether responsibility is for the overall program or for one part of it.

Members exercise their ministry without influencing prisoners or staff to change their religious preference or faith. Members conduct their ministry without communicating derogative attitudes toward other faiths.

Chaplains process all prisoner requests promptly, in order of urgency and without bias.

Chaplains balance administrative duties with direct ministry through individual or group activities, which include religious services, spiritual activities, and pastoral counseling.

## PRINCIPLE VIII

### RESPONSIBILITY

Members are primarily involved in matters directly related to the religious portion of the prisoners' institutional life and rehabilitation.

Members maintain the highest ethical standard of behavior and avoid any social, personal, financial, or political situation that might discredit their ministry.

Chaplains are responsible for planning, coordinating, and supervising all religious activities and services. They are responsible for ministry to prisoners regardless of religious beliefs or affiliation, using outside sources for assistance when needed.

Chaplains are responsible for preventing and correcting institutional policies and actions which distort, misuses, or suppress religious tenets and principles of all faith group adherents.

Chaplains uphold and promote standards for religious faith and practice within the institution which are in harmony with the Standard for Faith and Practice devised by this Association for youth and adult detention and prison institutions.

(Ballot Adoption Announced January 20, 1992, Portland, Oregon)

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[1] ACCA definition of the role of the chaplain. See [correctionalchaplains.org](http://correctionalchaplains.org)

