



**Chaplain Combat Ministry  
During the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan:  
Twenty Narrative Stories**

Instructor's Guide  
Religious Education  
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Authored by Jeffery Skinner  
Brigham Young University  
Religious Education

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Purpose.....	4
Audience .....	5
Instructions for Use.....	6
 <b>Supporting Research</b> .....	 8
Prelude .....	8
Short History.....	10
<i>War in Afghanistan</i> .....	10
<i>War in Iraq</i> .....	11
 <b>Narrative Case Studies – The Chaplains</b> .....	 21
Chaplain Kittleson .....	21
Chaplain Horton.....	23
Chaplain Pantlitz.....	25
Chaplain Williams.....	28
Chaplain Antal .....	29
Chaplain Dharm .....	31
Chaplain Brown .....	33

Chaplain Panzer .....	36
Chaplain Silva.....	39
Chaplain White .....	41
Chaplain Brunk .....	43
Chaplain Peters .....	46
Chaplain Christina .....	49
Chaplain Michael .....	50
Chaplain Timothy.....	51
Chaplain Craig .....	54
Chaplain George .....	56
Chaplain Eliason .....	57
Chaplain McCain .....	60
Chaplain White .....	62

## **Content Narrative Analysis..... 65**

Narrative Summary Analysis of Case Studies .....68

Conclusion .....75

## **Briefing Overview ..... 78**

## **Bibliography ..... 90**

*I would like to dedicate this to my wife  
and family for their support during this  
program.*

## Introduction

Since the beginning of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) the U.S. has spent almost \$700 billion on the war in Afghanistan, and more than \$800 billion on the war in Iraq. A force of over 2.5 million U.S. service members have served in this conflict with many service members deploying multiple times.<sup>1</sup>

The cost in regards to human life, both those killed and wounded, in the wars has been substantial. In Afghanistan 2,346 have been killed and 20,092 wounded in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), along with 31 killed and 145 wounded in Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS). In Iraq 4,425 were killed and 31,953 wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), along with 73 killed and 295 wounded in Operation New Dawn (OND), and 32 killed and 29 wounded in Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR). In total between both wars 6,907 service members were killed, with another 52,514 wounded.<sup>2</sup> In addition to this it is estimated that there have been over 200,000 civilian deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq because of the wars.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to those armed forces personnel who have died in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq there are others, who though they

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1. Lizzy Tomei, "It's 2015. Time for Some New US Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan," Mint Press News, published 6 January 2015, accessed 15 July 2016, <http://www.mintpressnews.com/2015-time-new-us-operations-iraq-afghanistan/200501/>.

2. United States Department of Defense, "Casualty," United States Department of Defense, last modified 2 February 2017, accessed 2 February 2017, <http://www.defense.gov/casualty.pdf>.

3. Brown University, "Costs of War: Civilians Killed & Wounded," Watson Institute International & Public Affairs Brown University, last updated March 2015, accessed 15 July 2016, <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians>.

survived the wars, live on with lasting memories and emotional scars caused by traumatic experiences. These scars are in large part a product of the conflict, and they manifest themselves in a myriad of ways. There are the emotional scars that are experienced through depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and moral injury just to name a few. There are also physical injuries that are evident through lost limbs, Minor/Major Traumatic Brain Injuries, and various other wounds.<sup>4</sup> It is important to remember that these emotional and physical wounds are not only experienced in the area of operation but also upon return, with many causing “Homelessness, family disruptions, domestic violence, suicide, criminal acts, substance abuse, and risk taking behaviors.”<sup>5</sup> These problems and many more are prominent features of the struggles that numerous military members have in dealing with the past and the present. Most troubling of all is the suicide rate of 20 veterans per day, the total of which has now surpassed those killed in combat during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>6,7</sup> Undoubtedly, the repercussions of the war will be felt for many years and even decades to come.

While most might envision chaplains as being immune to

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4. Michael S. Baker, “Casualties of the Global War on Terror and Their Future Impact on Health Care and Society: A Looming Public Health Crisis.” *Military medicine* 179, no. 4 (2014): 350.

5. Michael S. Baker, Casualties, 352.

6. Michael S. Baker, “Casualties of the Global War on Terror and Their Future Impact on Health Care and Society: A Looming Public Health Crisis.” *Military medicine* 179, no. 4 (2014): 350–351.

7. United States Department of Veterans Affairs, “VA Suicide Prevention Program: Facts about Veteran Suicide July 2016,” United States Department of Veteran Affairs, last modified July 2016, accessed 23 July 2016, [http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/Suicide\\_Prevention\\_FactSheet\\_New\\_VA\\_Stats\\_070616\\_1400.pdf](http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/factsheets/Suicide_Prevention_FactSheet_New_VA_Stats_070616_1400.pdf).



the scars of war due to the nature of their work, the opposite is in fact true. From forward operating bases to active combat zones, chaplains go wherever they are needed to provide pastoral counseling and to provide or perform religious support.<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, they are also exposed to the everyday dangers that other service members face, such as, “Roadside bombs, IEDs [Improvised Explosive Devices], suicide bombers, the handling of human remains, [witnessing the] killing [of] an enemy, seeing fellow soldiers and friends dead or injured, and the helplessness of not being able to stop violent situations.”<sup>9</sup> Chaplains also often administer to the sick, wounded, and dying, which exposes them to more traumatic material than most.

Furthermore, there has also been an increased workload as the military has cut back on budget and personnel. This has led to retention issues with many service members burning out and or getting out.<sup>10</sup> Service members in Afghanistan and Iraq have experienced, “More-frequent deployments, of greater lengths, with shorter rest periods in between.”<sup>11</sup> This has also affected the chaplain corps.

In the conflict, U.S. military chaplains have played an integral

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8. Religious support in this context can be provided through religious services, memorials, and advising the commander on how religion effects the operational environment.

9. RAND Corporation, Center for Military Health Policy Research, “Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences and Services to Assist Recover,” ed. by Terri Tanieliam and Lisa H. Jaycox (Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2008), 5.

10. RAND Corporation, “How Deployment Effects Service Members,” ed. by James Hosek, Jennifer Kavanagh, and Laura Miller (Santa Monica, RAND Corporation, 2006) 38–40.

11. RAND Corporation, *Invisible Wounds*, 5.

role in ensuring the spiritual and temporal well-being of service members. Unfortunately, there is little information available on the overall number of chaplains who have deployed during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. However, as of 2014 rough estimates showed that there were around 3,000 active duty military chaplains (Air Force 549, Army 1,580, Navy 800), and about 2,000 in the reserve and guard.<sup>12</sup> Chaplains have provided religious services to over three million service members of approximately 175 different religions, even serving those who profess no religious belief. Chaplains have also deployed often, with “The percentage of those deployed overseas at any one time... estimated to be approximately 20 percent.”<sup>13</sup>

While military chaplains have been actively involved in the work of ministry both at home and abroad, since the beginning of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, there has been little done to collect and analyze the firsthand accounts of those who have served. Considering the continued involvement of the U.S. in the Middle East, it is import that these accounts be compiled, analyzed and understood, so as to find the themes, patterns, and lessons that can be learned. In doing this, a resource can be created for distribution to better prepare U.S. military chaplains who will be deploying to that region of the world over the coming decades.

## **Purpose**

This resource was designed to help United States military

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12. Douglas Carver et al., *Military Chaplains in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond: Advisement and Leader Engagement in Highly Religious Environments*, ed. Eric Patterson (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 19-20.

13. Douglas Carver Forewarrrd, to *Military Chaplains in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Beyond: Advisement and Leader Engagement in Highly Religious Environments*, ed. Eric Patterson (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 20–21.

chaplains better understand combat ministry; the role that military chaplains have played in providing combat ministry; and the lessons that can be learned from their experiences. To help military chaplains better understand these elements, this resource examines the following: (1) a summary of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, (2) a compilation of the personal experiences and narrative stories from chaplains about their role in providing combat ministry, and (3) lessons learned from the themes and patterns of related experiences. Themes and patterns noted by the narrative experiences of these chaplains involved in combat ministry will be interpreted for meaning<sup>14</sup> to help prepare chaplains who will be deploying to South West Asia, and other areas of the world.

## **Audience**

As stated above, this resource is primarily for deploying chaplains; however, additional audiences may benefit from it. For example, military leaders might find this resource helpful in better understanding the role of U.S. military chaplains in modern warfare. Understanding this will help them better appreciate and utilize chaplains as force multipliers. Additionally, there may be those on the civilian side, in academia or otherwise, who would benefit from or be able to offer insight on the role and effects of U.S. military chaplains in warfare, or vice versa. The size of groups can range from small groups to large, and presenters should adapt the material

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14. "Qualitative interpretation begins with elucidating meanings. The analyst examines a story, a case study, a set of interviews, or a collection of field notes and asks, What does this mean? What does this tell me about the nature of the phenomenon of interest? In asking these questions, the analyst works back and forth between the data or story (the evidence) and his or her own perspective and understanding to make sense of the evidence." As quoted in Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, 2002), 477–478.

to best fit the needs of their specific audience.

## **Instructions for Use**

Those who use this resource should understand that there is no one specific way to present the chaplain narrative stories. However, presenters should keep in mind their audience, as one will present this material differently to different people. Some audiences might necessitate a more holistic approach and overview of the experiences of U.S. military chaplains in Afghanistan and Iraq, while others might only require a focus on one or a few of the eleven areas noted in the content analysis. More importantly, if presenters are to do justice to the topic, they must delve into the supporting research, especially the narratives. Without having a full understanding of these, it is impossible for one to accurately understand and depict a portion of what U.S. military chaplains experienced and gave in their service in Afghanistan and Iraq during the GWOT. Because of this, potential presenters are encouraged to explore the supporting research and come to an understanding of it before seeking to present it.

With this being said, the following is merely one of the many possible presentations that could be derived from this material. This presentation takes a general step by step approach to understanding the service of U.S. military chaplains in Afghanistan and Iraq, examining three specific elements: first, a prelude to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, beginning two decades before the events of September 11, 2001; second, there is an overview of the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, up to the present day; third, there will be analysis of eleven themes and patterns learned from the collected chaplain experiences, with a sampling of selected quotes to illustrate to the audience the experiences of these chaplains in their own words.

Respectively, this brief can be presenting in about 45-60 minutes with the length of the presentation depending on knowledge of the presenter, their interaction with the audience, and the specific purpose of the presentation. The attached disk included in this resource contains a PowerPoint of twenty-six slides, which can be adapted if need be. Additionally, this resource contains a printout of the slides with references to specific pages in the supporting research that presenters can turn to for better understanding.

*For more information concerning this project, contact Jeffrey Skinner [jamps2012@gmail.com](mailto:jamps2012@gmail.com).*

## Supporting Research

This supporting research consist of three elements. First, a brief prelude of the circumstances that led up to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Second, a short history of U.S. involvement in the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq since the turn of the 21st century. Finally, twenty case studies will be examined that illustrate the effects that military ministry in combat has had on U.S. military chaplains during the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

These case studies will consist of a brief bio of the chaplain (to the extent that information is available), block quotes of noteworthy narrative, and a brief analysis of the chaplain's experience, so as to highlight and categorize some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented. Lastly, a summative analysis and explanation of the narratives will be done by looking at the themes and patterns found within them.

### Prelude

The U.S. had been involved in the Cold War with the Soviet Union for decades when, on December 26, 1979, Soviet military forces invaded Afghanistan.<sup>15</sup> This began what would be yet another proxy war between the U.S. and the Soviets, with the former investing tens of billions of dollars to support the Mujahedeen guerrilla fighters against the Soviet forces. During this time a Saudi Arabian by the name of Osama bin Laden would become involved in supporting the Mujahedeen.<sup>16</sup> Although the U.S. would ultimately win the Cold War, the true repercussions from their involvement in

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15. Paul Thompson, *The Terror Timeline Year by Year, Day by Day, Minute by Minute: A Comprehensive Chronicle of the Road to 9/11 – and America's Response* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 5.

16. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 5.

the region were still yet to be felt.

In the late 1980s' into the 1990s' money and arms spent in supporting the Mujahedeen against the Soviets would transform and solidify into the creation of Afghanistan's Taliban government, and even more radical groups like Al-Qaeda.<sup>17</sup> During this decade, there would be repeated attacks on U.S. entities, to include an attack on the World Trade Center (WTC) on February 26, 1993, the bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia on June 25, 1996, and the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania on August 7, 1998.<sup>18</sup> During the 1990s' these, and many other attacks on the West and the U.S. specifically, were either financed, directed, or influenced by Osama bin Laden.<sup>19</sup>

The election of President George W. Bush in late 2000 signaled a change in emphasis for the U.S., as many of Bush's campaign promises focused on domestic policies like educational and economic reforms. However, on a beautiful clear morning in New York on September 11, 2001, much of that would change. At 8:46 a.m. Flight 11 was flown into the North Tower of the WTC, at 9:03 a.m. Flight 175 crashed into the South Tower of the WTC, and at 9:06 a.m. President Bush, who was attending an event at Booker Elementary School in Florida, was informed by his Chief of Staff Andrew Card that, "America's under attack."<sup>20</sup> At 9:37 a.m. Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and at 10:06 a.m. Flight 93 crashed in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.<sup>21</sup>

17. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 4–5, 7.

18. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 11, 17, 21.

19. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 8–26.

20. Paul Thompson, *The Terror Timeline Year by Year, Day by Day, Minute by Minute: A Comprehensive Chronicle of the Road to 9/11 – and America's Response* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 371, 390, 397.

21. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 422, 450.

That evening, as a shocked and traumatized nation steadied itself, President Bush declared what would come to be known as part of the “Bush Doctrine,” stating that, “We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them.”<sup>22</sup> On September 14, 2001, the U.S. congress would authorize the administration to “use all necessary military force against the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, their sponsors, and those who protected them.”<sup>23</sup> In this brief overview is found the prelude to what would become the longest protracted conflict in U.S. history, ushering in major U.S. military involvement in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

## **Short History**

The events of September 11, 2001, in which nearly 3,000 American’s lost their lives, sparked what would come to be known as the GWOT. While the GWOT has grown to officially include more than a dozen different countries, the focal point for U.S. involvement has largely been in Afghanistan and Iraq. For purposes of examining the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the following will serve to define the conflicts.

### *War in Afghanistan*

The war in Afghanistan, also known as Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), began on October 7, 2001. The aim of OEF was to carry out a GWOT, which included the locations and countries of Guantanamo Bay (Cuba), Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Philippines, Seychelles, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Yemen. Although OEF ended on December 31, 2014, U.S. Forces remained in Afghanistan under the banner of

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22. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 468.

23. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 320.



Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS), and are still operating there up to the present day.<sup>24</sup> For the purposes of this resource, the war in Afghanistan is understood as beginning October 7, 2001, and includes all operations (OEF and OFS) that have taken place in Afghanistan up to the present day.

### *War in Iraq*

The war in Iraq, also known as Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), began on March 19, 2003. The actions taken in OIF were many times referred to as central to the GWOT. However, OIF and OEF were never officially integrated, and they remained separate operations.<sup>25</sup> Operation Iraqi Freedom continued until August 31, 2010, at which time it was announced that the U.S. combat mission in Iraq would come to an end. On September 1, 2010, the military forces in Iraq carried on a different mission under the banner of Operation New Dawn (OND), which ended on December 15, 2011, when U.S. forces officially ended the war in Iraq.<sup>26</sup> However, as recently as June of 2014 the U.S. reengaged the conflict in Iraq because of the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), beginning what would come to be known as Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), which has continued up to the present day.<sup>27</sup> For the purpose of this resource the war in Iraq is understood as beginning

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24. United States Department of Defense, "Casualty," United States Department of Defense, last modified 2 February 2017, accessed 2 February 2017, <http://www.defense.gov/casualty.pdf>.

25. The White House, "Global Message: A Central Front in the War on Terror," published 7 September 2003, accessed 15 July 2016, <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/09/20030909.html>.

26. Barbara S. Torreon, "U.S. A

27. United States Department of Defense, "Operation Inherent Resolve: Targeted Operations Against ISIL Terrorists," published 5 July 2016, accessed 15 July 2016, [http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0814\\_Inherent-Resolve](http://www.defense.gov/News/Special-Reports/0814_Inherent-Resolve).

March 19, 2003, and includes all operations (OIF, OND, and OIR) that have to the present occurred in Iraq .

Having defined the scope of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the following is a condensed timeline of significant events that have taken place during the GWOT over the last decade and a half.

In the days and weeks that followed the attacks on September 11, 2001, it would become evident that a man by the name of Osama bin Laden, the head of an international terrorist group named Al-Qaeda, was the mastermind of the attacks.<sup>28</sup> The U.S. suspected the Taliban government in Afghanistan of providing safe haven for Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda. After the Taliban reportedly refused to give him up, the U.S. began combat operations in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).<sup>29</sup> Their goal was to depose the Taliban, deny Al-Qaeda safe haven, and to institute new leadership in Afghanistan. After successfully driving the Taliban from power, the U.S. instituted an interim government in December, 2001, led by Hamid Karzai.<sup>30</sup> Notably, in the months before the events of September 11, 2001, the Bush administration had been concerned about the potential threat that Iraq and its authoritarian leader Saddam Hussein posed. In the months that followed, there would be further scrutiny into Iraq's supposed involvement in the attacks. This was to become the groundwork for the U.S. led invasion of Iraq less than two years later.<sup>31</sup>

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28. Paul Thompson, *The Terror Timeline Year by Year, Day by Day, Minute by Minute: A Comprehensive Chronicle of the Road to 9/11 – and America's Response* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 468.

29. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 473.

30. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 474–475, 479, 482.

31. Paul Thompson, *The Terror Timeline Year by Year, Day by Day, Minute by Minute: A Comprehensive Chronicle of the Road to 9/11 – and America's Response* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 315–326.

In 2002, the Afghan fight against the remaining elements of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan became increasingly volatile, as both the interim government and regional warlords fought for power and U.S. support. The instability in Afghanistan was further exacerbated by the assassination of Afghan Vice President Hajji Abdul Qadir.<sup>32</sup> During this time, President Bush's administration began to look at the possibility of invading Iraq, pushing for the possibility publicly by labeling the Iraqi regime as part of the "Axis of Evil."<sup>33</sup> This was based on intelligence that led them to believe that Iraq and its President Saddam Hussein were harboring terrorists, and building up nuclear capabilities.<sup>34</sup>

On March 19, 2003, the U.S. began combat operations in Iraq under Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). The stated goal was that of widening the scope of the GWOT, removing Saddam Hussein from power, and instituting democracy in Iraq. On May 1, 2003, President Bush arrived aboard the aircraft carrier USS *Abraham Lincoln* and declared that conventional hostilities in Iraq would end and that the mission was accomplished.<sup>35</sup> On December 13 of that same year, Saddam Hussein was captured in Iraq.<sup>36</sup>

In 2004, the U.S. was facing a troubling situation in Afghanistan. Conditions in the country had deteriorated as infighting continued between the Afghan interim government and regional warlords, both of which were supposed to be fighting remnants of the

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32. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 481.

33. Thomas R. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War Encyclopedia*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 34-35.

34. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War*, 497.

35. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War*, 498.

36. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 325.

Taliban and Al-Qaeda, and both of which were vying for power and U.S. support.<sup>37</sup> In April of 2004, the human rights violations at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq came to light.<sup>38</sup> Not only did the Bush administration's public ratings drop, but worldwide it was felt by many that the U.S. was beginning to lose the moral high ground they once held in carrying out the GWOT. During that year, some of the most intense fighting of the war took place in Fallujah, Iraq.<sup>39</sup> Contributing to the instability in Iraq was a growing insurgency, fueled by sectarian (Sunni vs. Shiite) violence.<sup>40</sup> Over 900 U.S. service members were killed that year in Afghanistan and Iraq combined.<sup>41</sup>

In 2005, U.S. forces in Afghanistan doubled from 10,000 to 20,000, while the numbers in Iraq remained steady around 130,000 to 140,000.<sup>42</sup> In Iraq there was progress in instituting a government structure, with national elections for the Iraqi Legislative Council, the first meeting of the Iraqi National Assembly, and the election of Jalal Talabani as President of Iraq.<sup>43</sup> With the re-election of President Bush the previous November, many Americans were consigning

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37. Thompson, *The Terror Timeline*, 482–483.

38. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War*, 499.

39. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War*, 499.

40. Kent M. Bolton, *U.S. National Security and Foreign Policymaking After 9/11: Present at The Re-Creation*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2008), 192.

41. ICasualties, "Iraq Coalition Military Fatalities by Year - Afghanistan Coalition Military Fatalities by Year," Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, published 2 February 2017, accessed 2 February 2017, <http://icasualties.org/>.

42. Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*. (Washington, D.C. Congressional Research Service, 2014), 9.

43 Thomas R. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War Encyclopedia*, (Santa Barbra, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 499.

themselves to the fact that the GWOT would continue into the coming years. Once again, over 900 U.S. military members were killed that year in Afghanistan and Iraq combined.<sup>44</sup>

In 2006, public perception of the war had sunk to an all-time low. Whereas at the beginning of the GWOT the public perception that the U.S and its allies were winning the war was approximately 66%, it had now sunk to a new low of 29%, with an ever-increasing number believing that neither side was winning.<sup>45</sup> In Iraq, the transitional government was replaced by a regular governing body that was more autonomous, and in December of that year Saddam Hussein was executed by hanging.<sup>46</sup> For the third year in a row, over 900 U.S. military members were killed in Afghanistan and Iraq combined.<sup>47</sup>

In 2007, the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan remained at approximately 20,000.<sup>48</sup> That year the Iraq surge peaked at over 165,000 troops, but the year was riddled with large scale attacks such as the Baghdad Market bombings (February 3), Al-Hillah bombings (March 6), Tal Afar bombings (March 27), Baghdad bombings (April 18), Mosul massacre (April 23), Al-Askari Mosque bombings (June 13), Kirkuk bombings (June 16), Amirili truck bombing (July 17), Baghdad Market bombing (July 26),

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44. ICasualties, Coalition Military Fatalities.

45. Frank Newport, "Ten Years in, Many Doubt U.S. Is Winning War on Terrorism," Gallup, published 9 September 2011, accessed 22 November 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/149381/ten-years-later-doubts-war-terrorism.aspx>.

46. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War*, 171–172.

47. ICasualties, Coalition Military Fatalities.

48. Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*. (Washington, D.C. Congressional Research Service, 2014), 9.

Yazidi community bombing (August 14), and others.<sup>49</sup> At home in the U.S. the war was as unpopular as ever, as the number of U.S. military members killed that year in Afghanistan and Iraq combined surpassed 1,000.<sup>50</sup>

In 2008, the nation decided decisively for the U.S. presidential campaign that promised a drawdown in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and that year Barack Obama was elected the 44th President of the United States.<sup>51</sup> Shortly after the election that November the U.S. and Iraq signed a status of forces agreement to begin the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraqi cities by 2009, and to have all of them out of the country by 2011.<sup>52</sup>

In 2009, the Obama administration began its drawdown in Iraq, with the number of troops taking a sharp drop to 140,000.<sup>53</sup> The withdrawal emboldened the opposition insurgency, and in the latter half of the year hundreds of Iraqis were killed as Baghdad was bombed repeatedly (between August 19 and December 8 an estimated 383 died).<sup>54</sup> While the public perception and support of the GWOT slightly increased in the U.S., it was mostly only by virtue of the Obama administration's promise to drawdown and end the U.S.

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49. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War*, 501.

50. ICasualties, "Iraq Coalition Military Fatalities by Year - Afghanistan Coalition Military Fatalities by Year," Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, published 2 February 2017, accessed 2 February 2017, <http://icasualties.org/>.

51. Thomas R. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War Encyclopedia*, (Santa Barbra, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 312–315.

52. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War*, 502.

53. Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*. (Washington, D.C. Congressional Research Service, 2014), 9.

54. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War*, 502.

presence over the coming decade.<sup>55</sup>

In 2010, the Obama administration increased U.S. military troop levels in Afghanistan to almost 100,000; it would remain steady there for over a year. Meanwhile, on September 1, the U.S. ended OIF in Iraq, and maintained its presence in country under Operation New Dawn (OND). It was announced publicly that the U.S. would end combat missions in Iraq the next year, as troop levels there had dropped even lower to 60,000.<sup>56</sup>

On May 1, 2011, U.S. service members raided a compound in Pakistan and killed Osama bin Laden.<sup>57</sup> At this point, the U.S. was handing off major responsibilities in Afghanistan to the Afghans, hoping that they could take the lead so that U.S. troops could be removed. On December 15 of that year, the U.S. ended OND, and troops officially left Iraq after there was failure to reach another status of forces agreement.<sup>58</sup>

### U.S. Military Fatalities

Year	Iraq	Afghanistan	Total
2001	NA	12	12
2002	NA	49	49
2003	486	48	534
2004	849	52	901
2005	846	99	945

55. Frank Newport, "Ten Years in, Many Doubt U.S. Is Winning War on Terrorism," Gallup, published 9 September 2011, accessed 22 November 2016, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/149381/ten-years-later-doubts-war-terrorism.aspx>.

56. Belasco, *The Cost*, 9.

57. Paul J. Springer, *9/11 and the War on Terror: A Documentary and Reference Guide*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood & ABC-CLIO, 2016), 326.

58. Thomas R. Mockaitis, *The Iraq War Encyclopedia*, (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 502.

2006	823	98	921
2007	904	117	1021
2008	314	155	469
2009	149	317	466
2010	60	499	559
2011	54	418	472
2012	1	310	311
2013	NA	127	127
2014	3	55	58
2015	6	22	28
2016	17	14	31
2017	3	NA	3
Total	4515	2392	6907

ICasualties, "Iraq Coalition Military Fatalities by Year - Afghanistan Coalition Military Fatalities by Year," Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, published 2 February 2017, accessed 2 February 2017, <http://icasualties.org/>.

In 2012 Afghanistan's role and responsibility grew, and U.S. troops continued to be sent home from Afghanistan, ending the year with just over 66,000 in country.<sup>59</sup> As the election drew near the Obama administration began pushing to fulfill its campaign promise to pull out of the Middle East. However, their plans were complicated by an increasingly volatile environment in the Middle East, as in the previous months the Arab Spring had led to numerous government overthrows, and the U.S. had even lost its ambassador Christopher Stevens to assassination in Libya.<sup>60</sup>

In 2013, having won re-election the November previous, President Obama announced that the 66,000 troops in Afghanistan would drop by half in the coming year. In Iraq, the government

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59. Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11*. (Washington, D.C. Congressional Research Service, 2014), 9.

60. Paul J. Springer, *9/11 and the War on Terror: A Documentary and Reference Guide*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood & ABC-CLIO, 2016), 326.



struggled to maintain stability, as sectarian violence flared.<sup>61</sup>

In 2014, the number of troops in Afghanistan fell to 33,000 U.S. military forces on the ground, and it was projected that by January of 2017 there would only be 300 troops in country.<sup>62</sup> In Iraq, ISIS took over Fallujah in January.<sup>63</sup> In June, ISIS made a major push into Northern Iraq, causing the country to go into a state of emergency. On June 13 the U.S. began to reinsert itself by carrying out airstrikes on ISIS in Iraq.<sup>64</sup> On August 8 of that year the U.S. officially reentered the conflict with Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), which continues to the present day. In Afghanistan, OEF ended on December 31, 2014.



## Boots on the Ground In-Country, FY2001-FY2017

61. Belasco, *The Cost*, 9.

62. Belasco, *The Cost*, 9.

63. Tara John, "Timeline: The Rise of ISIS," Time Magazine, published 9 October 2015, accessed 22 November 2016, <http://time.com/4030714/isis-timeline-islamic-state/>

64. Springer, *War on Terror*, 327.

**Sources:** DOD, Monthly Boots-on-the Ground reports provided to CRS and congressional defense committees, 2001-June 2014. Month-by-month troop levels, both in-country and in-theater.

**Note:** Reflects U.S. troops in-country; excludes troops providing in-theater support or conducting counter-terror operations outside the region.

On January 1, 2015, the U.S. maintained their presence in Afghanistan under the banner of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel (OFS), which continues up to the present day. Having reinserted itself in Iraq the previous year, the U.S. stepped up their air campaign and influence in the fight to stop ISIS. At present, the conflict continues.

In all, a recent report shows that almost \$700 billion dollars has been spent in Afghanistan, over \$800 billion in Iraq, with the grand total being over \$1.5 trillion, with the projected costs over time estimated to be 4.8 trillion.<sup>65</sup> Over 2.5 million U.S. service members have gone to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, 6,907 U.S. service members were killed, and over 52,514 were wounded.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, by conservative estimates over 200,000 civilians have died due to the conflict, and an estimated 7.6 million have been displaced.<sup>67</sup>

It is from this overview of the GWOT that one can begin to gain a small appreciation for the complex circumstances that

65. Lizzy Tomei, “It’s 2015. Time for Some New US Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan,” Mint Press News, published 6 January 2015, accessed 22 November 2016, <http://www.mintpressnews.com/2015-time-new-us-operations-iraq-afghanistan/200501/>.

66. United States Department of Defense, “Casualty,” United States Department of Defense, last modified 2 February 2017, accessed 2 February 2017, <http://www.defense.gov/casualty.pdf>.

67. Brown University, “Costs of War: Civilians Killed & Wounded,” Watson Institute International & Public Affairs Brown University, last updated 2016, accessed 22 November 2016, <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/>.

chaplains have found themselves operating in during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this context, chaplains in the armed forces were deployed and have been deployed since 2001. Their stories of combat ministry are inspiring and their devotion to God and country noteworthy. It is hoped that from this summary of the conflict that the reader is better able to understand the following chaplain narratives (stories), and their place in the larger picture of the conflict over the last decade and a half since the beginning of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

## **Narrative Case Studies – The Chaplains**

Among the thousands of U.S. military members who have served during the GWOT are military chaplains. Much like their fellow service members, they have sacrificed and suffered to help carry out the military's mission. The following are the unique accounts of twenty U.S. military chaplains who served in Afghanistan and Iraq during the GWOT. These case studies will consist of a brief bio of the chaplain (to the extent that information is available), block quotes of noteworthy narrative, and a brief analysis of the chaplain's experience so as to highlight and categorize some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented.

### ***Chaplain Kittleson***

Chaplain Lance Kittleson served as a Lutheran minister in Iowa for over twenty years, and as an active duty and reservist soldier for over twenty-five. In January of 2003, he deployed with his reserve unit to Kuwait, where U.S. forces were being staged before their entrance into Iraq in March of that year. During this time, he would serve with the 3rd Corps Support Command of the Iowa Army Reserves, whose mission was to ensure that combat arms soldiers

had the appropriate equipment, food, ammunition, and supplies. He would not return home until February of 2004. The following are excerpts from e-mails sent home to his family and congregation in Iowa. Describing his unit's entrance into Iraq he said that:

Burned out tanks and APC's (armored personnel carriers) dotted the intersections. Dirt revetments were dug to protect in a tank-on-tank fight, but did little for attacks from the air. The pavement was scarred with baseball-sized holes, the obvious result of a cluster bomb dropped to take out Iraqi armor...<sup>68</sup>

Upon arriving at his base known as Anaconda, just north of Baghdad, he would write often about the many memorial services he performed and attended for those who had died. One particularly poignant account is given as he remembers a soldier who:

Did not die from hostile fire, but rather from fire from his own hand. Suicide. This situation sets off such a firestorm of conflicting thoughts and emotions... Could we have seen this coming? Could we have prevented it? Why didn't we realize there was a problem? The memorial service doesn't end or answer the questions; it merely announces the beginning of the long, hard process of coming to grips with what has happened and the grief that lurks in the long, waking nights.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to dealing with the deaths of service members Chaplain Kittleson endured the rigors of the desert elements, battled illness, sprinted for bunkers, and constantly traveled "along

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68. Lance Kittleson, *Meditations from Iraq: A Chaplain's Ministry in the Middle East 2003-2004* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing, 2005), 80-81.

69. Kittleson, *Meditations from Iraq*, 144-145.

Iraqi roads on the lookout for roadside ambushes and RPG [rocket propelled grenade] attacks.”<sup>70</sup> His service alongside the men and women of the U.S. armed forces allowed him to reach out to those in need of comfort and counsel.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented, several are apparent, (1) exposure to traumatic material (2) regret over a missed opportunity to help a service member that committed suicide, (4) sorrow over the loss of service members, and (4) the normal stress that many service members feel in a deployed environment.

### *Chaplain Horton*

Chaplain Anthony Horton deployed more than a dozen times in his seventeen years as a Latter-day Saint (LDS) Chaplain in the U.S. Army, and when he heard in May of 2003 that he was to be deployed to Iraq he was “excited and relieved all at once.”<sup>71</sup> He was to be assigned to the 40<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, which belonged to the 1st Armored Division in Germany. The unit was already stationed in downtown Baghdad, Iraq, and had been without a chaplain for two months. Upon arrival, he was inundated with requests to have soldiers meet with him. In making his rounds and visiting one on one, he came to learn of the toll that the deployment was taking. There were many issues manifest among the service members that he counseled, with divorce, death, gender identity, and suicide among many others. One account he recorded says:

It was late in the afternoon at the security check point on

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70. Lance Kittleson, *Meditations from Iraq: A Chaplain's Ministry in the Middle East 2003-2004* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing, 2005), 11.

71. Anthony W. Horton, *Finding Faith in the Desert* (Utah, Brigham Distributing, 2004), 6.

the south end of the 14<sup>th</sup> of July Bridge in Baghdad, Iraq. The temperature was a blistering 152 degrees, and the sergeant of the guard called for the chaplain. A soldier really needed to talk. I arrived to find the soldier sitting slouched over, shoulders heaving up and down as the soldier sobbed. Next to his head was the muzzle of his M16, conveniently leaning against the track vehicle he sat against, and due to the security conditions, I knew a round was chambered. My immediate thought was that this possibly was this soldier's last attempt to save himself. Had I not arrived, I sensed he was finalizing his commitment to kill himself. Adultery was the behavior that had torn his life into the shredded mess it was in.<sup>72</sup>

While there were little to no additional resources available to assist Chaplain Horton, he stayed with the soldier. He ordered that the soldier spend the night next to his cot, buoying him up, counseling with him, until finally the soldier could return to duty. However, his work was not confined to his own soldiers, as there was much opportunity for engaging the locals in the area. He met with an Imam who had been mistreated by American soldiers, reached out to religious minorities to build relationships of trust, and helped provide medical care for Iraqi citizens in need.<sup>73</sup> Going outside the boundaries of the Green Zone had its consequences though, as he repeatedly faced the dangers of doing so, recording that:

My first Sunday in Iraq, I was asked to go to the Baghdad Airport and pick up a Catholic priest and bring him back

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72. Horton, *Finding Faith*, 121.

73. Anthony W. Horton, *Finding Faith in the Desert* (Utah, Brigham Distributing, 2004), 126-127, 161.

to the Green Zone for our Catholic soldiers. My assistant, angry that I made him drive, commented that it would be his luck that if we got hit on our trip, I'd get killed and he would survive... We were just leaving the compound of our palace, and stopped at the guard gate... At that moment we both heard a very large explosion. Not more than 30 seconds down the road in front of us, a car bomb exploded. Had we not stopped at the guard gate for those short moments, we would have been caught in the blast area, and perhaps killed.<sup>74</sup>

Fortunately, Chaplain Horton made it through his tour without serious injury, and he was able to give timely service to those in need. Additionally, his deployment was extended for three months, giving him extra time and ample opportunity to continue his service.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent: (1) exposure to traumatic material (2) abundant opportunity to provide pastoral care and counseling, (3) physically dangerous situations, and (4) the normal stress that many service members feel in combat, and (4) building relationships of trust.

### ***Chaplain Pantlitz***

Chaplain Anthony Pantlitz served in the U.S. Army and Air Force. When the war in the Middle East intensified in 2004, he was called up to serve alongside the Army's 785th Combat Stress Company in Baghdad, Iraq.

In Iraq, he spent time in Abu Ghraib Prison, shortly after the human rights atrocities had taken place and come to light in April of 2004. He quickly came to know the pressures and dangers of

74. Horton, *Finding Faith*, 171.

working there. In one of his journals he recalls a mortar attack that happened on a Thanksgiving, where he saw “three security guards charred like burned meat.”<sup>75</sup> He recorded another traumatic experience by stating:

We had two mass casualties. The first one killed 22 detainees, and injured 97. The second one killed 14 detainees, and injured 18. Those 22 detainees had to be put in body bags, and ice had to be put on them, their eyes had to be closed, and they had to be put into the mortuary. Nobody wanted to do that job. So, they called the chaplain. When nobody wants to do a job, they know a chaplain will do it. So, I put these bodies in body bags and closed their eyes, put ice on them, and said a prayer for them. That event, is what I remember to this day. It is etched into my memory. It's the event that made me become numb inside, like I don't feel anything, no joy, no sorrow, no pain. I feel like a dead person inside.<sup>76</sup>

Chaplain Pantlitz talked about how these experiences made him lose faith for a time, and the internal struggle that he had with trying to be strong for others:

The chaplain is supposed to be the one that is unbroken... When soldiers see a chaplain is broken, they feel it's okay for them to be broken, too. Other soldiers

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75. Michelle Boorstein, “What Happens When the Military Chaplain Is Shaken by War,” The Washington Post, published 29 May 2016, accessed 22 November 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/what-happens-when-the-military-chaplain-is-shaken-by-war/2016/05/29/4dd27dc8-237f-11e6-8690-f14ca9de2972\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/what-happens-when-the-military-chaplain-is-shaken-by-war/2016/05/29/4dd27dc8-237f-11e6-8690-f14ca9de2972_story.html).

76. Anthony Pantlitz, “Coalition to Salute America's Heroes -- Capt. Anthony Pantlitz,” (Video Clip), Posted 22 February 2011, accessed 23 November 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rf3ZDOWQ9Mk>.



— okay. But a man or woman of God is not supposed to be broken... A still small voice frequently asked me, where is your God... I feel so alone in this world. I am so isolated and alienated from people, the world, and myself. I feel like a Prisoner of a War who has been forgotten on the battlefield.<sup>77</sup>

However, over time he came to find hope, and as he has tried to work through his PTSD he says that:

If I could turn back the hands of time, I'd not change anything... To go to Iraq, to get PTSD, and to use it, to make me a more ironically compassionate person, which opened doors for me to tell people who have been through trauma, difficulties, that God doesn't waste anything... Sometimes God purposely breaks the chaplain so he can make them a better chaplain... In my case, I was wounded, and I use my wounds to be a healer to others. This has made me a better Christian.<sup>78</sup>

Since returning from his service in Afghanistan and Iraq he has spent time with many other veterans who have served, and says:

One of the greatest hopes I've received, is just being around other wounded vets. I... [thought] I had the worst injury in the world, but when I look around and I see people, some have a bullet in their head still, literally, some walking around with no legs and no hands, I realize

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77, Michelle Boorstein, "What Happens When the Military Chaplain Is Shaken by War," The Washington Post, published 29 May 2016, accessed 22 November 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/what-happens-when-the-military-chaplain-is-shaken-by-war/2016/05/29/4dd27dc8-237f-11e6-8690-f14ca9de2972\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/what-happens-when-the-military-chaplain-is-shaken-by-war/2016/05/29/4dd27dc8-237f-11e6-8690-f14ca9de2972_story.html).

78. Michelle Boorstein, "What Happens When."

I need to put my injury in perspective... awareness that even though PTSD is a very challenging injury, I would much rather have it than have lost limbs.<sup>79</sup>

Chaplain Pantlitz is now retired, taking the time to focus on his family, other veterans, and counseling groups that he helps facilitate.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) exposure to traumatic material, (2) physically dangerous situations, (3) moral injury, and (4) PTSD.

### *Chaplain Williams*

Chaplain Matthew Williams began his work as a minister at the United Church of Christ, and shortly thereafter became an Army Chaplain from 2007-2013.<sup>80</sup> Having gone to seminary and being ordained, he thought his foundation of faith was firm. However, as a military chaplain he deployed twice, once to Afghanistan and once to Iraq, where he spent time:

Unzipping body bags and “seeing your friends’ faces all blown apart.” He watched as most of the marriages he officiated for fellow soldiers fell apart. He felt the terror of being the only soldier who wasn’t armed when the mortars dropped and bullets flew... “I thought I had a handle on suffering. I thought I had a handle on understanding the sovereignty of God. I didn’t know crap... At the end of the day, what I know now is: I’m alive, I believe in God, I have faith, and that’s where it stops. It doesn’t get much deeper than that... I don’t

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79. Anthony Pantlitz, “Coalition to Salute.”

80. Matthew O. Williams, “Who I Am,” published 2016, accessed 22 November 2016, <http://www.retiredarmychaplain.com/who-i-am.html>.

think anymore that there is some grand design... It just is.”<sup>81</sup>

Having faced these difficulties, he retired, left his faith and ministry with the United Church of Christ, and is now on disability with PTSD. He continues to travel the country, reaching out to other veterans who have been scarred by war.<sup>82</sup>

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) exposure to traumatic material, (2) physically dangerous situations, (3) stress of deployed environment, (4) moral injury, and (5) PTSD, and (6) changed faith group.

### *Chaplain Antal*

Chaplain Chris Antal was a seminary student and pacifist when he first felt the call to serve his country as a U.S. military chaplain. As a member of the Unitarian Universalist faith he joined the New York Army National Guard as a chaplain, and from September 2012 to February 2013 he served with a Signal Battalion supporting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division at Kandahar Airbase in southern Afghanistan. While there, he became more fully aware and concerned about the U.S. use of drones. He recalls:

Gather[ing] on the flight line whenever a service member was killed. As the casket was transferred onto a C-17 cargo plane, there is ‘Taps,’ there’s prayer, and we salute

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81. Michelle Boorstein, “What Happens When the Military Chaplain Is Shaken by War,” The Washington Post, published 29 May 2016, accessed 22 November 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/what-happens-when-the-military-chaplain-is-shaken-by-war/2016/05/29/4dd27dc8-237f-11e6-8690-f14ca9de2972\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/social-issues/what-happens-when-the-military-chaplain-is-shaken-by-war/2016/05/29/4dd27dc8-237f-11e6-8690-f14ca9de2972_story.html).

82. Boorstein, “What Happens When.”

as the casket is carried up the ramp. It was while I was standing on the flight line in those ceremonies that I saw the drones — surveillance and also armed drones — on the flight line... to hold that with the drones... to stand there wondering who we were killing, who their families were, and how they were grieving... it just created a break in my soul.<sup>83</sup>

This led him to speak out, and on Veterans' Day 2012 he gave a pointed sermon, stating:

We have made war entertainment enjoying box seats in the carnival of death consuming violence, turning tragedy into games raising our children to kill without remorse. We have morally disengaged, outsourcing our killing... We have sanitized killing and condoned extrajudicial assassinations: death by remote control, war made easy without due process, protecting ourselves from the human cost of war. We have deceived ourselves... The national closet bursts with skeletons.<sup>84</sup>

As one might suspect, this sermon and its eventual proliferation over the internet did not sit well with Chaplain Antal's superiors. Shortly thereafter he was contacted by an Army lawyer, summoned to his commander's office, lectured on how his message did not support the mission, and was then subjected to an Article 15-6 investigation. He was given an official reprimand for inflammatory statements, and returned to the states with a do not promote

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83. Stephen Snyder, "The 'Empire Chaplain': This Army clergyman quit over the US drone program," PRI, published 19 May 2016, accessed 23 November 2016, <http://www.pri.org/stories/2016-05-19/empire-chaplain-army-clergyman-quit-over-us-drone-program>.

84. Stephen Snyder, "The Empire Chaplain."

evaluation.<sup>85</sup> Subsequently, he decided to resign his commission, and sent a letter to President Barack Obama stating that he would “not serve as an empire chaplain.”<sup>86</sup> He has since spoken out about the risk of moral injury, the abolition of nuclear arms, and the Army’s revision of regulations that give the chaplain responsibility to “speak with a prophetic voice.”<sup>87</sup> While his crises of conscience ultimately led to the loss of his career, he continues his ministry as a pastor at New York’s Rock Tavern Unitarian Universalists, and is involved as an activist outside of the military with Veterans for Peace.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) moral injury, (2) disciplinary action, (3) the normal stress that many service members feel in a deployed environment, and (4) sorrow over loss.

### *Chaplain Dharm*

Chaplain Prathima Dharm served in the U.S. Army from 2006 to 2014. She entered the service as a Christian chaplain, and returned to

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85. Democracy Now, “I Refuse to Serve as an Empire Chaplain”: U.S. Army Minister Resigns over Drone Program,” Democracy Now, published 3 June 2016, accessed 23 November 2016, [https://www.democracynow.org/2016/6/3/i\\_refuse\\_to\\_serve\\_as\\_an](https://www.democracynow.org/2016/6/3/i_refuse_to_serve_as_an).

86. John Antal, “U.S. Army Chaplain Resigns in Opposition to Use of Assassin Drones by the United States,” Veterans for Peace, published 6 May 2016, accessed 23 November 2016, <https://www.veteransforpeace.org/who-we-are/member-highlights/2016/05/06/us-army-chaplain-resigns-opposition-use-assassin-drones-unit>.

87. Branko Marcetic, “Meet Chris Antal, the U.S. Army Chaplain Who Resigned Over the Drone Program,” In These Times, published 18 July 2016, accessed 23 November 2016, <http://inthesetimes.com/article/19276/the-army-chaplain-who-said-no-to-drones>.

“her family’s religious roots during her service, eventually becoming the Army’s first Hindu chaplain.”<sup>88</sup> During her military service, she had the opportunity to serve in Afghanistan, and she says,

The growing diversity of the military population has meant focusing on really listening and hearing, rather than coming at them from our own theological backgrounds... [a soldier’s spirituality is often] fluid [something Dharm herself experienced] ... As an interfaith and Hindu chaplain, I saw a lot more commonality of needs between the soldiers of diverse population than differences...<sup>89</sup>

In stating her personal philosophy, she said that, “If there is no relationship, everything else does not matter... To be able to better serve and understand the soldiers and their families, one must build relationships with them first.”<sup>90</sup> She recalls some of the most meaningful discussions with soldiers happening at four in the morning when she was helping to cook them breakfast, it was not because she had an opportunity to teach or preach to the service members, but rather because she was able to connect with them outside of her religious role.<sup>91</sup>

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) building relationships of trust, (2) opportunity to provide pastoral care and counseling, (3) faith strengthened, and (4) changed faith

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88. Mark Kellner, “The Changing Role of a Military Chaplain,” *Deseret News National: Faith*, published 9 May 2015, accessed 20 January 2016, <http://national.deseretnews.com/article/4398/the-changing-role-of-a-military-chaplain.html>.

89. Kellner, “The Changing Role.”

90. Kellner, “The Changing Role.”

91. Kellner, “The Changing Role.”

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### ***Chaplain Brown***

Chaplain Lyn Brown served in the Maryland Army National Guard for over a decade, and during that time he had the opportunity to deploy twice to Iraq. In sharing a particular experience, he talked about a soldier who was struggling with the concept of killing the enemy and the death of his own friends that he was witnessing, he states that:

Somebody had told me that he was having a tough time. So I went over to him, and I just said, “What are you thinking?” He said, “I never thought about the killing that would be going on.” When you’re firing at a target to practice, you think of those things as targets, not as people. For him to be there and to see that he had some buddies that were on the receiving end, he was just saying, The Ten Commandments and the Bible says, “Thou shalt not kill.” And he says, “I’m not certain I can go out and kill...” So there’s a lot of controversy, as you can imagine... Why am I wearing an Army uniform and trying to deal with people who are out to kill people?... We preach the love of God and the fact that we ought to be at peace with each other. In the same time, I’m wearing a uniform that says US Army on it. I’m there to support them in their mission of winning a war and that means taking lives. So I do wrestle with that. There’s times that you just kind of go, “God, can I resign here? Can I get away from this?” Rather than having to deal with the questioning that people have, and often not having answers. I think that’s probably the biggest challenge that I’ve ever had, was I couldn’t just say, “Just think this way and you’ll be fine.” There were times that they were asking the same questions that I would be asking... I think I’m much more hesitant about having a definite opinion about who

should die. Just seeing the brutality and the-- people have got body parts missing, or there's big holes. They died a violent death. It's not pretty. It just doesn't seem normal, which it isn't. But also even with the Iraqi culture, there were times that people just said, whatever group it was they didn't agree with, they just said, [SHOOTING SOUND] kill them all. I was going uh, these are people. I didn't like that attitude. And then I was seeing it even among the armed forces. There was people that would just kind of say, well we just need to kill them all, and then that will take care of it. I was going, "whoa." Who nominated you to be God? We all have a tendency to interpret the Ten Commandments in a way that's convenient for us. There's the interpretation of thou shalt not murder. It shouldn't be a premeditated killing. It has nothing to do with war. Those kinds of things. But it just makes me-- I'm looking at it as a principle that God says, you need to value life, and don't take it lightly. Just don't condemn people to death just because it's easy to do. You've got to stop and think about it seriously. This is something that God himself doesn't take lightly.<sup>92</sup>

In a later interview, he would talk about the complications that face political leaders who are deciding whether or not to go to war,

Ultimately it's our political leaders who have to make the decisions to put us in harm's way. They don't have to put *themselves* in harm's way. They're the ones who call people up, but you know that there's always the Cause. I saw that even with various Iraqis I talked to – everybody has their own arguments. I saw people killed and severely injured. My heart went out to countries where

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92. Alex Blumberg, "This American Life: The Ten Commandments." published 4 May 2007, accessed 28 January 2017. <https://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/332/transcript>



people are victims or families are affected. I would just hope that our leaders would really think hard about going to war, realize that there are serious repercussions and serious consequences that they may not even know.<sup>93</sup>

Lastly, he discussed working with a young man who was seeking to gain contentious objector status:

He was trying to readjust, and we helped him deal with the trauma. We transferred him from going out every day and moved him to the headquarters area, where he didn't have to go out for a while. He was able to go home on R and R {rest and recreation} and come back, and he said, "Hey, I'm ready to go back out. My girlfriend [who was pregnant] talked to me about it and it's OK." So it turned out well. I was thankful that we had people who were in charge who were understanding and compassionate... Over the last seventeen years there were twelve people that I needed to interview for conscientious objector status, and I would say that the majority of them had some other ulterior motive. It wasn't a theological or philosophical or spiritual reason. They just wanted to see if they could avoid getting killed or even being deployed... I think the only time we'll get over war is when God returns and establishes His government.<sup>94</sup>

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) exposure to traumatic material, (2) physically dangerous situations,

93. Marc Aronson and Patty Campbell, *War Is... Soldiers, Survivors, and Storytellers Talk About War* (Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2008), 43–44.

94. Marc Aronson and Patty Campbell, *War Is... Soldiers, Survivors, and Storytellers Talk About War* (Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2008), 44–45.

(3) opportunity to provide pastoral care and counseling, (4) grappling with one's theological understanding, and (5) the normal stress that many service members feel in a deployed environment, (6) building relationships of trust, and (7) sorrow over loss.

### *Chaplain Panzer*

Chaplain Joel Panzer was ordained a Catholic priest in 1994, joined the Army in 2006, and went on active duty in 2008. In 2008-2009 he served with the "25th Infantry Division Headquarters based outside of Tikrit, at COB Speicher — the U.S. Army Contingency Operating Base in north-central Iraq, about 95 miles north of Baghdad."<sup>95</sup> In December 2011, he was deployed to Iraq for a second time, serving with "the 25th Infantry Division Headquarters, based out of Schofield Barracks in Hawaii."<sup>96</sup> It was from a base near Baghdad that he gave this interview by phone.

In talking about his work in the deployed environment he said that:

Only a small percentage of soldiers engage in actual combat. Most are in support roles. Nevertheless, deployments tend to create unique stressors, and in the midst of these struggles, many begin to realize they are called to have a closer relationship with God... And a lot of people who are not religious at all still need a good counselor to console them during marital difficulties and other troubles. I counsel some soldiers who do route

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95. Joan Desmond, "As U.S. Withdraws from Iraq, a Chaplain Completes 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour," National Catholic Register, published 5 December 2011, accessed 24 November 2015 <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/as-u.s.-withdraws-from-iraq-a-chaplain-completes-2nd-tour>.

96. Desmond, "Chaplain Completes."

clearance, a dangerous responsibility that increases the likelihood they might encounter an IED [improvised explosive device]. They want to be at peace, rather than preoccupied with the threat of death. They need to face any dangers that may come, and can't allow their emotions to distract from the mission. Right now, we're at Camp Liberty, just outside of Baghdad. A while back, frequent rocket attacks stirred up some anxiety, causing some of my troops to face their own fears and the real prospect of death.<sup>97</sup>

He talked about their efforts to provide religious support to those in need, stating that they traveled:

Outside the base each week to offer Mass, insurgent activity increased the risk. The biggest concern was IEDs, which demolished vehicles in some other units' ground convoys. Every trip required a certain amount of peace and trust in God. About once a month we'd try to reach each unit in the outlying areas. The soldiers are always very appreciative to be able to attend Mass and go to confession. The missions each week had to be arranged well in advance, usually requiring a convoy of four vehicles or two helicopters. Weather is the biggest issue that can make it hard to fly.<sup>98</sup>

In discussing his distinct role as a Catholic chaplain, he said that,

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97. Joan Desmond, "As U.S. Withdraws from Iraq, a Chaplain Completes 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour," National Catholic Register, published 5 December 2011, accessed 24 November 2015 <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/as-u.s.-withdraws-from-iraq-a-chaplain-completes-2nd-tour>.

98. Desmond, "Chaplain Completes."

As a Catholic chaplain, I have two roles: I'm a unit chaplain to all 800 soldiers in the 25th Infantry Division Headquarters, Catholic or not. But, as a priest, I am a high-demand, low-density chaplain. That means I travel out to other units in our area who don't have their own priest... The Army recognizes there are essential differences between Protestant and Catholic chaplains: Only a Catholic priest can hear confessions and say Mass. That distinction is a good thing for Catholic soldiers because it ensures the Army will support moving the priest around the area of operations. I travel and offer Mass in the entire area of responsibility covered by the 25th Infantry. Most chaplains would not do that. And, yes, frequent travel in a combat zone increases the risk that you may be injured or killed.<sup>99</sup>

He discussed his role in pastoral counseling, saying that

It seems like the biggest problem is marital issues. After multiple deployments, family life can suffer. Many soldiers are headed towards divorce or separation. But I have been able to help my soldiers realize that they shouldn't make a hasty decision to divorce, even if they have grown apart from their spouse or if there has been infidelity. I encourage them to take time to work things out and get professional counseling when they get

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99. Desmond, "Chaplain Completes."

home.<sup>100</sup>

In short, one can see that Chaplain Panzer was able to provide invaluable ministry to numerous service members.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) physically dangerous situations, (2) ample opportunity to provide pastoral care and counseling, (3) the normal stress that many service members feel in a deployed environment, (4) increase in marital counseling, and (5) the need for logistical support in providing religious support, and (6) family negatively affected.

### *Chaplain Silva*

Chaplain Caesar Silva served in the Louisiana Air National Guard during the GWOT, while simultaneously serving his parish as a Catholic priest on the civilian side. In 2011 he deployed to Afghanistan with the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing, while there he acted as Deputy Wing Chaplain.<sup>101</sup>

In his work, Chaplain Silva was constantly on the move, with some describing him as the “circuit-riding priest.”<sup>102</sup> His experience was described in an Air Force publication, where it was said that:

#### Chaplain Silva travels to different locations throughout

100. Joan Desmond, “As U.S. Withdraws from Iraq, a Chaplain Completes 2<sup>nd</sup> Tour,” National Catholic Register, published 5 December 2011, accessed 24 November 2015 <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/as-u.s.-withdraws-from-iraq-a-chaplain-completes-2nd-tour>.

101. Christian Jadot, “Circuit-riding Chaplains Rack Up Frequent Flyer Miles,” 379<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs, published 1 June 2011, accessed 15 February 2017, <http://www.af.mil/News/Features/Display/tabid/273/Article/142703/circuit-riding-chaplains-rack-up-frequent-flyer-miles.aspx>

102. Jadot, “Circuit-riding Chaplains.”

the area of responsibility on a weekly basis... Father Silva's job is much the same today - to visit the faithful in locations throughout the theater, go out to serve them so they can remain engaged in the fight, and to maximize the spiritual impact of our 'high-demand, low density' Roman Catholic priest resources... "I was supposed to retire before coming here," Chaplain Silva said." (The military) asked me to extend before I retired. Back home, I had my own community -- my own parish. Here I am able to meet a lot more people. It is easier to share my gifts with many people. In my parish, I have to worry about the administration, the financial aspect and where my food comes from. In the military, I can focus on my ministry." Father Silva works here [the base] during the week. On weekends, he packs his bags and heads out to one of four forward locations to offer Mass... On a typical weekend, Father Silva will celebrate three to seven Masses for... frontline troops. There are challenges that Chaplain Silva faces being on the road and not having a regular parish. "The military is very metropolitan in a way; so many different people, so many different cultures. Here you meet new challenges, new people, and have to meet their needs," Chaplain Silva said. "Traveling, I am not able to see the effects my ministry has on people. The concern I have the most, is if the troops have a problem they have to wait two weeks for a chaplain." Despite the weekly travels, Chaplain Silva said his mind is focused on the job and his spirits remain high. "I enjoy ministering to the troops... I need to like what I am doing. I need to be in a good spiritual mindset to minister to the people. When I see the people

in the AOR, you can see the relief when they confess. I am doing as much as possible. That is what I am here for.”<sup>103</sup>

The service that those like Chaplain Silva gave was integral to ensuring the spiritual well-being of service members. Without this kind of outreach from those like Chaplain Silva, many service members might have gone weeks and even months without being administered to, which could have ultimately had negative effects on them and those they were serving with. Even with the myriad of duties that Chaplain Silva had, he found himself in situations where he was able to administer to the spiritual needs of those present.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) opportunity to provide pastoral care and counseling, (2) building relationships of trust, and (3) the normal stress that many service members feel in a deployed environment.

### *Chaplain White*

Navy Chaplain Dale White was personally affected by the events of September 11, 2001, as he had witnessed firsthand the attack on the Pentagon in Washington D.C. Later in his military service, he was awarded the Bronze Star for valor, as he was recognized for “his bravery in rescuing fellow military personnel when their

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103. Christian Jadot, “Circuit-riding Chaplains Rack Up Frequent Flyer Miles,” 379<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs, published 1 June 2011, accessed 15 February 2017, <http://www.af.mil/News/Features/Display/tabid/273/Article/142703/circuit-riding-chaplains-rack-up-frequent-flyer-miles.aspx>

Humvee was ambushed in Fallujah, Iraq in 2006.”<sup>104</sup> At the time of this interview Navy Chaplain Dale White was serving as the senior chaplain at Camp Lejeune N.C.

In an interview, Chaplain White discussed balancing his responsibility to others and to his own safety, saying that,

Part of our role as chaplains was to pick up the Marines who were injured and to provide pastoral care to them... our instinct is to reach out and help others - that's our calling from God. But in a war zone, we constantly have to balance that with our own safety. I would see what appeared to be a pregnant woman approaching me for help, for example, but potentially she was carrying explosive devices under her dress. We constantly dealt with that challenge.<sup>105</sup>

Additionally, Chaplain White talked about the opportunities he had to help strengthen family relationships during the deployment.

When I was deployed in Iraq for over a year one of the things that we coordinated was live video teleconference feeds back home, so service members could have five minutes back home on the television and just kind of talk

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104. Kerry Smith, “Military Chaplains from Iraq, Afghanistan Unite in Elsah and Share Experiences,” The United Methodist Church General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, published 10 November 2015, accessed 23 November 2015, <http://www.gbhem.org/article/military-chaplains-iraq-afghanistan-unite-elsah-and-share-experiences>.

105. Kerry Smith, “Military Chaplains from Iraq, Afghanistan Unite in Elsah and Share Experiences,” The United Methodist Church General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, published 10 November 2015, accessed 23 November 2015, <http://www.gbhem.org/article/military-chaplains-iraq-afghanistan-unite-elsah-and-share-experiences>.



like a Good Morning America interview and talk with their spouse and their kids back home. It wasn't much, but if you had, you know, fifty or sixty guys, service members lined up, in that case it was with United States Marines, five minutes, and their spouses were also lined up in a location back home, and they could sit in front of the camera and have just some one on one with their spouse and with their children, so there is just a plethora of things that we do to build those relationships.<sup>106</sup>

Undoubtedly, Chaplain White offered invaluable service during his deployment in Iraq.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) physically dangerous situations, (2) opportunity to provide pastoral care and counseling, and (3) building relationships of trust.

### ***Chaplain Brunk***

Chaplain Richard Brunk, a Lutheran minister, served as an U.S. Army Chaplain in Baghdad Iraq from 2004-2005. At the time of this interview (2008) he was stationed stateside with a Mobilization Brigade at Fort Hood, T.X. There, he helped soldiers prepare for deployment, working tirelessly to help others to serve in a place that

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106. Armin Brott and Dale White, "Armin Brott interview CPT (Navy) Dale White, Operations Officer in the Office of the Chief of Navy Chaplains" (Video Clip), Posted 5 November 2012, accessed 11 February 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLC\\_L0gLx8A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLC_L0gLx8A).

had dramatically changed his own life.<sup>107</sup>

His narrative is best captured by this interview in the New York Times, where Chaplain Brunk stated:

I've been really pushed to my limits and beyond... At times, I've really wondered if I could get through." Just as it has claimed so many other members of the military, the war in Iraq has taken a toll on chaplains. Although they do not engage in combat [in the traditional sense of the word], chaplains face the perils of war as they move around Iraq to visit troops... some, like Chaplain Brunk, have been wounded. Many report post-traumatic stress disorder and other stress problems... [Chaplain Brunk] had been in Iraq only a month when he was wounded. On a sunny morning during a service at Camp Victory in Baghdad, three missiles struck nearby, shattering the windows and spewing rubble. The blast threw him to the marble floor. As he lay amid the chocolates he had been saving as a treat for after services, he could see a fellow chaplain mouthing words but he heard nothing. His eardrums had been ruptured, and he had an undiagnosed brain injury. "They told me I had a really bad headache," he said. "They told me to get some sleep." He said he still did not remember the first three days after the blast, including a telephone call home to talk about the birth of his grandson. Several weeks later, he passed out at a meeting. He was treated at hospitals in Iraq, Germany and the United States, and returned to

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107. Sarah Abruzzese, "War's Stresses Take Toll on Military's Chaplains," The New York Times, 29 May 2008, accessed 15 February 2017, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/29/washington/29chaplains.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/29/washington/29chaplains.html?_r=0)

Baghdad in May 2005 to finish his deployment. He was sent home again, however, after doctors found blood clots in his brain, caused by exposure to five explosions during his time in Baghdad. Like a boxer repeatedly punched in the head, the trauma had been cumulative. Chaplain Brunk still has headaches, which he says make his head feel “like a sizzling hotplate,” and he hears a rushing sound like a waterfall. “I started to get very angry, crying uncontrollably,” he said, speaking of his post-traumatic stress disorder. A sergeant who had been in Vietnam recognized the symptoms and told a doctor, who sent Chaplain Brunk home. Since being stationed as the chaplain for the Fort Hood Mobilization Brigade in January 2007, Chaplain Brunk has counseled soldiers but has not been able to talk to his wife about his own experiences. He withdraws to his quarters on weekends, and said he sometimes felt uncomfortable in large groups, as he was last month when sending several hundred soldiers off to Iraq... “It’s the right place to be,” Chaplain Brunk said. “I stand in awe of our soldiers.”<sup>108</sup>

From this account is clear that Chaplain Brunk has braved not only the challenges that combat ministry can bring, but also the residual effects that remain long after he came home. In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) physically dangerous situations, (2) stress of deployed environment, (3) PTSD/TBI, (4) and negative effects on family relationships (more specifically his marriage).

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108. Sarah Abruze, “War’s Stresses Take Toll on Military’s Chaplains,” *The New York Times*, 29 May 2008, accessed 15 February 2017, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/29/washington/29chaplains.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/29/washington/29chaplains.html?_r=0).

## *Chaplain Peters*

Chaplain David Peters was raised in a fundamentalist evangelical church. In 2005 he deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, as a chaplain with the U.S. Army's 62nd Engineer Combat Battalion, which was assigned the repairing road and building bridges. At the young age of thirty he had the responsibility of caring for the hundreds who had been deployed.<sup>109</sup>

In speaking with National Public Radio about his time with the Brigade while in Iraq, he shared the story of his service and how it affected his life, saying,

So they were operating all around Baghdad, at night, in the streets, in the neighborhoods — and it really exposed [them] to an incredible amount of danger...” Peters’ duties included administering last rites, grieving with survivors and listening to soldiers lament their broken marriages back home. After 12 months in a combat zone, it was time for Peters to go home. But when he arrived back in Texas, Peters realized that he had changed. “I found that going to war was really pretty easy and it was kind of exciting, and there was a lot of energy around it... But when I came home, I really fell apart emotionally and spiritually.” He had symptoms of PTSD, and his own marriage had shattered while he was away at war. His homecoming was not unusual, it turns out. Former Army Capt. Kurt Stein, the signal officer in the engineering battalion, grew close to Peters in Iraq. “The

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109. John Burnett, “An Army Chaplain, First Tested by War, Finds His Faith Renewed,” National Public Radio, 6 January 2015, accessed 11 February 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2015/01/06/375387392/an-army-chaplain-first-tested-by-war-finds-his-faith-renewed>.

real crisis,” he says, “is when we were deployed, we were always told, ‘When you guys get back, December 2006, all your problems are gonna be over. You’re gonna be a hero, your families are going to be glad to see you... For David and for a lot of us, that just wasn’t the case.” Peters says it was his lifelong relationship with God that suffered the most. In fact, the God he had taken with him to Iraq — the benevolent deity who loves everyone and rewards the faithful — that concept of God died along with a whole bunch of brave soldiers, he says. He had a hard time even going to church anymore... “The church was asking me to confess *my* sins, when I felt like God had done far worse things than I’ve ever done,” he says. Like “standing by and not really doing much for the world that’s full of war and conflict and despair, loss... I looked at my own life and I felt that way. I’d just gotten divorced. I was just really angry at God for disappearing on me when I needed him most.” Peters wound up working as a chaplain in the amputee ward at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., meeting with veterans whose troubles seemed to dwarf his own. He also worked in the psych ward, where, he says, “there was a thin line between the patients and me.” Outside of work, his life had imploded. Newly single, he dated a succession of women because, he says, sometimes they “can take the pain away.” His younger sister, Sarah, visited him in D.C. and noticed a dramatic change. “He was drinking a lot. I just remember him being very angry at people — just things that were so out of character for him,” she says. Last year, Tactical 16, a small veteran-owned press, published a slim, anguished

memoir that Peters wrote about his journey. In the book, *Death Letter: God, Sex and War*, he writes, “I went into the business of religion to understand death.” Since the book came out, he has gotten emails from others — “Army chaplains who have experienced real transition like I did when they came home,” he says. “And yet, they were religious people — they weren’t allowed to have problems.” Peters had to start over. Because he was divorced, he had to leave the Bible Fellowship Church that had endorsed him as a military chaplain. He eventually found a home and became ordained in the Episcopal Church. He also remarried; he and his new wife are expecting a child next month. “To start over, to start a new marriage, to start a new job, to start in a new church — all those things took a great deal of, just, patience,” Peters says... Now 39, Peters is on the staff at Grace Episcopal Church in Georgetown, Texas, outside Austin. He still serves as a chaplain in the Army Reserve up the highway at Fort Hood.<sup>110</sup>

Fortunately, like many others, Chaplain Peters chose to work through the negative effects that his time in service inflicted upon him.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) physically dangerous situations, (2) pastoral care and counseling (3) exposure to traumatic material (4) stress of deployed environment (4) PTSD, (5) sorrow over the loss of service members, (5) changed

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110. John Burnett, “An Army Chaplain, First Tested by War, Finds His Faith Renewed,” National Public Radio, 6 January 2015, accessed 11 February 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2015/01/06/375387392/an-army-chaplain-first-tested-by-war-finds-his-faith-renewed>.

faith group, and (6) divorced spouse.

### *Chaplain Christina*

It is acknowledged that the effects of military service on an individual are deep and personal. As such, some chaplains who bravely share of their experience and how it has affected them prefer to do so in anonymity. In respecting this, the following narrative is given by a female Army chaplain by the pseudonym of *Christina*.<sup>111</sup>

When Christina deployed, she left at home her husband and two daughters. In discussing her experience and return home she said,

I spoke to my family when I came back and I can't say things to my family. They just don't understand why I don't talk to them. Being a chaplain I've moved—I haven't had time to process. Because of the confidentiality of my work I carry lots of things in my psyche. Some things I just can't share, very private things. We are all uncomfortable and disconnected to family. I used to be self-righteous—lots of church in me. Swearing used to offend me, now soldiers don't offend me. They protected me. They carried my bags. We were bonding, they were gone.<sup>112</sup>

Chaplain Christina undoubtedly offered valuable service as a chaplain to those in need, and it is apparent that her service has had residual effects on her and those around her.

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111. David W. Peters, *Listening On the Edge: Oral History in The After Math of Crisis, (Chapter 12) A Spiritual War- Crises of Faith in Combat Chaplains from Iraq and Afghanistan*, Edited by Mark Cave and Stephen M. Sloan. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 226.

112. Peters, *Listening*, 226.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) physically dangerous situations, (2) sorrow over the loss of service members, (3) change in how the chaplain saw service members, and (4) negative effects on family communication and relationships.

### *Chaplain Michael*

It is acknowledged that the effects of military service on an individual are deep and personal. As such, some chaplains who bravely share of their experience and how it has affected them prefer to do so in anonymity. In respecting this, the following narrative is given by a male Army chaplain by the pseudonym of *Michael*. Michael is an Army chaplain who had been married to his wife for more than a decade.<sup>113</sup>

In speaking of his service in Iraq he discussed the traumatic material that he was exposed to, and how it personally affected him, saying that:

The scale of devastation was different. There were no small wounds in Iraq. I had a real problem. I saw the bodies of people charred. We had to wash the floor—it was very gory, gruesome, concentrated. It was like we had to wade through the gore just to treat the remains. But after that, after dealing with all that I just wanted to have sex, I mean, I just wanted to procreate. We are born to procreate, and I guess that when I was around all that death I wanted to feel alive. I didn't expect this.<sup>114</sup>

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113. Peters, *Listening*, 227

114. David W. Peters, *Listening On the Edge: Oral History in The After Math of Crisis, (Chapter 12) A Spiritual War- Crises of Faith in Combat Chaplains from Iraq and Afghanistan*, Edited by Mark Cave and Stephen M. Sloan. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 226.



From this experience, it is clear that Chaplain Michael's experience had a profound effect on him as he sought to serve those in his care. In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) physically dangerous situations, (2) exposure to traumatic material, and (3) moral injury.

### *Chaplain Timothy*

It is acknowledged that the effects of military service on an individual are deep and personal. As such, some chaplains who bravely share of their experience and how it has affected them prefer to do so in anonymity. In respecting this, the following narrative is given by a male chaplain by the pseudonym of *Timothy*. Timothy was a Baptist, and an Army chaplain who deployed to Iraq in 2006. His battalion was responsible for clearing the roads of improvised explosive devices (IED). After being in Iraq for over a year he was "diagnosed with an aggressive cancer and medically evacuated" first to Europe, then to the U.S.<sup>115</sup> Although he was told by doctors that he only had a year to live, he fought through the cancer and continued his military service stateside.

In speaking of his experience in Iraq, he shared that:

I'm usually pretty easy mannered, easy going. But there was one time. Where we were sitting out there and we had just had an IED go off beside the vehicle. It shook the vehicle and filled it with dust. Everybody's checking themselves, you know. And we're sitting there for a little bit and then—it was route clearance engineers and they were always out there with the bombs. I rode with them like every seven days. And we backed off

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115. Peters, *Listening*, 227.

of it and whenever they are nervous, you're supposed to be nervous. So we backed off it and we were sitting still. And all of the sudden there was a loud "bang!" on the side of the vehicle. And I was sitting there kind of looking out the window, looking around and one of them said, "Get down, Chaplain!" I turned and looked and there was a bullet stuck in the window. It was stuck right next to my head. So I got down and they said, "Man, Chaplain, you've got a sniper and he's got you right in his crosshairs, you better stay down." I remember right in that moment that I had a kind of weird anger about it that I hadn't had before. I remember it really well. I wrote it in my journal. Shortly down the road they said, "I'm surprised you didn't flip him off." I said, "Well, I hadn't thought about that. I'm definitely not going to moon him in case he sends a second round and it makes it through. I don't want to have to describe how I got that wound." But I told all of them how pissed off I was at the sniper and [how I wished] they would go ahead and [that] somebody would just kill the guy. And I've never said that before about the enemy. I've never spoke about, "Somebody needs to kill that guy." I never realized how impacting that can be onto our soldiers when the chaplain is saying, "We need to kill that guy." I did let anger out once, that what I'm saying. That I can recall... Oh man, it just came out. But I was pissed off. That dude had me in his crosshairs and it made me mad. Like I can't believe that you felt comfortable pulling that trigger with my head in your crosshairs. But he was the enemy and he did what he was supposed to do. I guess I did what I was supposed to do. The bottom line was, that at the end

of the day, I told everybody that I wished one of them would kill him. I'd be OK with that. It sure shocked a bunch of them. They never thought that would come from me. I didn't come across that way... You know they gave me the glass. When I was medevac'd back. Somebody kept it. When I got back to my station, like six months after being here at Walter Reed, they said, "Hey, we brought your window back for you." And you know it, like, takes a general's approval to take anything like that out of theater. But they said, "We've been told that you weren't going to make it so the general approved it." It's a huge Buffalo window... Like six or seven feet long. So what am I going to do with that? I don't need that window. They said, "Oh, you'll make a coffee table!" They had a bunch of fun with it. And I still have it.<sup>116</sup>

Chaplain Timothy also talked about his relationship with his wife, and how his service in Iraq and overcoming cancer have changed his perspective on life:

My wife, she dealt with a lot. My time in Iraq was far easier than my cancer. And looking back on it I can say that... You know every day in Iraq... were just like bearing the heat and living on the FOB [Forward Operating Base]. Or traveling, which wasn't always dangerous, especially by helicopter. But cancer never gives you a day off so that's probably why it was hard on my spiritual life... In Iraq I had a better spiritual level than I've ever had. So, for me, I came from such a high

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116. David W. Peters, *Listening On the Edge: Oral History in The After Math of Crisis, (Chapter 12) A Spiritual War- Crises of Faith in Combat Chaplains from Iraq and Afghanistan*, Edited by Mark Cave and Stephen M. Sloan. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 228–229.

to such a low [because of the cancer] ... My wife says I'm a better preacher now. She said that's because I'm more genuine now... I'm trying to get to the point where I can say to God that you're apparently in control and I guess I can trust you. I need to trust him. I couldn't say that before Iraq. I remember that now and think, What kind of Christian would say they didn't trust God and they were in the pulpit?<sup>117</sup>

The bravery of Chaplain Timothy in these accounts is evident, as he not only overcame the challenges he faced in Iraq, but also those presented by cancer.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) physically dangerous situations, (2) relationships of trust between chaplain and service members, and (3) growth emotionally, mentally, and spiritually, and moral injury.

### *Chaplain Craig*

It is acknowledged that the effects of military service on an individual are deep and personal. As such, some chaplains who bravely share of their experience and how it has affected them prefer to do so in anonymity. In respecting this, the following narrative is given by a male chaplain by the pseudonym of *Craig*. Craig came from Africa to the United States, sought his ordination as a Roman Catholic Priest, and became a U.S. Army Chaplain. He served in Iraq in 2006.<sup>118</sup>

117. Peters, *Listening*, 229–230.

118. David W. Peters, *Listening On the Edge: Oral History in The After Math of Crisis, (Chapter 12) A Spiritual War- Crises of Faith in Combat Chaplains from Iraq and Afghanistan*, Edited by Mark Cave and Stephen M. Sloan. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 231.

In talking about his service in Iraq he discussed how it had changed his outlook on life and his relationship with his family, stating that after returning he realized that:

I was more reflective, more approachable, talked about love more. I talked about living in the moment more, washing my plate when I eat. Because culturally, for the first time, I don't have to wash my plate when I eat. The first son is more independent. When I get up to wash my plate, my father said, "You have changed." I'm calmer now, more reflective... The first death I witnessed was horrible. Myself and my commander had to go to the front to bless the body and put him in a body bag. It was the end of life. It was my first day in Iraq. So, why do we hurt people? Violence is a violation of love. I was always aware of the violence that was about to happen. I prayed a lot, I did a lot of adoration. Because I didn't know what could happen. If I prepared myself for danger around me—like the Bible says, be watchful, be vigilant" ... if a Catholic dies he goes to heaven. I was ready for that. Prayer works. My commander was worried before we left and I told him I would pray and no one died.<sup>119</sup>

The faith of chaplain Craig in this account is both insightful and heartening, as in the midst of war he was able to center himself in his faith.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) exposure to traumatic material, (2) immediacy and insight with self, and (3) growth emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

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119. Peters, *Listening*, 231.

## *Chaplain George*

It is acknowledged that the effects of military service on an individual are deep and personal. As such, some chaplains who bravely share of their experience and how it has affected them prefer to do so in anonymity. In respecting this, the following narrative is given by a male chaplain by the pseudonym of *George*. George served as a chaplain in the U.S. Army, deploying to Iraq in 2006.<sup>120</sup>

In sharing about his experience, he stated that:

I sucked in darkness. Maybe I should have referred more of my soldiers to others for counseling. I would get to a place where I couldn't counsel any more soldiers. It was like I reached a limit. Maybe I should have said I didn't know more. I liked my Clinical Pastoral Care group because I could share my war stories... [In discussing how he relates to civilian clergy] They don't know what I went through. They have their own world. I really prayed over there in Iraq. When I first got back, I associated church with the memorial services that I would do for my soldiers who died. I would get anxious and leave. It bothered me for years. I needed connection but I couldn't get it at church. I had to walk out when they prayed for the troops. I wanted to think about something else.<sup>121</sup>

From this account, it is evident that the residual effects of service on Chaplain George were life altering and long lasting.

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120. David W. Peters, *Listening On the Edge: Oral History in The After Math of Crisis, (Chapter 12) A Spiritual War- Crises of Faith in Combat Chaplains from Iraq and Afghanistan*, Edited by Mark Cave and Stephen M. Sloan. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 231.

121. Peters, *Listening*, 231-232.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) secondary trauma from providing pastoral care and counseling, (2) self-doubt, (3) the need for self-care, and (4) post-traumatic stress.

### *Chaplain Eliason*

Chaplain Eric Eliason served with the U.S. Army in Afghanistan in early 2004. While there he was assigned to work with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 19<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group, Salt Lake City, Utah.<sup>122</sup> In contrast to how some have portrayed the war in Afghanistan, Chaplain Eliason said that he and his men, “won the support of locals by risking our lives to protect them, not by threatening to kill them if they got in our way.”<sup>123</sup> It was this approach that gave him the opportunity to build bridges of friendship and faith during his deployment.

In speaking of his experience, Chaplain Eliason said that:

As new Afghan armies are recruited and trained to maintain order in their deeply religious country, Afghan soldiers naturally begin to seek chaplain support. Religious leadership in Islamic countries is much more valued than it is in the West. So while Afghan soldiers are being trained to become professionals, training is also taking place for Afghan chaplaincies. Considering that the conflicts of the region have religious dimensions, the developing role of chaplains will have an increasing importance. As Americans, we did not want to meddle

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122. Erick Eliason, “Lone Survivor,’ A Veteran’s View: Movie’s ‘moral dilemma’ on whether to kill goat herders is troubling,” USA Today, published 29 January 2014, accessed 11 February 2017 <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/01/29/lone-survivor-review-navy-seals-veteran-column/5037595/>

123. Eliason, “A Veteran’s View.”

in their religious affairs, but we did need to foster chaplaincies that wouldn't succumb to radical religious leaders. In the spring of 2004, I developed and conducted a short chaplain training program for a man named "Maseullah," the indigenous mullah (Islamic religious leader). Though our backgrounds—a militant trained Afghan mullah and an American Christian chaplain might make us seem unlikely friends, Maseullah and I shared an almost instant bond of purpose. I became known as "the American Mullah." That I was a Christian became of second my importance to him. In the course of this experiment, we learned the truth and wisdom of an old Afghan proverb that was one of the guiding lights of our project, "I destroy my enemy by making him my friend." Maseullah quickly put into practice, in real world combat situations, the training from our lessons together. I explained, "When you go to minister to an injured person, tell them who you are and what is going on. You are a symbol of God's love and watchfulness over soldiers." ... "It's curious," Maseullah had responded, "but even my soldiers who are not very good Muslims like seeing me. They seem more calm when I am around." ... "That's because they can see you are a peaceful person who is right with God. This makes them feel secure. That is why they chose you as their mullah," I had said, referring to his role as his soldiers' elected pastor. Maseullah dramatically "switched on" to the idea of promoting religious tolerance and freedom, at great risk to himself. As my student, he was a marked man by allies of the Taliban. He was going against the enforced propaganda that America was the Great Satan. One day



I met with Maseullah after being separated from him for some time. He told me that he had been with his prior teachers in Pakistan. He confided with them that he was working with the Americans and said to them, “They are not the crusaders you said they were.” He supported his statement by citing the many worthy actions of his American friends. They refused to believe him, so he invited them to come to witness it for themselves. Through the eyes of Maseullah and other Afghans, I witnessed that freedom from tyranny was affecting peoples’ lives. I saw refugees returning from Iran and Pakistan to their homes. I worked with members of an Afghan women’s group, no longer hunted and murdered by the Taliban, now operating freely for the benefit of Afghan women. I listened to people excitedly discussing, for the first time in their lives, differing opinions about candidates in upcoming elections. I saw girls going to school for the first time. I watched independent farmers freely planting lucrative crops the Taliban had earlier monopolized for themselves. During one of our many conversations, Maseullah said, “You see, Chaplain, whether I live or die is no matter. I will die when I die, and I hope to die while doing what is right-regardless of the dangers. It is all in God’s hands. We are working together, you and I – a Muslim and a Christian working together to conquer those who don’t like the idea of a Muslim and a Christian as friends here in Afghanistan or anywhere in the world. If God wills, we will prevail; so we need not fear.” I sensed a great lesson in this for both America and the Muslim world in these times of trouble.

Without fear there is hope.<sup>124</sup>

In short, one can see that Chaplain Eliason was able to provide critical support and training to Afghan Nationals who were working to rebuild their country's military.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) religious advisement and leader engagement, (2) building relationships of trust, and (3) promotion of religious tolerance.

### ***Chaplain McCain***

Chaplain Henry McCain served with the U.S. Army as a Latter-day Saint (LDS) Chaplain in Iraq on two yearlong tours, the first from 2004-2005, and the second from 2007-2008. On his first deployment in Iraq Chaplain McCain arrived at a time when violence in the country was escalating. As such, he faced many dangerous situations as he accompanied his men.<sup>125</sup>

In speaking of his service, he shared a particularly poignant experience:

It was early Easter morning in 2004, and we had just had an uplifting Protestant service. Following the service, at about 10:00 A.M., we received word that an Apache helicopter had been shot down. We did not yet know of the status of those in the helicopter, but we knew we had to get to them. They had crashed off post in an unsafe area during an intense time of the war. The military had ordered that no one was allowed off base unless

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124. Chad S. Hawkins, *Faith in the Service: Inspirational Stories from LDS Servicemen and Servicewomen*. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2008), 150–153.

125. Hawkins, *Faith*, 170-171.

it was an emergency mission. This was an emergency, but as we proceeded out the gate I remember someone saying, “You are all going to die. It is too dangerous for you to go out there.” As our convoy proceeded, we passed other convoys-each one burning and abandoned. We could feel the insurgents roaming the countryside. Once we located the chopper we began to secure the area. As we were getting out of our vehicles, two Iraqi insurgents jumped out of a canal and started raining fire down on our vehicles. We returned fire, and they disappeared back into the canal. I was then told that a chaplain had previously come by and did an open prayer for the deceased soldiers. The previous chaplain did not know who the deceased were but he did pray for them. I wanted to know who the soldiers were and pay them the proper respects, so I ran to the chopper. It was still on fire, so all I could do was grab the dog tags off the pilot and an I.D. bag from the other. I now had their names. My commanding officer was a Catholic, and he instructed me to perform their last rites. I was able to offer the appropriate prayer using their names: Colton and Fortenberry. I will never forget those names. These pilots had been shot down while trying to save other U.S. soldiers in a convoy. As I offered their last rites, I was thinking that it was Easter morning back home in the States. If these soldiers had children, their children were perhaps looking for their Easter eggs. I thought about the meaning and importance of Easter, the miracle of the Savior’s resurrection, and the incredible hope and promise that resurrection provides us all. Even though these two heroes had died, they will someday be

resurrected and restored whole, with perfect, immortal bodies. I look forward to the day when I will meet them as resurrected beings. This life is only a temporary state but because of the miracle of our Savior's resurrection, we will all be restored.<sup>126</sup>

From this experience one can see that Chaplain McCain willingly went above and beyond to serve not only those service members living, but also those deceased.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) physically dangerous situation, (2) exposure to traumatic material, (3) spiritual strength drawn from religious beliefs, and (4) opportunity to provide pastoral care and counseling.

### *Chaplain White*

Chaplain Gerald White served with the Utah Army National Guard as an LDS Chaplain. He deployed to the Middle East twice, first to Iraq in 2004, and then to Afghanistan in 2006.<sup>127</sup> In seeking out opportunities to provide a ministry of presence he would often go where his soldiers did, even when it meant going into a dangerous situation.

In speaking of a particular experience during his first deployment, he said:

During the first week of June 2004, I was approached by a soldier and asked if I would travel with his convoy. The convoy was leaving Bagram and heading to Asadabad

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126. Chad S. Hawkins, *Faith in the Service: Inspirational Stories from LDS Servicemen and Servicewomen*. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2008), 170–171.

127. Hawkins, *Faith*, 159.

through Jalalabad, a distance of about two hundred kilometers. I agreed because it was an opportunity to ride and minister to soldiers moving through the country of Afghanistan. The convoy left midmorning and headed out the gate, fully loaded with all of our gear and an enthusiasm to get to Asadabad. Little did I know the trip was going to be an all-day long adventure. The roads were dusty and dirty, with little pavement except from Bagram to Kabul. Once we left the Kabul area the roads turned to dirt, washboard style. We drove for several hours, traveling no faster than thirty miles an hour. Our convoy had a few armed vehicles, along with several trucks needing protection. At about 1300 hours, we stopped along the road to stretch. Soldiers jumped out of the vehicles and set up a perimeter in case of an ambush. As we prepared to leave, our lead vehicle wouldn't start. A mechanic ran to the lead vehicle to analyze the problem. The bolt to the starter had dropped out, paralyzing the vehicle. Although we thought we would never find the bolt, we located it on the ground right where the vehicle had stopped. During our return from Asadabad, we were driving in a light sandstorm; vehicles could be seen only two car lengths away. It reminded me of a very hazy, smoggy day anywhere in the United States. Ahead of us was "ambush alley," a long stretch of dirt road with a slight rise in elevation on each side. Strategically, it was a perfect place to be attacked, and many ambushes and fatalities had occurred there. As we entered ambush alley, our left rear tire blew out. We were forced to stop right in the middle of this dangerous location. Again, soldiers jumped out of the vehicles and

set up a security perimeter. Our safety was compromised and our nerves were on edge. As the tire was being changed, the sandstorm rapidly increased in intensity. Everything around us became invisible as more and more sand was tossed in the air. My vehicle commander asked if I was praying. I said, "I haven't stopped since we left Bagram." After the tire was changed, the vehicle was lowered—and to our shock, the spare tire was flat. With a flat tire, we had to travel through ambush alley at a pace of only one or two miles an hour. The fierce storm forced us to remain close together. We had no idea if the enemy was near. After inching along for eight miles we saw a lighted sign. Lighted signs in the countryside are relatively rare in Afghanistan because most small villages usually don't have electricity. But there was that lighted sign. We pulled in and, using very basic English, asked if anyone had an air tank. Filled with gratitude, we inflated the tire. As we pulled out of the gas station the blinding storm subsided. Our adventure continued as we began to climb a very steep pass. The vertical climb caused the second vehicle in the convoy to overheat. We all stopped as the mechanic inspected the problem. He told the convoy commander that we should proceed but predicted we would soon have to tow the vehicle back to base. Towing a vehicle uphill in a combat zone one hundred miles from base was a worst-case scenario. I remember saying a quick prayer asking for help to get back safely. We proceeded up the mountain into Kabul and, thankfully, arrived at our distant base without having to tow. I am convinced we were watched over and protected throughout our long journey. Finding an essential lost

bolt; experiencing a blinding sandstorm that shielded us from the enemy as we drove through ambush alley; seeing a lit sign in a place where electricity is scarce; and being able to drive a disabled vehicle to its destination-to me, all these are miracles. I am not sure why we were so blessed, but I am very grateful we were.<sup>128</sup>

From this experience, it is clear that for Chaplain White a ministry of presence came with a cost, one which he willingly paid.

In briefly highlighting and categorizing some of the most prominent themes in the narrative presented several are apparent, (1) physically dangerous situation, (2) spiritual strength drawn from religious beliefs, (3) opportunity to provide pastoral care and counseling, and (4) stress of the deployed environment.

## **Content Narrative Analysis**

In overviewing and briefly analyzing the given narratives, it is clear that U.S. military chaplains offered invaluable aid to their fellow service members in Afghanistan and Iraq during the GWOT. Additionally, one can see the effects of service on each of the respective chaplains according to a broad range of narrative responses. The following table was developed to depict the themes and patterns found at the end of each narrative. A summation of the themes and patterns are totaled depicted by a short analyses of each chaplain's narrative. It is also noted, that the given categorizations in the analyses are not, by any means, meant to be disparaging, derogatory, defamatory, or definitive. The themes and patterns observed are merely the subjective insights

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128. Chad S. Hawkins, *Faith in the Service: Inspirational Stories from LDS Servicemen and Servicewomen*. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2008), 159–161.

of this author. Nevertheless, in order to overcome bias in a single observer's observations, triangulation which "is based on the premise that no single method ever adequately solves the problem of...explanation"<sup>129</sup> will be utilized to help the author minimize his biases. To do this, a form of triangulation called analyst triangulation will be used.<sup>130</sup> Triangulation will use various analysts to review and validate themes and patterns from the narrative chaplain combat stories discovered by the author. A committee of three chaplains who have been involved in combat ministry was created to help validate the author's analysis. The committee reviewed the narratives to see if analysis was reliable and if other themes or patterns were evident that the author may have missed. The matrix on page 38 includes their input.

Moreover, if one wishes to further analyze and understand the most prominent themes and patterns from the given narratives, they have but to refer to the given accounts themselves. To further analyze the given accounts is beyond the scope of this resource. The table depicted below represents prominent themes and patterns observed in the narratives of the twenty chaplains. It should be noted that not all the effects of service given in the twenty accounts are listed in the table. This because they were not recorded as having been repeated by more than one chaplain.

This being said, in the interest of acknowledging those elements not included in the above table they are listed as follows: disciplinary action (Antal), Traumatic brain injury (Brunk), change in how the chaplain saw service members (Christina), immediacy and insight with self (Craig), religious advisement and leader

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129. Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, 2002), 555-556.

130. Patton, *Qualitative Research*, 556.



engagement, promotion of religious tolerance (Eliason / Horton), secondary trauma from providing pastoral care and counseling, self-doubt, the need for self-care (George), regret over a missed opportunity to help a service member that committed suicide (Kittleson), increase in marital counseling, and the need for logistical support in providing religious support (Panzer), and family was strengthened by combat experience, (Timothy).

While these narratives are not fully addressed, these observations are interesting insights and aspects that could be further analyzed. Almost undoubtedly some of these elements appear in the lives of the other chaplains, but for purposes of privacy, personality, or personal preference, they are either not mentioned in the given accounts, or were inadvertently excluded from this supporting research.

The Chaplains		Themes and Patterns									
Antal											
Brown	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓		

Brunk	✓		✓			✓				✓	
Christina	✓								✓	✓	
Craig				✓			✓				
Dharm		✓			✓		✓				✓
Eliason					✓						
George		✓				✓					
Horton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
Kittleson			✓	✓					✓		
McCain	✓	✓		✓	✓						
Michael	✓			✓		✓		✓			
Pantlitz	✓			✓		✓		✓			
Panzer	✓	✓	✓							✓	
Peters	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓	✓
Silva		✓	✓		✓						
Timothy	✓				✓		✓	✓			
White D.	✓	✓			✓		✓				
White G.	✓	✓	✓				✓				
Williams	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓			✓
<b>Totals</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>

## Narrative Summary Analysis of Case Studies

From these case studies, it is evident that the chaplains and their narrative combat stories are rich with content as to themes and patterns. Their ministry is inspiring and their narratives tell their story. In their personal experiences key phrases and statements which speak directly to their ministry were selected and examined. Physical danger was an ever present theme expressed by many of

the chaplains. The combat environment can be dangerous. As of February 2, 2017 6907 service-members have lost their lives in their service to their country.<sup>131</sup> Nonetheless, this number does not take into account the wounded in mind and body. Also, a sense of respect for some of the stories was employed by not using names (anonymous) where there were sensitive themes.

The chaplain's ability to be honest and authentic was inspiring especially when there was a crisis of personal faith. The author tried to be sensitive to the words and experiences of the shared narratives. Sharing the pain and bonding experience of combat with their service-members was noteworthy. Albert Schweitzer best described this type of bonding as the fellowship of pain.<sup>132</sup>

Pastoral care and counseling was a common pattern shared by the chaplains. Pastoral counseling "is a focused form of pastoral care geared toward enabling individuals, couples, and families [service-members] to cope more constructively with crises, losses, difficult decisions, and other anxiety laden experiences."<sup>133</sup> This was clearly demonstrated in many of the narratives from assistance with suicidal ideation, bereavement help, marital advice, concern with moral injury, etc. In many of these narratives, the chaplain was sought out for counsel. They helped those burdened to constructively work through their issues. Though not specifically mentioned, it can be inferred from the narratives that the chaplains were able to help others with their brokenness. And sometimes, they suffered from

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131. ICasualties, "Iraq Coalition Military Fatalities by Year - Afghanistan Coalition Military Fatalities by Year," Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, published 2 February 2017, accessed 2 February 2017, <http://icasualties.org/>.

132. Norman Cousins, *The Words of Albert Schweitzer* (New York: Newmarket Press, 1989), 10.

133. Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), 9–10.

their own brokenness.

Trauma “is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster.”<sup>134</sup> Exposure to traumatic material was a common theme in these narratives. Also, present was the effect of secondary trauma which is the process where trauma is transferred to another and becomes secondary trauma. Secondary trauma has been defined as “the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the first hand trauma experiences of another. Its symptoms mimic those of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Accordingly, individuals affected by secondary stress may find themselves re-experiencing personal trauma.”<sup>135</sup> Though many suffered from the effects of trauma, there was one chaplain whose trauma affected not only himself but his family. This pattern may be more prevalent than the narrative stories depict and may be an area for future research in the field of compassion fatigue as it relates to secondary trauma.

The stress of the deployed environment was evident in many of the explored narratives from roadside bombs, separation, ministering to the dead and dying, and to the everyday personal experiences of the deployed chaplains. Their ability to be present in ministry was a key factor in encouraging the living, caring for the wounded (body/spirit) and honoring the fallen. Clearly, a combat environment can be a dangerous and complicated setting.\

It was interesting to note that some of the chaplains suffered from a crisis of faith or a strengthening of faith. Faith as described

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134. American Psychological Association, “Trauma,” accessed February 25, 2017, <http://www.apa.org/topics/trauma/>.

135. “Secondary Traumatic Stress,” *National Child Traumatic Stress Network*, accessed February 22, 2017. <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/secondary-traumatic-stress>.

in the “Old Testament, in Hebrew means essentially steadfastness, it also means faithfulness...of God towards man or of man towards God. In the New Testament the meanings to “believe” and “belief”<sup>136</sup> are prominent. In the narratives, some suffered from a crisis of faith due to moral injury;<sup>137</sup> the drain of providing or performing religious support to the living, dead and dying; burnout caused by pastoral counseling; and the issues of every day combat. Also, their faith was tried through experiencing traumatic material which sometimes affected their belief in God, i.e., How could God let this happen? On the other hand, many were strengthened in their faith by their selfless service to others. Whether, it was providing prayer over the dead, pastoral counseling or bonding through ministry facilitated in a combat environment, many suffered the joys of comradeship and the pain of loss. Truly faith, as a subjective construct, can have many meanings and be effected by the experiences of war, that is to say, both good and bad. Crisis of faith was also manifested by a change of faith traditions by three chaplains. It appears that “faith” in its broadest terms, as it should, influences military chaplains.

As provided by the narratives some, but not all, suffered from PTSD. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder as stated in DSM-5 Criteria for

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136. “Faith,” *Catholic Encyclopedia*, <http://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=4554>, accessed February 22, 2017.

137. Moral injury as described by Litz and colleagues “...requires an act of transgression that severely and abruptly contradicts an individual’s personal or shared expectation about the rules or the code of conduct, either during the event or at some point afterwards. The event can be an act of wrongdoing, failing to prevent serious unethical behavior, or witnessing or learning about such an event. The individual also must be (or become) aware of the discrepancy between his or her morals and the experience (i.e., moral violation), causing dissonance and inner conflict.” Brett T. Litz, et al., “Moral Injury and Moral Repair in War Veterans: A Preliminary Model and Intervention Strategy,” *Clinical Psychology Review* 29 (2009):700.

PTSD is as follows:

Criterion A (one required); The person was exposed to: death, threatened death, actual or threatened serious injury, or actual or threatened sexual violence, in the following ways: direct exposure, witnessing the trauma, learning that a relative or close friend was exposed to a trauma, indirect exposure to aversive details of the trauma, usually in the course of professional duties (e.g., first responders, medics). Criterion B (one required): The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced, in the following way(s): intrusive thoughts, nightmares, flashbacks, emotional distress after exposure to traumatic reminders, physical reactivity after exposure to traumatic reminders. Criterion C (one required): Avoidance of trauma-related stimuli after the trauma, in the following ways(s): trauma-related thoughts or feelings, trauma-related reminders. Criterion D – H continues with trauma related symptoms as diagnosed by a competent psychiatrist.<sup>138</sup>

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, indeed, effects many service-members. Charles Hogue a medical doctor in the Army found that over 15.6 to 17.1%<sup>139</sup> involved in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq suffered from PTSD, anxiety or major depression from their deployments. In another study conducted by Hoge and his

138. American Psychiatric Association, "Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" in *DSM-5* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013). Criteria for review can also be found at [http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/dsm5\\_criteria\\_ptsd.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/PTSD-overview/dsm5_criteria_ptsd.asp).

139. Charles W. Hoge, et al., "Combat Duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, Mental Health Problems, and Barriers to Care," *New England Journal of Medicine* 351, no. 1 (July 2004): 13.

colleagues, they found an increase in mental health problems in over 300,000 service members deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan accompanied by a rise in the use of mental health care providers.<sup>140</sup> This suggests that chaplains as members of the combat community are not immune to the effects of PTSD or mental health care concerns caused by experiencing traumatic material.

Moral injury and issues of trust as already discussed in this analysis were prevalent with the chaplain stories. They were not protected from traumatic material just because they were chaplains. The very concept of ministry of presence kept them on the front line ministering to their units in times of combat and during periods of rest. They all experienced the effects of combat and its difficulties. As the themes and patterns suggest, they suffered from the environment which effected their ability or inability to minister to others. Just as moral injury can cause one to challenge one's own values and religious beliefs, trust and relationships were important aspects in maintaining a positive perspective in providing or performing religious support in the chaplain's ministry.

Another interesting facet of the case studies dealt with loss. The loss of friends by death, loss of faith, loss of comradery, loss of spouse, and loss of fitting in. Perhaps, while not explicitly expressed, though implicitly implied, is that chaplains suffered from grief which is a form of loss. Kubler-Ross in her seminal work *On Death and Dying* concerning grief, breaks bereavement down in various stages, or patterns of adjustment to loss: denial, anger, bargaining,

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140. Charles W. Hoge, Jennifer L. Auchterlonie, and Charles S. Milliken, "Mental Health Problems, Use of Mental Health Services, and Attrition from Military Service after Returning from Deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 295, no. 9 (March 2006): 1023–1024.

depression, and acceptance.<sup>141</sup> It was evident that the chaplains were affected by loss and adjustments to returning home from combat and of re-integrating to living a “normal” life-style. It can be implied that many of these chaplains went through the stages of grief or loss as described by Kubler-Ross.<sup>142</sup>

Finally, a few suggested that the family was negatively affected due to deployments. Since 9/11, military deployments have increased and reintegration concerns have contributed to stress for military families. The stress and negative impact due to deployment on families has been significant in the areas of marital stability, parental and child adjustments, and individual social emotional change due to separation.<sup>143</sup> Chaplains and their families have also been effected by the impact of deployment. Deployments are stressful for family members, and reintegration for many is a process. This is another area where future research can be conducted, and as the narratives found chaplains and their families were definitely impacted by the cycle of deployments.

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141. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 34–121.

142. It should be noted that Kubler-Ross’s stages of adjustment are just one of many models in dealing with loss. There are other strategies such as psychotherapeutic models, psychoeducational programs, and religious counseling to help individual alleviate the effects of loss.

143. The following are a few articles and a dissertation that address the impact of deployment on military families: Sean A. Sheppard, Jennifer Weil Malatras, and Allen C. Israel, “The Impact of Deployment on U.S. Military Families,” *American Psychologist* 65, no. 6 (September 2010): 599-609; Patricia Lester, et al., “The Impact of Deployment on Parental, Family and Child Adjustment in Military Families,” *Child Psychiatry Human Development* 47 (2016): 938-949; and Shawn A. Brue, “Couples Experiences of Role and Responsibility Changes as a Result of Military Deployment: A Phenomenological Inquiry,” (PhD diss., Northcentral University, 2015), 1–238.



Though the stories shared in case study format were inspiring and thought-provoking, it was evident that combat ministry effected military chaplains in many different ways. Obviously, ministry in a combat environment has many unique challenges. It is hoped that these shared chaplain narratives, though few in number, provided insight into the life of chaplains involved in combat. It is also hoped that these experiences can help future armed forces chaplains understand the effects, challenges and rewards of ministry in a combat setting.

## **Conclusion**

The involvement of the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq since beginning of the GWOT has had a profound impact on military chaplains. As illustrated, military chaplains have served faithfully alongside our U.S. service members to help meet their spiritual needs and safe guard their right to the free exercise of religion.

In concluding a resource such as this, one might wonder about the importance of this work, and what it contributes to an ever-evolving field of literature that addresses topical issues dealing with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. While opinions will differ, the insights of this author are that the most prominent findings are the following. First, the value of military chaplains, if ever doubted, is clearly seen in the sacrifices that these and other chaplains were and are willing to make as they minister to those most in need. To date, there is no comparable replacement for what chaplains can and will do, and from this resource it can be seen that all branches of the military have benefited from the force multiplying presence of chaplains. Second, this resource dispels myths that chaplains are not impacted as much as other service members from the ill effects of war. If anything, the narratives show that chaplains are exposed to more traumatic material and dangerous situations than most, in large

part due to the nature of their far-reaching ministry of presence. Third, considering the negative effects of service on chaplains in these wars, further studies should be done to determine the best ways to mitigate these effects on the chaplain corps. Whether that is additional resources, shorter deployments, or a change in culture that does not stigmatize chaplains who need and seek help, the military should consider mitigating measures to ensure that chaplains can continue their valuable service. Fourth, narratives should continue to be collected, organized, and analyzed, so as to better understand the effects of combat ministry on the chaplain corps. In a world where the methods and means of war are ever changing, it is critical to understand what new challenges this brings to the chaplain corps. Nevertheless, the narratives included in this resource have the potential to be valuable training material for chaplains.

Through analysis and introspection one can gain insight as to the environment, challenges, and potential effects of trying to provide ministry and chaplain care to those in combat. In studying these narratives one can gain insight, and a greater appreciation for the sacrifices made by U.S. military chaplains who have and are serving in the GWOT in Afghanistan and Iraq.

## **Briefing Overview**

# Military Chaplains in Afghanistan and Iraq



## Overview

- Prelude to Afghanistan and Iraq
- Short History of the Global War on Terror
- Military Chaplains In Afghanistan and Iraq
- Narratives: 11 Themes and Patterns
- Conclusion



## Prelude to Afghanistan and Iraq

The roots of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq go back to the Cold War.

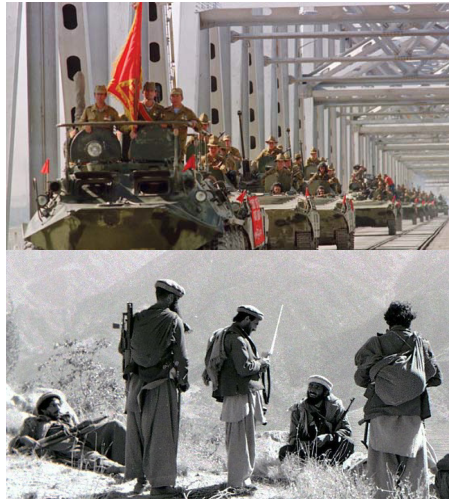
December 26, 1979, Soviet military forces invaded Afghanistan.

This began what would be yet another proxy war between the U.S. and the Soviets.

U.S. invested tens of billions of dollars to support the Mujahedeen guerrilla fighters against the Soviet forces.

During this time a Saudi Arabian by the name of Osama bin Laden would become involved in supporting the Mujahedeen.

Although the U.S. would ultimately win the Cold War, the true repercussions from their involvement in the region were still yet to be felt.<sup>1</sup>



*See pages 7-8 for references, further information, and insight.*

## Prelude to Afghanistan and Iraq

In the late 1980s' into the 1990s' money and arms spent in supporting the Mujahedeen against the Soviets would transform and solidify.

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Helped create Afghanistan's Taliban more radical groups like Al-Qae

In the late 1980s' into the 1990s' money and arms spent in supporting the Mujahedeen against the Soviets would transform and solidify.

Helped create Afghanistan's Taliban government, and even more radical groups like Al-Qaeda.

During this decade there would entities, to include:

- February 26, 1993, attack
- June 25, 1996, bombing o Arabia.
- August 7, 1998, bombing and Tanzania.

During this decade there would be repeated attacks on U.S. entities, to include:

- February 26, 1993, attack on the World Trade Center.
- June 25, 1996, bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia.
- August 7, 1998, bombing of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

During the 1990s' these, and many other attacks on the West and the U.S. specifically, were either financed, directed, or influenced by Osama bin Laden.<sup>2</sup>

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*See pages 7-8 for references, further information, and insight.*

## Global War on Terror

Election of President George W. Bush in late 2000.

Bush's campaign promises focused on domestic policies like educational and economic reforms.

September 11, 2001.

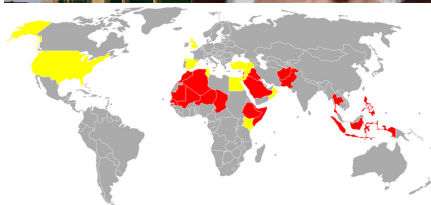
Nearly 3,000 American's lost their lives.

Sparked what would come to be known as the Global War on Terror (GWOT).

September 14, 2001, the U.S. congress authorizes use of "all necessary military force against the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks, their sponsors, and those who protected them."<sup>1</sup>

Eventually, the GWOT has **grown** to officially include more than a dozen different countries.

However, the focal point for U.S. involvement has largely been in Afghanistan and Iraq.



*See pages 7-8 for references, further information, and insight.*

### Global War on Terror: Iraq and Afghanistan



**March 19, 2003**, U.S. began combat operations in Iraq - Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).<sup>4</sup>

**September 1, 2010**, U.S. ended OIF, and maintained its presence in country under Operation New Dawn (OND).

**December 15, 2011**, U.S. ended OND, and troops officially left Iraq after there was failure to reach a status of forces agreement.<sup>5</sup>

June, 2014, ISIS

**June 13, 2014**, the U.S. began to reinsert itself in the conflict with Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR), which continues to the present day.<sup>6</sup>



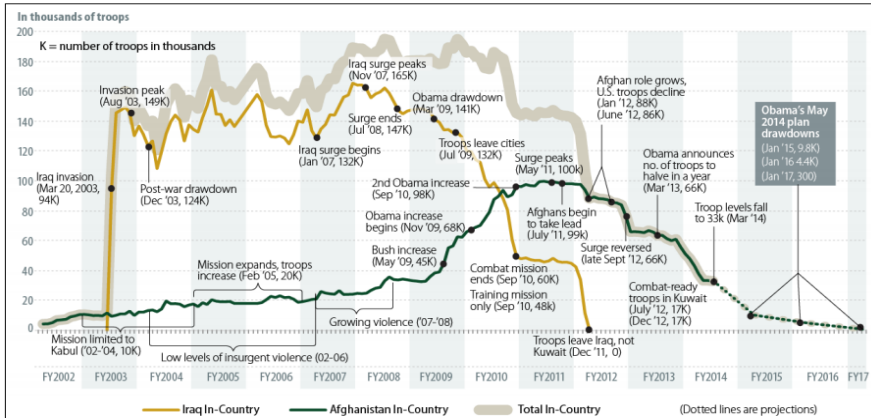
**October 7, 2001**, U.S. began combat operations in Afghanistan - Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).<sup>7</sup>

**December 31, 2014**, OEF ended.

**January 1, 2015**, the U.S. maintained their presence in Afghanistan under Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS), which continues up to the present day.<sup>8</sup>

*See pages 8-9 for references, further information, and insight.*

## In thousands of U.S. troops



**Sources:** DOD, Monthly Boots-on-the Ground reports provided to CRS and congressional defense committees, 2001-June 2014. For month-by-month troop levels, both in-country and in-theater, see **Table A-1**.

*See pages 9-15 for references, further information, and insight.*

Year	Iraq	Afghanistan	Total
2001	NA	12	12
2002	NA	49	49
2003	486	48	534
2004	849	52	901
2005	846	99	945
2006	823	98	921
2007	904	117	1021
2008	314	155	469
2009	149	317	466
2010	60	499	559
2011	54	418	472
2012	1	310	311
2013	NA	127	127
2014	3	55	58
2015	6	22	28
2016	17	14	31
2017	3	NA	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4515</b>	<b>2392</b>	<b>6907</b>

ICAsualties, "Iraq Coalition Military Fatalities by Year - Afghanistan Coalition Military Fatalities by Year," Iraq Coalition Casualty Count, published 2 February 2017, accessed 2 February 2017, <http://icasualties.org/>.



*See pages 9-15 for references, further information, and insight.*



## Global War on Terror

\$700 billion dollars has been spent in Afghanistan.

\$800 billion in Iraq.

Over \$1.5 trillion total.

Projected costs over time estimated to be 4.8 trillion.

2.5 million U.S. service members deployed to Afghanistan/Iraq.

6,907 U.S. service members killed.

52,514 wounded.

200,000 civilians have died due to the wars there.\*

7.6 million civilians have been displaced.\*



*See pages 9-15 for references, further information, and insight.*

## Military Chaplains In Afghanistan and Iraq

Among the millions of U.S. service members who have served during the GWOT are military chaplains.

Much like their fellow service members, they have sacrificed and suffered to help carry out the military's mission.

The following are eleven themes and patterns derived from twenty narrative experiences of U.S. military chaplains in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Three excerpts from individual chaplains will be given to illustrate each of the themes and patterns.



*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*



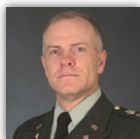
## Narratives: 11 Themes and Patterns<sup>10</sup>



The Chaplains	Themes and Patterns									
	Physically Dangerous Situation(s)	Pastoral Care and Counseling	Stress of Deployed Environment	Exposure to Traumatic Material	Building Relationships of Trust	Post-Traumatic Stress (Disorder)	Faith Strengthened / Weakened	Moral Injury	Sorrow Over Loss	Family Negatively Affected
Aital										
Brown	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Brunk	✓		✓			✓				
Christina	✓								✓	✓
Craig										
Dharm		✓				✓				
Eliason						✓				✓
George		✓				✓				
Horton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Kittleson		✓	✓	✓						
McCaun	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Michael	✓					✓		✓		
Pantlitz	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					
Panzer	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓
Peters		✓	✓	✓						✓
Silva		✓	✓	✓						
Timothy	✓			✓	✓	✓				
White D.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
White G.		✓	✓	✓						
Williams	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Totals	13	10	10	9	8	6	6	5	5	4
										3

See pages 38-44 for references, further information, and insight.

### 1. Physically Dangerous Situation(s)



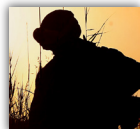
Chaplain Horton

We were just leaving the compound of our palace, and stopped at the guard gate... At that moment we both heard a very large explosion. Not more than 30 seconds down the road in front of us, a car bomb exploded. Had we not stopped at the guard gate for those short moments, we would have been caught in the blast area, and perhaps killed.<sup>11</sup>



Chaplain Brunk

On a sunny morning during a service at Camp Victory in Baghdad, three missiles struck nearby, shattering the windows and spewing rubble. The blast threw him to the marble floor. As he lay [there]... he could see a fellow chaplain mouthing words but he heard nothing. His eardrums had been ruptured, and he had an undiagnosed brain injury.<sup>12</sup>



Chaplain Timothy

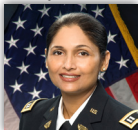
And all of the sudden there was a loud “bang!” on the side of the vehicle. And I was sitting there kind of looking out the window, looking around and one of them said, “Get down, Chaplain!” I turned and looked and there was a bullet stuck in the window. It was stuck right next to my head. So I got down and they said, “Man, Chaplain, you’ve got a sniper and he’s got you right in his crosshairs, you better stay down.” I remember right in that moment that I had a kind of weird anger about it that I hadn’t had before. I remember it really well.<sup>13</sup>

See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.

## 2. Pastoral Care and Counseling



Chaplain D. White



Chaplain Dharm



Chaplain Panzer

Part of our role as chaplains was to pick up the Marines who were injured and to provide pastoral care to them... our instinct is to reach out and help others - that's our calling from God. But in a war zone, we constantly have to balance that with our own safety. I would see what appeared to be a pregnant woman approaching me for help, for example, but potentially she was carrying explosive devices under her dress. We constantly dealt with that challenge.<sup>14</sup>

The growing diversity of the military population has meant focusing on really listening and hearing, rather than coming at them from our own theological backgrounds...<sup>15</sup>

I counsel some soldiers who do route clearance, a dangerous responsibility that increases the likelihood they might encounter an IED [improvised explosive device]. They want to be at peace, rather than preoccupied with the threat of death. They need to face any dangers that may come, and can't allow their emotions to distract from the mission.<sup>16</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

## 3. Stress of Deployed Environment



Chaplain G. White



Chaplain Panzer



Chaplain Brown

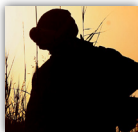
As we entered ambush alley, our left rear tire blew out. We were forced to stop right in the middle of this dangerous location. Again, soldiers jumped out of the vehicles and set up a security perimeter. Our safety was compromised and our nerves were on edge. As the tire was being changed, the sandstorm rapidly increased in intensity. Everything around us became invisible as more and more sand was tossed in the air. My vehicle commander asked if I was praying. I said, "I haven't stopped since we left Bagram." After the tire was changed, the vehicle was lowered--and to our shock, the spare tire was flat. With a flat tire, we had to travel through ambush alley at a pace of only one or two miles an hour.<sup>17</sup>

Right now, we're at Camp Liberty, just outside of Baghdad. A while back, frequent rocket attacks stirred up some anxiety, causing some of my troops to face their own fears and the real prospect of death.<sup>18</sup>

So there's a lot of controversy, as you can imagine... Why am I wearing an Army uniform and trying to deal with people who are out to kill people?... We preach the love of God and the fact that we ought to be at peace with each other. In the same time, I'm wearing a uniform that says US Army on it. I'm there to support them in their mission of winning a war and that means taking lives. So I do wrestle with that. There's times that you just kind of go, "God, can I resign here? Can I get away from this?"<sup>19</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

## 4. Exposure to Traumatic Material



Chaplain Brown



Chaplain Pantlitz



Chaplain Michael

I think I'm much more hesitant about having a definite opinion about who should die. Just seeing the brutality and the-- people have got body parts missing, or there's big holes. They died a violent death. It's not pretty. It just doesn't seem normal, which it isn't.<sup>20</sup>

We had two mass casualties. The first one killed 22 detainees, and injured 97. The second one killed 14 detainees, and injured 18. Those 22 detainees had to be put in body bags, and ice had to be put on them, their eyes had to be closed, and they had to be put into the mortuary. Nobody wanted to do that job. So, they called the chaplain. When nobody wants to do a job, they know a chaplain will do it. So, I put these bodies in body bags and closed their eyes, put ice on them, and said a prayer for them. That event, is what I remember to this day. It is etched into my memory.<sup>21</sup>

The scale of devastation was different. There were no small wounds in Iraq. I had a real problem. I saw the bodies of people charred. We had to wash the floor—it was very gory, gruesome, concentrated. It was like we had to wade through the gore just to treat the remains.<sup>22</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

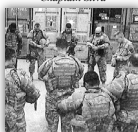
## 5. Building Relationships of Trust



Chaplain Eliason



Chaplain Silva



Chaplain McCain

As Americans, we did not want to meddle in their religious affairs, but we did need to foster chaplaincies that wouldn't succumb to radical religious leaders. In the spring of 2004, I developed and conducted a short chaplain training program for a man named "Maseullah," the indigenous mullah (Islamic religious leader).<sup>23</sup>

Father Silva works here [the base] during the week. On weekends, he packs his bags and heads out to one of four forward locations to offer Mass... On a typical weekend, Father Silva will celebrate three to seven Masses for... frontline troops.<sup>24</sup>

The previous chaplain did not know who the deceased were but he did pray for them. I wanted to know who the soldiers were and pay them the proper respects, so I ran to the chopper. It was still on fire, so all I could do was grab the dog tags off the pilot and an I.D. bag from the other. I now had their names. My commanding officer was a Catholic, and he instructed me to perform their last rites. I was able to offer the appropriate prayer using their names: Colton and Fortenberry. I will never forget those names.<sup>25</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

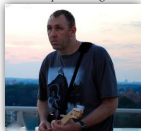
## 6. Post-Traumatic Stress (Disorder)



Chaplain Pantlitz



Chaplain George



Chaplain Williams

If I could turn back the hands of time, I'd not change anything... To go to Iraq, to get PTSD, and to use it, to make me a more ironically compassionate person, which opened doors for me to tell people who have been through trauma, difficulties, that God doesn't waste anything... Sometimes God purposely breaks the chaplain so he can make them a better chaplain... In my case, I was wounded, and I use my wounds to be a healer to others. This has made me a better Christian.<sup>26</sup>

When I first got back, I associated church with the memorial services that I would do for my soldiers who died. I would get anxious and leave. It bothered me for years. I needed connection but I couldn't get it at church. I had to walk out when they prayed for the troops. I wanted to think about something else.<sup>27</sup>

Unzipping body bags and "seeing your friends' faces all blown apart." He watched as most of the marriages he officiated for fellow soldiers fell apart. He felt the terror of being the only soldier who wasn't armed when the mortars dropped and bullets flew... "I thought I had a handle on suffering. I thought I had a handle on understanding the sovereignty of God. I didn't know crap..."<sup>28</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

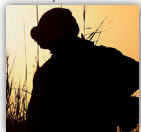
## 7. Faith Strengthened / Weakened



Chaplain G. White



Chaplain Pantlitz



Chaplain Craig

I am convinced we were watched over and protected throughout our long journey. Finding an essential lost bolt; experiencing a blinding sandstorm that shielded us from the enemy as we drove through ambush alley; seeing a lit sign in a place where electricity is scarce; and being able to drive a disabled vehicle to its destination-to me, all these are miracles. I am not sure why we were so blessed, but I am very grateful we were.<sup>29</sup>

Sometimes God purposely breaks the chaplain so he can make them a better chaplain... In my case, I was wounded, and I use my wounds to be a healer to others. This has made me a better Christian.<sup>30</sup>

I'm calmer now, more reflective... The first death I witnessed was horrible. Myself and my commander had to go to the front to bless the body and put him in a body bag. It was the end of life. It was my first day in Iraq... I was always aware of the violence that was about to happen. I prayed a lot, I did a lot of adoration. Because I didn't know what could happen... if a Catholic dies he goes to heaven. I was ready for that. Prayer works. My commander was worried before we left and I told him I would pray and no one died.<sup>31</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

## 8. Moral Injury



Chaplain Michael



Chaplain Antal



Chaplain George

But after that, after dealing with all that [traumatic material experienced] I just wanted to have sex, I mean, I just wanted to procreate. We are born to procreate, and I guess that when I was around all that death I wanted to feel alive. I didn't expect this.<sup>32</sup>

Gather[ing] on the flight line whenever a service member was killed. As the casket was transferred onto a C-17 cargo plane, there is 'Taps,' there's prayer, and we salute as the casket is carried up the ramp. It was while I was standing on the flight line in those ceremonies that I saw the drones — surveillance and also armed drones — on the flight line... to hold that with the drones... to stand there wondering who we were killing, who their families were, and how they were grieving... it just created a break in my soul.<sup>33</sup>

I sucked in darkness. Maybe I should have referred more of my soldiers to others for counseling. I would get to a place where I couldn't counsel any more soldiers. It was like I reached a limit. Maybe I should have said I didn't know more. I liked my Clinical Pastoral Care group because I could share my war stories...<sup>34</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

## 9. Sorrow Over Loss



Chaplain Kathleen



Chaplain Antal



Chaplain Christina

[There was] a soldier who did not die from hostile fire, but rather from fire from his own hand. Suicide. This situation sets off such a firestorm of conflicting thoughts and emotions... Could we have seen this coming? Could we have prevented it? Why didn't we realize there was a problem? The memorial service doesn't end or answer the questions; it merely announces the beginning of the long, hard process of coming to grips with what has happened and the grief that lurks in the long, waking nights.<sup>35</sup>

We have made war entertainment enjoying box seats in the carnival of death consuming violence, turning tragedy into games raising our children to kill without remorse. We have morally disengaged, outsourcing our killing... We have sanitized killing and condoned extrajudicial assassinations: death by remote control, war made easy without due process, protecting ourselves from the human cost of war. We have deceived ourselves...<sup>36</sup>

I used to be self-righteous—lots of church in me. Swearing used to offend me, now soldiers don't offend me. They protected me. They carried my bags. We were bonding, they were gone.<sup>37</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

## 10. Family Negatively Affected



Chaplain Brunk

[He] has counseled soldiers but has not been able to talk to his wife about his own experiences. He withdraws to his quarters on weekends, and said he sometimes felt uncomfortable in large groups, as he was last month when sending several hundred soldiers off to Iraq..."<sup>38</sup>



Chaplain Christina

I spoke to my family when I came back and I can't say things to my family. They just don't understand why I don't talk to them. Being a chaplain I've moved—I haven't had time to process. Because of the confidentiality of my work I carry lots of things in my psyche. Some things I just can't share, very private things. We are all uncomfortable and disconnected to family."<sup>39</sup>



Chaplain Peters

Because he was divorced, he had to leave the Bible Fellowship Church that had endorsed him as a military chaplain. He eventually found a home and became ordained in the Episcopal Church. He also remarried; he and his new wife are expecting a child next month. "To start over, to start a new marriage, to start a new job, to start in a new church — all those things took a great deal of, just, patience."<sup>40</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

## 11. Changed Faith Group



Chaplain Williams

At the end of the day, what I know now is: I'm alive, I believe in God, I have faith, and that's where it stops. It doesn't get much deeper than that... I don't think anymore that there is some grand design... It just is."<sup>41</sup>



Chaplain Dharm

As an interfaith and Hindu chaplain, I saw a lot more commonality of needs between the soldiers of diverse population than differences..."<sup>42</sup>



Chaplain Peters

It was his lifelong relationship with God that suffered the most... "The church was asking me to confess *my* sins, when I felt like God had done far worse things than I've ever done," he says. Like "standing by and not really doing much for the world that's full of war and conflict and despair, loss... I looked at my own life and I felt that way. I'd just gotten divorced. I was just really angry at God for disappearing on me when I needed him most."<sup>43</sup>

*See pages 15-38 for references, further information, and insight.*

## Narratives: 11 Themes and Patterns:



The Chaplains	Themes and Patterns									
	Physically Dangerous Situation(s)	Pastoral Care and Counseling	Stress of Deployed Environment	Exposure to Traumatic Material	Building Relationships of Trust	Post-Traumatic Stress (Dread)	Faith Strengthened / Weakened	Moral Injury	Sorrow Over Loss	Family Negatively Affected
Antal										
Brown	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Brown	✓		✓							
Christina	✓									
Craig										
Dharm		✓								
Eliason					✓	✓				
George		✓				✓				
Horton	✓				✓					
Kittleson			✓							
McCaun	✓	✓			✓					
Michael	✓					✓		✓		
Pantitz			✓							
Pantzer		✓	✓							
Peters	✓	✓	✓			✓			✓	✓
Silva		✓			✓					
Timothy	✓					✓		✓		
White D.			✓							
White G.	✓	✓	✓			✓				
Williams		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Totals	13	10	10	9	8	6	6	5	5	4
										3

*See pages 38-44 for references, further information, and insight.*

## Conclusion

### 5 Main Takeaways

1. The value of military chaplains, if ever doubted, is clearly seen in the sacrifices that these and other chaplains were and are willing to make as they minister to those most in need. To date, there is no comparable replacement for what chaplains can and will do, and from this resource it can be seen that all branches of the military have benefited from the force multiplying presence of chaplains.
2. This resource dispels myths that chaplains are not impacted as much as other service members from the ill effects of war. If anything, the narratives show that chaplains are exposed to more traumatic material and dangerous situations than most, in large part due to the nature of their far-reaching ministry of presence.
3. Considering the negative effects of service on chaplains in these wars, further studies should be done to determine the best ways to mitigate these effects on the chaplain corps. Whether that is additional resources, shorter deployments, or a change in culture that does not stigmatize chaplains who need and seek help, the military should consider mitigating measures to ensure that chaplains can continue their valuable service.
4. Narratives should continue to be collected, organized, and analyzed, so as to better understand the effects of combat ministry on the chaplain corps. In a world where the methods and means of war are ever changing, it is critical to understand what new challenges this brings to the chaplain corps.
5. The narratives included in this resource have the potential to be valuable training material for chaplains. Through analysis and introspection one can gain insight as to the environment, challenges, and potential effects of trying to provide ministry and chaplain care to those in combat. In studying these narratives one can gain insight, and a greater appreciation for the sacrifices made by U.S. military chaplains who have and are serving in the GWOT in Afghanistan and Iraq.

*See pages 44-45 for references, further information, and insight.*

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