

Original Message

From: Park David M Col AFSPC/HC

Sent: Wednesday, June 13, 2001 10:45 AM

To: Dekok Roger G LtGen AFSPC/CV

Subject: Chaplain Service Update

Sir,

The Deputy Chief of Chaplains addressed the African American chaplains at Hampton, Virginia, last week. The conference was attended by active duty chaplains, including 3 command chaplains as well as Reserve, ANG and Chaplain Candidate personnel. Total attendance was approximately 55. The Deputy's presentation reportedly was a disaster. He allegedly lost control, was visibly angry and lacked professional perspective. African American chaplains were stunned, shocked and dismayed. They felt insulted and degraded. One chaplain reported that the only thing missing in the Deputy's briefcase was a hood and sheet. Another stated that although the "N" word was not explicitly used, that's how they felt they had been addressed. According to witnesses, the Deputy stated emphatically 4-6 times, "if you can't fall in line, if you can't be loyal, if you disagree with Air Staff leadership then get out of the Air Force!" Many African American chaplains interpreted these remarks to mean, blind obedience, unquestioned loyalty are required and if you can't serve in that capacity then pack your bags and go back to Africa. When one chaplain raised a question regarding the credibility of chaplain leadership, the Deputy responded that such a question was inappropriate and that chaplains should not be critical of their leaders. One African American chaplain responded to the Deputy that trust and credibility are virtues that are earned and cannot be solicited on demand.

When I first heard about the outcome of the meeting at Hampton, I too was stunned. I had hoped that the Chaplain Service was going to turn the corner on diversity issues and model Air Force Core Values. I have known the Deputy for 23 years and regard him as a close friend. At this point I have no explanation for what happened at Hampton. I have placed a call to talk with the Deputy, but thus far have not heard from him. I do not know his version of what occurred at Hampton. Regardless, this incident on the heels of last year's controversy with our Chief of Chaplains has left many chaplains shell shocked. I wish there was an internal fix the Chaplain Service could implement to heal itself, but more and more I am coming to the conclusion that we cannot get well without help. In my view, it will take flag officer intervention and oversight at the highest level to effect the positive changes necessary to ensure a viable Chaplain Service.

Admittedly, what I have reported to you regarding the Hampton conference is hearsay. I was not invited and consequently did not attend the conference. However, the findings I have stated were corroborated by 4 senior chaplains who did attend the conference, two of the command chaplains--one white the other

African American.

Hopefully, after the dust settles from this last incident, some resolve can be reached to allay the tensions and disappointment which now exists.

If you wish to discuss this issue further, please advise me and I'll schedule some time on your calendar. Wish the "not so good news" was better. Here's hoping for better days!

David

Original message

From: Dekok Roger G; LtGen AFSPC/CV
Sent: June 14, 2001 7:27 AM
To: Park David M Col AFSPC/HC
Subject: RE: Chaplain Service Update

David- this is indeed bad news. I, too, am shocked at the "bad" incident. Pls keep me informed as this unfolds. It has enormous implications for future of the Chaplain Service. Thx...RGD