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CHAPLAIN CONTACT WITH LOCAL
RELIGIOUS LEADERS: A STRATEGIC SUPPORT

by

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ABSTRACT

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Military commanders are confronting duties in environments where religion plays a big part of the military mission. Chaplains are one important and immediately available resource for effective work with religion. In their role as advisor to commanders, chaplains are contacting local religious leaders to build bridges of mutual understanding that foster a more secure environment for mission accomplishment between the local population and American forces. This is especially true in the Muslim communities where many of our forces are currently deployed. These actions occur because of the chaplain's unique status and capabilities that allow interfaith dialogue to occur with local clergy. This paper explores religious relationship building in support of the commander's mission particularly answering why most local indigenous religious leaders are amenable to this conversation and cooperation with a representative of an occupying force. It further studies and recommends this utilization of chaplains within an inter-agency cooperation.

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CHAPLAIN CONTACT WITH LOCAL RELIGIOUS LEADERS: A STRATEGIC SUPPORT

Fresh from the front in Iraq comes an interesting story still in the making from Chaplain (LTC) Mike Lembke, 1st Infantry Division Chaplain.

One of our chaplains is involved with an imam who wrote a FATWA (which has been blessed by Mecca) that talks about how a society can positively respond to an occupying force. Right now the writer of the FATWA is seeking an audience with the Iraqi Prime Minister to get the FATWA national airplay. While we (chaplains) do not want association with the FATWA (avoiding criticism as having forced our agenda on the imam..., which we did not), we certainly will track it as it moves through the channels. The chaplains from this area have been very involved in meeting with imams (monthly) and have regular contact.¹

This chaplain experience is repeating itself in a variety of ways, strategically, operationally, and tactically, in places where military chaplains are deploying. Chaplains are expanding their role as religious advisor to their commands contacting local indigenous religious leaders (LRLs), building bridges of mutual understanding, and fostering a more secure environment for mission accomplishment between the local population and American forces. The mutual understanding derives from sharing information about culture, customs and religion, clarifying both a community and commander's intent, and expressing shared values that may help establish relationships. The secure environment grows from supporting moderate Islam through interfaith dialogue and supportive humanitarian activities.

These efforts raise two questions that need to be addressed if uniformly successful results are to continue with this extended religious support. First, why would LRLs want to deal with military chaplains who are a part of an occupying force? Second, what approach can be used to make these contacts? Ad hoc attempts are being made by military chaplains and interagency representatives, but no standard model exists to assist this liaison activity.

It is this paper's thesis that LRLs generally respond positively to a military chaplain's unique status and are best-approached using interfaith dialogues experienced via military-interagency cooperation. The interagency model outlined here comes from lessons learned by chaplains working in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Iraq. The Islamic faith is the focus due to the current U. S. military need, though the same model is applicable to developing relationships with the leaders of other major faiths.

DIALOGUE PATH

Most LRLs accept chaplains as people of faith who can be trusted to help them deal with a community's challenges. Despite the risks involved for both, mutual need and a partially

shared faith tradition provide grounds to develop personal relationships of hope. The medium of exchange is interfaith dialogue done in different ways. This paper offers a background and definitions on faith-based diplomacy, track-one diplomacy, and bridge building, followed by the role and context of LRLs. Next, a major section reviews chaplain capabilities embraced by LRLs looking at what both parties bring to helpful talks. Here the focus is on a shared worldview, values, needs, and responsibilities as people of faith. Following chaplain capabilities, a model is examined for approaching LRLs. This area explores interagency and staff cooperation and coordination, different forms of visitation, prepared events, worship opportunities, and inter-religious councils. Finally, concluding remarks underscore the justification for using chaplains as frontline contacts with local religious leaders to assist a commander's mission using interfaith dialogue within a modified model from chaplain activity in Afghanistan. Sources are reviewed and further questions for continuing research are encouraged for future development.

DIPLOMACY AND DEFINITIONS

There are two types of recognized diplomacy. Track one, realpolitik diplomacy, is the most used and known by people being the standard approach used by governments. Dr. Douglas Johnston, noted subject expert on faith-based diplomacy, describes track one in relation to religion.

Realpolitik, as commonly understood and referred to by most foreign policy experts, has been the term describing the practice of power politics based on a tough-minded, realistic view of the political, economic, and security factors that dominate any given situation. Typically, this concept has not included a sophisticated understanding of the larger religious and philosophic values that influence the actors, nor has it offered its disciples access to the kind of spiritual engagement that can sometimes be useful in the diplomatic search for solutions.²

Track two or faith-based diplomacy is based on certain premises according to Johnston. First, religion is a critical element of national security. Second, often religion is not a part of the diplomatic efforts at peacemaking due to realist political views that discount religion. Recent developments in the world have forced religion to the forefront for serious consideration. In this gap between realist diplomats and theologians has arisen faith-based diplomacy that integrates the dynamics of religious faith with the conduct of international peacemaking.³ The basic goal of faith-based diplomacy is reconciliation among conflicted parties.

Bridge building is a loosely used term to define track two efforts where participants in a contact conversation are not seeking to perform official diplomatic activities on behalf of another party (i.e. community, nation, military force), but are seeking to develop improved relationships.

Reconciliation, increased security, and other end states may occur, but it is not necessarily the mission guiding the contact.

Military chaplains are not involved in official diplomacy due to regulatory restrictions. They are experimenting with bridge building activities that sometimes makes it difficult to determine where bridge building ends and faith-based diplomacy begins. For the purposes of this paper, the distinction between these two will be the authority supporting these two approaches. Faith-based diplomacy will be regarded as participants being able to speak with authority from a country or international organization supporting the efforts. Bridge building participants will have only the authority to develop relationships on a limited basis within the current restrictions of the Title 10 U.S. Code and Joint and Army regulations since this paper is only dealing with military chaplains conducting military missions.

These definitions are made more problematic by current situations in the world where chaplains are deployed. In several parts of the world, religion and politics are one. There is no traditional separation of organized religion and state as practiced in the United States. Indeed, to attempt separation of these topics is to confuse and alienate relationships. Summarizing the importance of this fact, Strategic Studies Institute fellow, W. Andrew Terrill writes, referring to the numerically dominant Shi'ite population in Iraq, "Clerics are one of the most important forces guiding and directing Iraqi Shi'ite public opinion...Moreover, many Shi'ite clerics are emerging as important spokesmen for their communities."⁴

Historically this realization has surfaced, as has the use of chaplains by commanders, where this influence of local religious leaders was recognized. A good example is during the Spanish-American War of 1898. Chaplain William D. McKinnon,

...with the consent of Brigadier General Thomas M. Anderson, attempted to visit the archbishop of Manila and negotiate a peace settlement. Although fired upon, he kept walking, reached the enemy line, and with a Spanish escort, met with the archbishop. Unfortunately, his mission failed. However, hostilities in the Philippines lasted only 14 days and battle casualties were relatively light.⁵

WHY EMBRACE CHAPLAINS?

Chaplains are unique in the military system and offer several capabilities that work well for relating to LRLs. It starts with a worldview assumption that people are created by God and therefore God is present in all relationships. This is a basic tenant in all major religions. Among Muslims this is reflected in the Qur'an. "The universality of humanity is a central precept in Islam, amply affirmed throughout the Qur'an and Hadith and conveyed through the belief in the equality of origins and rights and the essential solidarity of all people."⁶ This serves as a base to

start a relationship of trust as people of faith, who share the belief that the world is not secular, not an accident, but a divine act.

Chaplains increase their credibility with Muslims by also being dedicated clergy serving on a commander's staff. Often local clergy view this position as similar to their own role as a religious and community leader. Army CH (LTC) Joel Harris relates that during his work with LRLs in Bosnia the chaplain was heard as "the voice of the soldier and commander in the eyes of the local clergy" ⁷ because of this dual status.

Western nations are viewed frequently as secularist by third world countries who often combine religion and politics. Dr. Johnston says,

Sadly, we have let our rigorous separation of church and state become a crutch for not taking the time to understand how religious factors shape the perceptions and political aspirations of others who do not similarly separate the two...Where Muslims are concerned, for example, this means appreciating the fact that Islam is the glue that binds their societies together spiritually, morally, politically, and economically.⁸

Therefore, local clergy view chaplains differently, because they symbolize both church and state in their unique roles in the military. CH (MAJ) Carlos C. Huerta, a rabbi who served in Mosul, Iraq in 2003, says this basic belief was his first start towards effectively working with Muslims in his area.⁹

As clergy and community leaders, chaplains and Muslim LRLs can build upon some basic common values revered by both. This is particularly true with the Abrahamic faiths of Jew, Muslim, and Christian. Joseph Montville offers four core values that these three faiths share.

The first core value is that we all live in God's world. Muslims, Christians, and Jews answer to the same God. The world is His, not ours. Authority is not there to affirm our sectarian biases but for us to become attuned to the presence of God in all of life. The second value is the recognition that human beings are created in the image of God. The third core value is the recognition that our faith requires us to cross the boundary lines that normally divide us from each other. The fourth and final core value is the recognition that justice is required for human flourishing and peace. There is no peace without justice.¹⁰

Commenting on potential starters for dialogue using values, Muslim author Sulayman Nyang, indicates a similar list of commonalities to build from.

- A belief in God (faith)
- God created us all as equals
- Emphasis on human accountability to God
- A stress on moral responsibility
- An acknowledgement of human rights ¹¹

Chaplains share these commonly respected values as non-threatening people with a non-combatant status as opposed to armed soldiers or other representatives. The Geneva Convention outlines a non-combatant role. More specifically, U.S. military regulations say chaplains do not bear arms.¹² Consequently they hold a special position despite wearing a military uniform. This safeguard may not be true in a combined operation where some national chaplains are armed combatants or non-combatants. Given that many American military operations overseas are combined operations, American chaplains do need to clearly explain their status to local clergy during initial contact. Although American chaplains have arms-bearing assistants, these partners can be looked upon in the same way as armed followers of other LRLs.

In addition to status, both chaplains and LRLs bear common responsibilities to provide religious support to their followers. This duty is better accomplished in a safe and secure place. In such an environment the word of God can be spread successfully. This is caring for their communities. Several chaplains in contact with LRLs speak of added credibility with followers helping each other care for their religious communities.

Chaplains are recognized by local leaders as possible conduits for humanitarian help as well. Often chaplains are on assessment teams for commanders and assist with non-government organizations through different military units such as the civil-military operating center. This gives the impression, if not being the truth, chaplains hold some influence in what funding may be used in local communities. CH (MAJ) Carlos Huerta during his deployment in Iraq, CH (MAJ) William Klavetter in Bosnia, and CH (COL) Kenneth Sampson in Afghanistan all mention this as a definite reason why some local leaders were anxious to see chaplains and make known their needs.¹³

Besides exchanging needs there is general knowledge about customs, culture, and faith being shared on several levels. Learning about each other's communities and concerns helps dispel rumors and begins eliminating certain prejudices. This is especially supportive in clarifying intents. A chaplain can explain a commander's mission and learn more clearly local frustrations and desires within a local context. Safety can come from an accurate understanding of local conditions and peoples' positions. Chaplains and local clergy are better able to assist their respective leaders by enhancing decision making with accurate information. Also, they can instruct their congregants in developing improved relationships between soldiers and civilians.¹⁴ CH (COL) Kenneth Sampson, the combined task force chaplain from a deployment in Afghanistan, echoes the chief benefit from informational and opinion exchange. "Local clergy want to develop accurate and credible information about Americans for advice to

their own local leaders. Talking with chaplains on their turf goes a long way in increasing trust.”¹⁵

This contact between religious leaders offers an opportunity to express thoughts and feelings by exploring Eastern and Western ideas. Canadian Chaplain (MAJ) S. K. Moore observes this opportunity among Canadian chaplains in contact with LRLs. “As Canadians, deployed chaplains will discover among local religious and community leaders genuine intrigue and curiosity with respect to western thinking, beliefs and values. A desire to engage in some form of dialogue reference the existing conflict and/or its residual effects is also not uncommon.”¹⁶ American CH (MAJ) Klavetter, while in Kosovo, said, “Clergy would talk with troops, but only to make requests for things whereas with clergy they would open up more talking about many other things.”¹⁷

Finally, besides a chaplain’s status and capabilities, another touchstone for local clergy embracing chaplains centers on the Chaplain Corps as an organization. The American military chaplain corps has long proven to be a successful structure where numerous faith groups work together for a common purpose of serving personnel of all religious beliefs without serious conflict among clergy.¹⁸ This pluralism can be appealing to Islamic clergy leaders for two reasons. First, pluralism is valued in the Koran. Issa Boullata, professor of Arab language and literature, explains from several *suras* (verses) of the Koran that God “...permits that there be more than one religious community in the world...It seems abundantly clear that there is here a manifest Qur’amic principle of interfaith relations, based on a harmonic religious pluralism, and urging believers of all faiths to do good.”¹⁹ Second, there is a need in nations, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, to find a way of religiously caring for their military personnel using a democratic pluralism that is compatible with Koranic principles. This issue often develops a useful starting point for discussion among Islamic religious leaders and chaplains. In Bosnia the multinational force commander, different national chaplains serving in the peacekeeping force, and other military staff joined with LRLs of three faiths using the Chaplains Corps as a bridge-building subject for discussion with great success.²⁰ More recently, in Afghanistan, an American Special Forces chaplain demonstrated the possible effects of such sharing.

CH (MAJ) Erik Elisson’s Special Forces unit was training Afghan soldiers to form a battalion. The Afghans observed the chaplain’s support to the American soldiers and wanted their own chaplain. They elected a young mullah (Muslim clergy) to act as their chaplain. The Mullah contacted Chaplain Elisson for help. Using materials from his Chaplain’s Officer Basic Course, altered by him to meet the need, he first discussed the concept of pluralism. This became a key issue that led to successful training and a strategic secondary effect. The Mullah became so positively excited about the use of pluralism within this military chaplain context, that he returned to his *madrassa* (religious school) in Pakistan to

tell folks there of his experience. According to CH (LTC) Blake Boatwright, CENTCOM operations chaplain, the mullah said Americans are all right. The information about these folks we've been receiving is wrong. They're good people.²¹

Despite many LRLs embracing chaplains, there always exist some Muslim leaders who are not receptive. CH (MAJ) Klavetter spoke of a particular group of "radical" Muslims in his area of Bosnia known as the 'Black Beards' who wouldn't talk with any American regardless of designation.²² Every faith has its extremists. Dialogue begins with the moderate population. W. Andrew Terrill of the Strategic Studies Institute, a part of the U.S. Army War College, talks about the quietist view versus Islamic activism in his discussion about Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq and their level of political involvement as clerics. Quietest clerics see a separation of politics from religion. He says part of the winning of hearts and minds in Iraq is helping the quietest approach by seeking it out.²³ The best audience to initiate interfaith dialogue with may be the quietest group, a moderate community within Islam. Washington Post editor Fred Hiatt relates the story of the possibilities among this moderate population that is struggling to make contact with others. He tells of A. Heather Coyne, chief representative of the U.S. Institute of Peace in Iraq, and her work with Iraqis, clergy and lay, willing to cross dangerous lines to talk.

And yet, what strikes Coyne is not the bad news -- maybe because she's living in the middle of it -- but the fortitude and persistence in the face of attacks of the Iraqis she works with. The Mosul professor keeps teaching. One local leader called the day after being shot three times -- to ask whether the institute had accepted the people he had recommended to take part in a seminar. Another, whose house was torched, got in touch to make sure Coyne had his new telephone number.

Yes, they complain about conditions, Coyne said. But she finds a surfeit of Iraqis who still want to learn what the institute has to teach -- about how to peacefully manage religious and sectarian conflict, for example -- and who are willing to drive 11 or 12 hours through multiple dangerous checkpoints to get books and practical advice and lessons from other Iraqis.²⁴

HOW TO EMBRACE

Chaplains have a great opportunity to reach the moderate population and are doing so using a variety of approaches: direct visitations to local religious leaders, setting up special events, participating in worship moments, and experimenting with inter-religious councils via inter-agency cooperation. The common cord that ties these methods together is inter-faith dialogue that is different from conversations going on elsewhere in the military system. As this conversation continues, chaplains are learning what it takes to prepare themselves for these contacts regardless of the methods and the risks that are involved.

Direct visitations, individually and as a part of official military groups, are the most frequent method used in making contact, especially in the beginning of developing relationships with local clergy leaders. According to the several chaplains interviewed about their experiences, contact as a part of a group is made through a commander's assessment team, civil-affairs effort, Prevention Reconstruction Team (PRT) visits, and by special ad hoc efforts. These group methods fix in the minds of LRLs the chaplain as a clergy person who has influence. It provides an entry for the chaplain to the community. Finally, it keeps the chaplain focused on being a part of the military team effort rather than conducting 'lone ranger' religious support. In all cases, these contacts are made as a part of the commander's efforts in his sector and with his approval.²⁵

Civil-Military Coordination Cell (CIMIC) groups in pursuit of humanitarian efforts often use chaplains to help identify potential sites for improvement projects. In Bosnia and Kosovo this approach became routine, providing credibility with LRLs for the CIMIC groups having clergy as a part of their team. The same is true with any commander directed assessment team. According to chaplains in the field, a chaplain's presence changes the dynamic of the visit in a positive way.

CH (MAJ) Jonathan Etterbeek, currently in Iraq as a brigade chaplain near Kirkuk, serving with 2BCT, 25th ID (Light), is involved in over 3.1 million dollars of improvements including the renovation of a mosque located on an American base. Starting with an initial assessment CH (MAJ) Etterbeek and others from his unit's staff completed the mosque project and several visits with LRLs. Their efforts led to a major breakthrough with local Shia Muslims. The State Department became involved and ultimately the chaplain's relationship building made a key local group available to other American officials for strategic goal accomplishment. CH (MAJ) Etterbeek describes several lessons learned from this successful contact with Shia religious leaders.

This is critical-establish a personal relationship with LRLs. The State Department heard that we had made a breakthrough with the Shia and requested to attend the meeting. We allowed one of the State Department officials to sit in on the meeting as observer since this was considered a religious engagement. They (Shia religion leaders) were not willing to meet with our commanders yet, but were willing to meet with me because I was viewed as a Man of God and spiritual leader rather than a soldier. The personal relationship is important because I could assure them that I had great respect for the Muslim faith and Iraqi people. The renovation of the mosque on our base was proof.²⁶

After initial visits and working closely with the command staff and interagency representatives, CH (MAJ) Etterbeek advanced the relationship with another critical visitation.

The 2nd Brigade had raided a Shia mosque two weeks prior and arrested 18 militants. This caused great concern among regional LRLs. Representatives from the national level of Shia religious leaders were sent to Kirkuk. At the same time CH (MAJ) Etterbeek made his visit.

I visited the detainees (18 militants) in the detention facility and brought our Islamic chaplain, CH (CPT) Abdullah Hulwe, and talked to them (detainees) for over an hour. This visitation and the meeting set the stage for an important meeting that occurred a week later. I was the first American invited inside this Shia mosque since the Coalition Forces arrived in March 2003....Following this meeting, they (Shia religious leaders) agreed to meet with the company commander of that sector and have now established a working relationship with the command. The Imam was grateful that we visited the detainees who were members of his mosque. This was simply a pastoral visitation, but it was significant in the eyes of the members of that mosque...The breakthrough we achieved with the Shia Muslims was an agreement that they would engage with the company commander, open lines of communication with Coalition Forces, prohibit weapons in the mosque, temper their violent anti-coalition language, submit to monitoring of their Friday messages, and begin working towards a mosque renovation project....This engagement indirectly saved lives- the lives of our soldiers....²⁷

Note the invitation of the State Department representative. Sometimes a Political Advisor (POLAD) for the theater of operations and a chaplain are paired together for the purpose of developing mutual understanding and better relationships in general with local religious leaders. In Afghanistan CH (COL) Sampson, Combined Joint Task Force 180 Staff Chaplain, and Dr. John D. Finney, Jr., POLAD in the Afghanistan Theater, made several such visits from September 2003 to January 2004. Dr. Finney said these meetings made common sense to him, the commander, and his staff. Religion plays a key role in how things are run in Afghanistan. The security challenges for troops in the area required local understanding and cooperation for stable conditions. The mullahs are the key leaders and wield great influence in the provinces. They are both religious and political leaders in their communities. These people hold the chaplain in special regard as a person of God. The chaplain also brings a special religious language, and respect that establish possibilities with the local population. These visits followed by prepared events for the gathering of religious leaders, military staff, and inter-agency representatives helped greatly in creating an atmosphere of trust, security improvement, and new projects in the reconstruction of the nation according to Dr. Finney. Eventually this team joined forces with the PRT and visited religious leaders in the provinces every other month.²⁸

Visits by local religious leaders to American bases hopefully follow after personal relationships are established. The most popular settings are conferences and some form of

worship opportunity such as a prayer meal. In one case an inter-religious council is being added to this list of gatherings.

Conferences are informational in nature. The purpose is to get LRLs in the same room with chaplains and interagency personnel to continue developing personal relationships and to share stories. Often sharing begins with discussing American and Western nations' military chaplain organizations. This includes how diverse faith groups can come together for a common mission of religious support in an ecumenical and collegial way. It is the hope that by studying the military chaplaincy model, support is developed for interfaith cooperation among local religious groups and between peacekeeping force chaplains and LRLs. After years of visitations by chaplain/staff teams in Bosnia, there occurred on 20 March 2001, with the Armed Forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, a Religious Support Conference. A variety of LRLs, chaplains from four multinational peace keeping forces, several different interagency representatives, and American chaplains met to discuss roles and functions of chaplains with the Federation and Republika Srpska. This gathering included carefully scripted briefs from different chaplains on how their military chaplaincy works in supporting soldiers of many different faith groups. Having a Muslim chaplain from the Turkish military present was especially helpful. Chaplains were the lead agent for the event, but they worked closely with the Joint Military Commission in the operational theater. LRLs of all faiths present voiced encouraging support for continued efforts along these lines as a way to improve relations.²⁹

Another approach for gathering with LRLs is worship opportunities, especially prayer meals for gathering religious leaders. In Afghanistan, Major General Lloyd Austin, Commander of Combined Joint Operations Center 180, hosted a prayer breakfast with eleven local Mullahs from the two provinces surrounding Bagram Airfield, 25 October 2003. Arranged by several different members of the staff, chaplains acted as key participants. Commanders and selected staff from the United Arab Emirates and Egypt also attended. Held just before the Muslim festival of Ramadan, the purpose was to "offer united hopes and prayers for peace and stability in Afghanistan and the world" besides "opening dialog, building understanding, and gaining support between CJTF 180 and moderate Muslim cleric leaders throughout the Combined Joint Operations Area."³⁰ According to POLAD Dr. Finney, Jr. who attended, this event went a long ways towards developing security and stability in the area from greatly improved relationships and better understanding of each other's culture and religion.³¹

Other ways to celebrate faith together are possible. David Smock, Director of the Religion and Peacemaking Initiative at the United States Institute of Peace, underscores this saying, "The shared study of sacred texts is one such activity and can be particularly valuable for

religions like Islam, Judaism, and Christianity that share reverence for their basic texts. Such study can enhance mutual understanding and may also identify shared values.”³² CH (MAJ) Huerta, a Jewish chaplain, studied regularly with local Muslims in Iraq. These Muslim leaders changed their impressions about him as a Jew and an American soldier. This sharing of sacred texts coupled with regular visits and joint efforts at rebuilding schools in the area, led one prominent Muslim to say that he had been told American soldiers were infidels, but this couldn't be true given such honoring of the Koran. Later, the local Mayor gave CH (MAJ) Huerta the name, *Abu-Mudaris*, father of schools, and the public privilege of reading a *sura* (verse) of the Koran in Arabic at one of the local school dedication ceremonies.³³

The idea of an inter-religious council is being attempted as well. Brigadier General (promotable) Martin E. Dempsey, Commander, United States Army 1st Armored Division, directed his chaplain to establish an Inter-Religious Council (IRC) of local clergy. The purpose was to win the trust of local clergy who would then try to restrain people from violence in the area of operations. Fewer roadside bombings have followed since the first meeting with these clerics in October 2003.³⁴

The common thread that connects all these methods of clergy contact is interfaith dialogue. This type of conversation is different than coordinating or sharing pleasantries. It is the use of faith language that plumbs the depth of faith and feelings for both people. It is a focused talk that deals with important concerns. The spirituality of participants takes center stage. “This deep sense of motivation that originates from religious identity distinguishes interfaith dialogue from secular or interethnic encounter,” explains David Smock.³⁵ Put this into words from Iraq informed by much experience in dialoging with LRLs in Bosnia and Iraq, CH (LTC) Mike Lembke summarizes.

I find there is great interest in pure dialog...conversation. This is a rich culture and there is much to explore, topic wise, when we look at life here. There is also much suffering. This is where we can begin to ask questions about how the mosque (and also the church in Iraq) can affect peace and justice. You see these are the terms that we, as clergy (chaplains) have in our vocabulary, but commanders don't. Not that they don't know these words, but peace, justice, mercy, charity, faith, love, hospitality....these are part of the doctrinal vocabulary of chaplains. So rather than talk about freedom and democracy (which most Arabs feel means licentious-ness and debauchery) we speak of justice and mercy. These Biblical and Qu'ranic expressions are immediately understood by the imams. I also find that it takes the conversation quickly away from the propaganda that they have all learned so well. It gets them beyond the CNN and Al Jezeera myopic framework that paralyzes so many of these people.³⁶

CH (LTC) Lembke's meaningful interfaith dialogue demands carefully prepared chaplains and certain considerations for every local contact with religious leaders. The following points

come from after action reports and other comments from chaplains queried in the field. Additional training before deployment is a must in customs, culture, and religion. This includes language training, if possible. CH (MAJ) Huerta learned Arabic during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) making a tremendous difference with local mayors and religious leaders, honoring them by learning their language rather than always relying on a translator.³⁷ Translators are important too. There's no effective interfaith dialogue without a good translator. CH (LTC) Harris, who served in Bosnia, says having the same translator consistently further improves communication because of the team concept and nuances of the language.

Besides language accuracy all contacts with local leaders must be authorized by a commander and not as an independent action or program of the chaplain. Chaplains make contact because of their extended role as religious advisors to the commander. Interfaith conversation provides input to a commander as a part of the commander's decision-making process on how to approach local leaders. Likewise, the same information is used to inform soldiers of what to do and not do when interacting with local populations. Dr. Finney in Afghanistan says the information obtained and relationships established by chaplains "saved lives of our soldiers because they were culturally aware. This is care for our troops developing their sensitivity to the religion and the cultural environment in which they function."³⁸

This requires a clear purpose and mission whenever a chaplain makes a visit. Careful coordination with all appropriate unit staff and agency representatives is routine. Chaplains must not be co-opted by military intelligence, information operations or other agencies. This compromises a person of faith. LRLs could view chaplains as political propagandists of the U.S. government.

Planning and rehearsals follow a clear purpose, especially when LRLs visit an American base. This is particularly true with operational security and force protection. Contact with LRLs is just as dangerous as when American troops are on patrol or convoy. Security arrangements are highly problematic for religious leaders visiting chaplains. This raises an important question indicated at the beginning of this paper.

Given the dangers involved in visiting or being seen with Americans in some countries, like Iraq, there are two additional reasons why local leaders are willing to allow such contact. First, the gains often outweigh the risks. Chaplains are personal advisors to the American commanders controlling the troops occupying their countries. Yet, chaplains are people of faith like themselves. If there is any leverage to be made with the Americans, would it not be made with those similar to themselves? Secondly, Muslim religious tradition honors peace rather than violence. Mohammed Abu-Nimer makes this point well. "In the peace-building field, in general,

open face-to-face communication about problems and conflicts is deemed more productive than avoidance or violence, reducing the cost of conflict by addressing all the grievances of the conflicting parties."³⁹

This is fertile ground for chaplains to reach out to local religious leaders in the Muslim world. Chaplains mirror similar positions and influence, as do local clergy. Chaplains are people of faith. Needs for both groups can be met with cooperation and both ultimately want security, safety, and peace for their own respective worship groups.

How chaplains and LRLs approach each other for effective peace work varies with the quality of their visitations. Chaplains must carefully prepare for these contacts in coordination with all staff members and agencies under the sponsorship of commanders. This task is an extension of their advisor's role to the commander and as instructors for soldiers on morality. It assists in the safety and security of the troops and supports commander's mission. When chaplains remain who they are as people of God and clergy reaching out to the same in LRLs, they are of critical benefit to the commander.

In showing this, care has been made to try and balance Muslim and chaplain voices noting that most of the Muslim speakers are from academia while the chaplains' side is more evenly distributed between school and field. The task of gathering stories from both sides is daunting since not all stories are recorded by formal means in after action reviews and other reports. Hopefully this paper preserved the more important examples.

The experimentation and research continues on this topic at a rapid pace fueled by an ever-pressing need in Iraq and Afghanistan for understanding and peace. A further look is warranted concerning potential ethical issues where chaplains, information officers, political advisors, military intelligence, and civil affairs overlap with each other in their support of the commander. Coordination is critical among these disciplines and will require a further refining of the roles and responsibilities of each pertaining to LRLs.

Continuing their contacts with local religious leaders in the Muslim world as chaplains uniquely trained and placed, they will continue to make a difference for the safety, security, and peace that benefits both American soldiers and the local indigenous peoples. This requires that chaplains continue these contacts embedded within the commander's program, planned and coordinated with staff and agency representatives, and continue the interfaith dialogue of their callings. This paper led with a story from Iraq about a FATWA aimed at peace and chaplain involvement with local clergy. It need not be an isolated incident. Interfaith dialogue between LRLs and chaplains, properly conducted, will continue to offer opportunities for strategic impacts for peace in support of a commander's mission.

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ENDNOTES

¹ A FATWA is a religious ruling issued by a senior cleric. Fatwas are considered binding on the followers of their cleric so long as the clerics are alive. Michael Lembke <mike.lembke@us.army.mil>, "Spiritual Diplomacy," electronic mail message to Scottie Lloyd <srilloyd@msn.com>, 29 November 2004.

² Douglas M. Johnston, "Faith-based Diplomacy and National Security," In *The National Interest* 1 October 2003; available from <<http://www.internationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol2Issue38/Vol2Issue38JohnstonPFV.html>>; Internet; accessed 28 September 2004.

³ Douglas M. Johnston, ed., *Faith-based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2003), 11-16.

⁴ W. Andrew Terrill, *The United States and Iraq's Shi'ite Clergy: Partners or Adversaries?* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2004), i.

⁵ William J. Hourihan, "The United States Army Chaplaincy, 1865-1917," *A Brief History of the U. S. Chaplain Corps*, 3 March 2004; available from <http://www.usaches.army.mil/history/brief/chapter_4.htm>; Internet; accessed 15 February 2005.

⁶ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2003), 57.

⁷ Joel Harris, LTC, United States Army Chaplain, telephone interview by author, 10 December 2004. Army Regulation 165-1, paragraph 4-3-b., states, "The Chaplain is a qualified and endorsed clergy person of a DOD recognized religious denomination or faith group."

⁸ Johnston, 1.

⁹ Carlos C. Huerta, MAJ, United States Army Chaplain, telephone interview by author, 17 December 2004.

¹⁰ S.K. Moore, *The Ministry and Theology of Reconciliation in Operations* (n.p., n.d.), 29.

¹¹ Sulayman S. Nyang, "Challenges Facing Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the United States," in *Christian-Muslim Encounter*, ed., Yvonne Y. Haddad and Wadi Z. Haddad (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), 336.

¹² Department of the Army, *Chaplain Activities in the United States Army*, Army Regulation 165-1, paragraph 4-3-c (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 25 March 2004), "Chaplains are noncombatants and will not bear arms."

¹³ Kenneth Sampson, COL, United States Army Chaplain, Joel Harris, LTC, United States Army Chaplain, and William Klavetter, CPT, United States Army Chaplain, telephone interviews by author, 16 and 17 December 2004. Hereafter referred as Sampson, Harris, or Klavetter.

¹⁴ Army Regulation 165-1, chap. 11, outlines the commander and chaplain's responsibility for moral leadership training. Instructing soldiers on local morals, religion and culture are a part of this duty.

¹⁵ Sampson.

¹⁶ Joseph V. Montville, "Religion and Peacemaking," *Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, ed. Helmick and Peterson (Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001), 109; quoted in S. K. Moore, *The Ministry and Theology of Reconciliation in Operations* (n.p., n.d.), 29.

¹⁷ Klavetter.

¹⁸ There are over 120 faith groups recognized by the Army Chaplaincy with clergy as chaplains for most of them represented in the service.

¹⁹ Issa J. Boullata, "Fa-stabiqu 'l-khayrat: A Qur'anic Principle of Interfaith Relations," in *Christian-Muslim Encounter*, ed. Yvonne Y. Haddad and Wadi Z. Haddad (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), 43-44. See Abu-Nimer in *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam*, for further support of this point. Abu-Nimer goes so far as to say, "Pluralism and diversity are among the core values of the Islamic religious and cultural tradition." (78) This may be overstated in light of conditioned statements by other Islamic authors, but all commentators point to pluralism as a welcomed subject for discussion and practice among Muslims and other faith group representatives.

²⁰ Adam Ramirez, "Inter-Entity Religious Support Conference," *Stars and Stripes*, 25 March 2001, p. 1. Chaplain (MAJ) Michael Lembke, "After Action Report-20 March Religious Support Conference," memorandum for Chaplain of the Multinational Division (North), Tuzla, Bosnia, 20 March 2001.

²¹ Blake Boatwright, LTC, United States Army Chaplain, telephone interview by author, 3 December 2004.

²² Klavetter.

²³ Terrill, 2-7.

²⁴ Fred Hiatt, "Courage Under Fire," *Washington Post.com*, 26 December 2004; available from <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/acz/wp-dyn/admin/emailfriend?contentId=A28090-2004Dec26andsent=notreferrer=emailarticle>>. Internet. accessed 27 December 2004.

²⁵ Joel Harris, LTC, United States Army Chaplain, telephone interview by author, 10 December 2004; Erick Feig, MAJ, United States Army Chaplain, telephone interview by author, 17 December 2004; William Klavetter, CPT, United States Army Chaplain, telephone interview by author, 17 December 2004; Kenneth Sampson, COL, United States Army Chaplain, telephone interview by author, 16 December 2004; Michael Lembke <mike.lembke@us.army.mil> "Spiritual Diplomacy," electronic message to Scottie Lloyd <srloyd@msn.com>, 16 October 2004.

²⁶ Jonathan Etterbeek <EtterbeekJ@mmcs.army.mil>, "Spiritual Diplomacy," electronic mail message to Scottie Lloyd <srloyd@msn.com> 16 January 2005

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ John D. Finney, Jr., CJTF 180 POLAD, telephone interview by author, 3 January 2005.

²⁹ Michael Lembke, MAJ, United States Army Chaplain “After Action Review: 20 March 2001 Religious Support Conference, Multinational Division (North),” memorandum for Chief Joint Military Commission on Inter-Entity Religious Support Conference, Tuzla, Bosnia, 25 January 2001.

³⁰ Kenneth Sampson, COL, United States Army Chaplain, “After Action Review: Commander’s Prayer Breakfast with Parwan and Kapisa Province Mullahs, 25 October 2003, Bagram, Afghanistan, 30 October 2003.

³¹ Finney.

³² David R. Smock, ed., *Interfaith Dialogue and Peace building* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 131.

³³ Huerta.

³⁴ William S. Lee, Christopher J. Burke, and Zonna M. Caryne, *Military Chaplains as Peace Builders: Embracing Indigenous Religions in Stability Operations, Strategy Research Project* (Cambridge, MA: John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, n.d.), 17.

³⁵ Mohammed Abu-Nimer, “The Miracles of Transformation through Interfaith Dialogue,” in *Interfaith Dialogue and Peacebuilding*, ed. David R. Smock (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2002), 17.

³⁶ Lembke.

³⁷ Huerta.

³⁸ Finney.

³⁹ Abu-Nimer, 62. See Qur’an *sura* 49:9-10.

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