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Army considers rescinding invitation to evangelist

AP Associated Press

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AP – FILE - In this Sunday, May 24, 2009 file photo, Franklin Graham prepares to give the invocation before ...

By DAN ELLIOTT, Associated Press Writer – 49 mins ago

DENVER – The Army is considering whether to rescind an invitation to evangelist Franklin Graham to appear at the Pentagon amid complaints about his description of Islam as evil, a military spokesman said Wednesday.

Graham, the son of famed evangelist Billy Graham, was to appear at the Pentagon on May 6 — the National Day of Prayer.

He said he will be a guest of the Pentagon and would speak only if he's still invited.

Army Col. Tom Collins said withdrawing the invitation "is on the table," but no decision has been made. He said Army brass will have the ultimate decision on whether to pull the invite.

The Military Religious Freedom Foundation raised the objection to the appearance, citing Graham's past remarks about Islam.

Mikey Weinstein, president of the foundation, said the invitation offended Muslim employees at the Pentagon. He said it would endanger American troops by stirring up Muslim extremists.

Collins said the invitation wasn't from the Pentagon but from the Colorado-based National Day of Prayer Task Force, which works with the Pentagon chaplain's office on the prayer event.

Collins said neither Army Secretary John McHugh nor Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. was aware of the invitation.

The task force organizes Christian events for the National Day of Prayer.

Task force chairwoman Shirley Dobson said in a written statement that U.S. leaders have called for a day of prayer during times of crisis since 1775 but the tradition is under attack.

"Enough is enough," said Dobson, wife of conservative Christian leader James Dobson. "We at the National Day of Prayer Task Force ask the American people to defend the right to pray in the Pentagon."

She called on President Barack Obama to appeal a ruling by a federal judge in Wisconsin last week that the National Day of Prayer was unconstitutional because it amounts to a call for religious action. The judge did not bar any observances until all appeals are exhausted.

Weinstein objected to the working relationship between the Pentagon chaplain's office and the task force, saying the chaplains have effectively endorsed the task force by using its materials and routinely inviting its honorary chairman to speak at the Pentagon.

Weinstein said that amounts to preferential treatment in violation of Defense Department rules.

Collins said the working relationship has been reviewed by Pentagon lawyers and passed legal scrutiny.

"We are an all-inclusive military. We hold observances throughout the year. This one happens to be a Christian-themed event," Collins said.

Graham is president and CEO of both Samaritan's Purse, a Christian international relief organization in Boone, N.C., and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in Charlotte.

After the 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, Graham said Islam "is a very evil and wicked religion." In a later op-ed piece in The Wall Street Journal, Graham wrote that he did not believe Muslims were evil because of their faith, but "as a minister ... I believe it is my responsibility to speak out against the terrible deeds that are committed as a result of Islamic teaching."

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Tom Tue Apr 20, 2010 01:15 pm PDT | [Report Abuse](#)

3230   106

Here in the USA we don't have a state religion. Our Constitution forbids it.

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Les P. Tue Apr 20, 2010 01:16 pm PDT | [Report Abuse](#)

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How about a Muslim speaker too.....

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Ban religion, it does more harm than good - always has!

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Why is a National Day of Prayer only for Christians? Why not include all religions?

[Replies \(80\)](#)

John Tue Apr 20, 2010 01:19 pm PDT | [Report Abuse](#)

1560   818

Wow, not a shortage of insanity as rep by listed comments. think the articles answers it all.....National Day of Prayer was set forth by our forefathers. been around along, long time. Either it was ridiculous to establish and remain in effect for all these years or the new thought is ridiculous. Christianity was prevalent then...still is today. Pretty silly people can get all upset...but then that's how their father has been for thousands of years.

[Replies \(78\)](#)

Piscean Tue Apr 20, 2010 01:20 pm PDT | [Report Abuse](#)

676   108

Evangelists and other prayer-minded people have churches and other non-governmental or publicly funded venues to spout their messages. I suggest they go there and leave my tax dollars alone. While we're at it, let's get rid of the tax-exempt status for all religious institutions - then we won't have this as an issue, we'll have far greater revenues, and it will be clear to all what "religion" is all about (control).

[Replies \(37\)](#)

RONNY Tue Apr 20, 2010 01:21 pm PDT | [Report Abuse](#)

627   276

The only one stirring up crap is Weinstein!!!!

[Replies \(12\)](#)

Committed1985 Tue Apr 20, 2010 01:22 pm PDT | [Report Abuse](#)

1381   293

Gosh, how about the Muslims calling us infidels? Guess that doesn't mean anything, does it?

[Replies \(42\)](#)

ErnestB Tue Apr 20, 2010 01:22 pm PDT | [Report Abuse](#)

700   122

Does anyone at all remember the separation of church and state. KEEP RELIGION OUT OF OUR GOVERNMENT!!!

We have soldiers in tanks handing out bibles. Who approves this kind of crap? Muslims are already looking at our actions in the Middle East like a second crusades - and they are right!

[Replies \(63\)](#)



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This guy hates Muslims and his father hated Jews. Good Christians?

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