



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 N097/03127  
8 May 03

Dear Colleagues:

Recognition is a wonderful gift—and a very proper reward for a job well done. Last week our Commander-in-Chief flew to the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 73) as she and her battle group concluded an extraordinarily successful (and extraordinarily long) deployment. He stood before the men and women of her crew to thank them—and through them—all the men and women on all the ships and in all the commands of all the services who have sacrificed so much and performed so well to make Operation Iraqi Freedom such a stunning victory. I join him in applauding that hard work and sacrifice, especially on the part of the hundreds of Navy chaplains and RPs “embedded” (in our case, permanently) in the ships’ companies and Marine units involved in this war effort.

Recently, I flew to New Orleans for the annual Military Chaplains Association (MCA) National Institute conference. While I did not come off my plane wearing anything as impressive as the flight suit the President had on, I did experience something of the same high level of exhilaration. Of course, in his case, the thrill came with getting on the plane and taking off. For me, it had to do with feeling the plane land safely and getting off.

I went to the MCA conference to participate in the recognition of some of our very deserving colleagues being honored as MCA Distinguished Service Award recipients. I was very proud to be part of the audience at the Awards Banquet that recognized LCDR David A. Tubley for service with the Coast Guard, LT Richard J. Vidrine for service with the Navy; and LCDR Michael L. Greenwalt for service with the Marine Corps. Each of these recipients distinguished himself through faithful service to God in ministry to our Sea Services men and women. I congratulate each of them and their families.

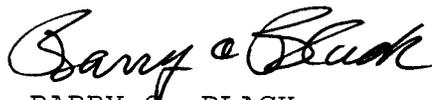
Of course, these three fine chaplains are not the only members of our many Religious Ministry Teams who deserve recognition for their fine work day in and day out. And the President only went to one ship among many; he was not able to shake the hand of

every crewmember—even on that one ship. In reality, many people do not get the recognition they deserve. Much of your labor takes place well below the radar screen. As chaplains, you huddle in private for a heart-to-heart talk with a servicemember in distress. You faithfully gather for worship in a cramped ship's library with a handful of the faithful from an in-port duty section, while your civilian counterparts are standing before hundreds in visually inspiring sanctuaries. You advocate for your people in quiet conversations with command that never go in any record. RPs have to prove their worth as sailors in the world of Marines, and carry their weight (and more) aboard their ships to overcome longstanding misperceptions and earn the respect of their shipmates in other ratings.

It is an interesting and sometimes frustrating aspect of life that we cannot control the amount of recognition the world gives us. Attempts to get more often result in greater disappointment. Although there are always a few fortunate souls who receive a surplus of praise, I suspect most people receive far less positive recognition than their efforts deserve. On the other hand, every single one of us has a great deal more control over the amount of recognition we give. We can be stingy or generous; it's up to us. In my experience, the ability to give praise and recognition generously goes a long way to make up for the disappointment of one's own personal recognition deficit.

So let me conclude this letter as I began it and urge you to be generous in giving the wonderful gift of recognition. Give it to those who work with you and for you. Give it to everyone you can. Rarely, will you give it undeservedly. Be generous with your recognition, knowing we serve a generous God who "sees and knows all the ways we have trod," and who waits to bestow the greatest recognition of all: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant...."

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry C. Black". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

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