



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

IN REPLY REFER TO

1730
Ser N097/02022
31 Jan 02

Dear Colleagues:

Over the last six weeks, both Chaplain Iasiello and I traveled to the Persian Gulf AOR to visit Religious Ministry Team personnel and the Sailors and Marines deployed with them in the region. Chaplain Iasiello, the Deputy Chief of Chaplains and Chaplain of the Marine Corps, was invited by the Commandant of the Marine Corps to visit forward deployed Marine units during late December and early January. He was accompanied by Captain James L. Danner, Naval Surface Force Pacific, Chaplain. RPCM William A. Person, Jr., and I were invited to accompany the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON) from 12 to 18 January for a visit to ships in the Persian Gulf.

Chaplain Iasiello and Chaplain Danner paid courtesy calls on VADM Moore of NAVCENT followed by visits to the Amphibious Ready Groups. They celebrated Christmas services for the Marines at Pasni, Pakistan, and Camp Rhino and Kandahar Airport, Afganistan. They walked the frontlines from foxhole to foxhole and visited every Marine standing watch for Alpha and Bravo Companies. Many foxholes had a Christmas tree made from a desert scrub using MRE Tabasco Sauce bottles as ornaments.

RPCM Person and I accompanied CNO and MCPON as we visited the Sailors and Marines at NavCent, Bahrain and aboard USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN 71), USS Vella Gulf (CG 72), USS Detroit (AOE 4), USS Decatur (DDG 73), USS Bataan (LHD 5), USS Shreveport (LPD 12), USS Whidbey Island (LSD 41), USS John C. Stennis (CVN 71), USS Port Royal (DD 73), USS Peterson (DD 969) and USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) underway in the Gulf.

I can still see the faces of many men and women who shared their faith with me. While addressing the Sailors, the CNO invited me to offer words of encouragement. After my remarks, several Sailors requested to speak with me and asked that I remember them in my prayers.

The Navy-Marine Corps team of the Chief and Deputy Chief of Chaplains conducted worship services on steel decks and the bare earth. Whether it was deckplate visitation from stem to stern or walking the perimeter, we saw an unwavering commitment to duty. Whether it was singing Christmas carols under the night light of the North Star or placing a communion host in the hand of a Sailor or Marine - we saw the power of faith. Even though these brave men and women missed family members and loved ones, there was no place they would rather be.

It was an honor for Chaplain Iasiello and me to represent the Chaplain Corps and witness the tremendous sacrifices and fortitude of our men and women of the Sea Services. The round-the-clock operations of our Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen bear testimony to the team spirit and reliability of every individual. Our visits reinforced the message that what we do makes a profound difference in the lives of people. May God continue to bless you as you minister to the men and women of the Sea Services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry C. Black". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "B" and "C" at the beginning.

BARRY C. BLACK
Rear Admiral, CHC, U.S. Navy
Chief of Chaplains