DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

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11 Oct 02

Dear Colleagues:

Chaplain Black and I recently received an after-action report from Captain Harold L. Robinson, CHC, USNR, who serves as N097 Reserve Manpower Advisor. Chaplain Robinson reports on his experience in providing worship services for Jewish personnel deployed to NAVCENT. His ministry represents the incredible work all Navy chaplains and RPs are doing on the front lines. We are proud of all of you and thank you for your cooperative spirits and total dedication to providing quality ministry in the Sea Services.

Having returned from the Gulf on 19 September, I am back on Central Standard Time. The emotional and spiritual impact of my 15 days in the Arabian Gulf far exceeds my limited ability to describe it. Still, I will share two vignettes out of many, with the understanding that to really grasp their power "you had to be there."

One involves a fine young Naval Academy graduate who was, on the holiday, feeling distance from family, tradition, and all things familiar. The Jewish community brought together from throughout the Battle Group, created a "family" just when one was most needed. We chaplains often fill roles that exceed the simple term "clergy." What made this moment palpably different was that we all knew, recognized, and openly acknowledged the diverse roles we were each playing in the lives of those around us.

Part of the power of this entire experience came from my fellow chaplains and RPs. Late night Yom Kippur eve, arguably our most sublime liturgical moment, I managed to read part of an email from home informing me that one of my dearest family friends had unexpectedly died. Then the system aboard ship crashed. A fellow chaplain, Wes Sloat, became my chaplain, caring for me, ministering to me, helping me through my loss and loneliness. I was 9,000 miles from those who shared my grief—the distance magnified the pain. Wes was for me the chaplain we so often are for others, and though the pain may not have been less intense, somehow, with his help and care, I was more able to persevere even with this new burden.

My story was so nearly the same as that of the young sailor who had just been told by Chaplain Bob Marshall of his grandmother's death. How was it that the sailor and I crossed paths two or three times a day even in the vastness of a CVN? How ironic that he was the last person I spoke to on the ABRAHAM LINCOLN! By "chance," he was descending from the flight deck just as I climbed out to depart on the COD. We exchanged just a few more words, but we knew we were connected by what chaplains had done for us on that ship.

No one can exaggerate the role of chaplains, RPs and lay readers whose collaboration greatly amplifies the power of each and the effectiveness of all. My thanks to Fleet Chaplain Mark Tidd, to all the command

chaplains (Brad Ableson, Bob Marshall and Dale Parker), to all the RPs (led by RPC Norman and RPC Kiener), lay reader MAC(SW) Scheer, to my traveling companion Chaplain Sean O'Brien and to the fantastic "over the top" efforts of Chaplain Bill Kennedy, who planned (and then flawlessly implemented) all the details that made the difference between success and failure.

Do you remember the old *Readers' Digest* column "Only in the United States"? We can truly be proud that only in the United States Navy would Protestant, Catholic, Muslim and Jew come together to ensure with such devotion and extra effort, that the needs of "the few" were met as part of the needs of the whole. We Americans do draw strength from our diversity. It is so sad that our enemies fail to grasp the power and meaning of this truth: though each of us is entirely unique, we are each created in God's own image. May God bless us all, and continue to bless our great land. V/r, Chaplain Harold Robinson

Thank you for all you do every day for God, country and those you serve.

Sincerely,

LOUIS V. IASIELLO
Rear Admiral, Chaplain Corps
U. S. Navy
Deputy Chief of Navy Chaplains
Chaplain of the Marine Corps