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MILITARY CHAPLAINS AS MORAL LEADERS: A CENTRAL ROLE IN SUPPRESSING 21st CENTURY HUMAN SLAVERY

Remarks as delivered by Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz of the Department of Defense to the XVI International Military Chaplains Conference, Ljubljana, Slovenia, February 9, 2005

Thank you, Chaplain Inghilterra, for that introduction. It is no accident that military chaplains have always served – and continue to serve today – in a central support role in the development of military leaders of character. Likewise, the traditional role of the military Inspector General in America since the time of our War of Independence has been as "*an independent extension of the eyes, ears, and conscience of the Commander.*"¹

As Inspector General, it is my duty independently and objectively to pursue the truth, and then to present my findings to Secretary Rumsfeld, to our Congress, and ultimately to the American people, as plainly as I see it. Allow me today to share with you how I see the military chaplain's central role in helping leaders suppress 21st Century human slavery.

In his 1796 Farewell Address, President George Washington admonished, "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to national prosperity, Religion and morality are indispensable supports."

The first three articles of the 1775 "Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies of North America" offer historical proof of a traditional military focus on spiritual needs of service members:

ART. 1. The Commanders of all ships and vessels belonging to the THIRTEEN UNITED COLONIES, are strictly required to shew in themselves a good example of honor and virtue to their officers and men, and to be very vigilant in inspecting the behaviour of all such as are under them, and to discountenance and suppress all dissolute, immoral and disorderly practices; and also, such as are contrary to the rules of discipline and obedience, and to correct those who are guilty of the same according to the usage of the sea.

ART. 2. The Commanders of the ships of the Thirteen United Colonies are to take care that divine service be performed twice a day on board, and a sermon

¹Joseph E. Schmitz, *The Enduring Legacy of Inspector General von Steuben*, J. PUB. INQUIRY (Fall/Winter 2002) citing Inspector General Activities and Procedures, Army Reg. 20-1 (Army, 2002).

preached on Sundays, unless bad weather or other extraordinary accidents prevent it.

ART. 3. If any shall be heard to swear, curse or blaspheme the name of God, the Captain is strictly enjoined to punish them for every offence, by causing them to wear a wooden collar or some other shameful badge of distinction, for so long a time as he shall judge proper:-- If he be a commissioned officer he shall forfeit one shilling for each offence, and a warrant or inferior officer, six-pence: He who is guilty of drunkenness (if a seaman) shall be put in irons until he is sober, but if an officer, he shall forfeit two days pay.²

The first conference I attended after having been confirmed by the United States Senate as Inspector General of Department of Defense in 2002 was sponsored by an organization promoting corporate ethics among defense contractors. The most interesting panel discussion of that conference was presented by the Character Development Officers of the three United States Service Academies. Each of the three Character Development Officers acknowledged a spiritual component inherent in character development.

As a graduate of one of those three Academies, the United States Naval Academy, I have benefited from an American institution that still today officially acknowledges the spiritual component of character – and leadership – development.

As the Inspector General of the Department of Defense – the independent extension of the eyes, ears, and conscience of the Secretary of Defense – it is now my duty to help Secretary Donald Rumsfeld guard against and suppress any threat to the moral values and principles upon which the United States was founded. President Ronald Reagan summarized our foundational principles in a speech to the British House of Commons in 1982: “individual liberty, representative government, and the rule of law under God.”³ I would respectfully suggest that many of you here today share our profound commitment to these principles, which are classic examples of what C.S. Lewis would have called “first things.”

“[T]he principle of ‘first and second things,’ as C.S. Lewis calls it . . . [is] that when second things are put first, not only first things but second things too are lost. More exactly, when there are greater goods, or ultimate ends and proximate ends, if we put lesser goods, like survival, before greater goods, like values to survive for, then we lose not only the greater goods, the values, but even the lesser goods that we’ve idolized. . . . [T]he society that believes in nothing worth surviving for beyond mere survival will not survive.”⁴

² Rules for the Regulation of the Navy of the United Colonies of North-America (William and Thomas Bradford, Philadelphia 1775) *reprinted* by Naval Historical Foundation, Washington, D.C. (1944). The text is abridged and reproduced here exactly as in the original, following the original use of capitalization and italics.

³ Ronald Reagan, Speech to the House of Commons (June 18, 1982), *available at* www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1982reagan1.html.

⁴ PETER KREEFT, A REFUTATION OF MORAL RELATIVISM: INTERVIEWS WITH AN ABSOLUTIST 133 (1999); *see* C.S. Lewis, *Time and Tide*, *reprinted in* GOD IN THE DOCK (1942) (“You can’t get second things by

Fortunately, most of us in this room believe in “first things” that are worth surviving for, including “individual liberty.” Unfortunately, one of the biggest threats to this “first thing” is what President George W. Bush has called a “special evil” – the buying and selling of human beings – our response to which, I would submit, will define who we are as individuals, as nations, and ultimately as a world community.

According to official estimates, each year “an estimated 800,000 to 900,00 human beings are bought, sold or forced across the world’s borders. . . generating billions of dollars.”⁵ A high percentage of the victims of human trafficking are tricked and/or coerced into prostitution. Agents of organized crime lure poor, and often very young, women into leaving home for the promise of a well-paying job in the entertainment field, only to find themselves shackled to a brothel in a foreign country, with passports confiscated until they can pay back their so-called “debt.”

Some officials in these countries assert that these women consent to their employment. According to our Military Police in one country where I inspected, the contracts for these “entertainers” are sold weekly from one establishment to another. This is human slavery, plain, simple, and morally repugnant. In the words of one survivor, “I was so desperate. When they offered work, I had no choice but to accept. Soon after my arrival . . . I realized that I had been sold. My life after that was like that of an animal . . . I was sold three more times and forced to have sex everyday. My owner threatened that wherever I escaped to, I would be traced and killed and so would my parents in Thailand.”⁶

Some officials in countries which tolerate prostitution claim that “prostitution is a victimless crime.” For the women forced to live under inhuman conditions until they have earned enough money to “buy back” their freedom – or die from venereal diseases or physical abuse – prostitution is hardly a victimless crime.

Military chaplains are on the front lines in the moral and culture wars of your respective nations and services. I’m sure you’ve heard people rationalize that efforts to suppress prostitution will inevitably fail because “It’s the world’s oldest profession.” For those who suggest legalization of prostitution as a solution, I would suggest they read the most recent U.S. State Department report on human trafficking, which includes a section titled, “Would Legalizing Prostitution Curb Human Trafficking?”

Here is what it reports: “When law enforcement tolerates or communities legalize prostitution, organized crime groups are freer to traffic in human beings. Where prostitution is legalized, the cost of sexual services includes brothel rent, medical

putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first...Civilizations have pursued a host of different values in the past: God’s Will, honour, virtues, empire, ritual, glory, mysticism, knowledge. The first and most practical question for ours is to raise the question, to care about the summum bonum, to have something to life for and to die for, lest we die”).

⁵ President George W. Bush, Address to the United Nations General Assembly (Sept. 23, 2002).

⁶ Siripom Skrobanek, *Set me free: Women immigrants often forced into prostitution*, NEW INTERNATIONALIST (Sept. 1998).

examinations, and registration fees. Due in part to these costs, illegal prostitution has flourished in legalized areas as clients seek cheaper sex. In some countries where prostitution is legal there are from three to ten times as many non-registered women involved in prostitution as registered women.”⁷

In that same State Department report, there is another section titled “How Prostitution Fuels Trafficking.” It validates “a direct link between prostitution and trafficking.” According to the report, “prostitution and its related activities . . . contributes to trafficking persons by serving as a front behind which traffickers for sexual exploitation operate.”⁸

Both Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary Paul Wolfowitz have promulgated “zero tolerance” policy guidance throughout the Department of Defense that neither our Armed Forces nor the contractors who support them will be complicit in any way in the trafficking of persons.⁹ Department of Defense policy defines trafficking broadly to include involuntary servitude and debt bondage, in addition to sex slavery.

As the “independent extension of the eye and ears” of Secretary Rumsfeld, I can assure you that leaders at all levels are already being held accountable for enforcing this policy throughout the Department of Defense. The standard against which I inspect and which I enforce, to quote Secretary Rumsfeld’s policy memo, is that “no leader in this Department should ever turn a blind eye to this issue.”

Inspections and enforcement alone, however, are not enough. If we are effectively to suppress the trafficking of human beings, the root causes must be addressed. This is where military chaplains can serve in a critical role. Military leaders at all levels cannot effectively suppress sex slavery without addressing the demand side of the market for prostitution. This effort will inevitably lead to an examination of morality, lifestyles, and cultural attitudes, particularly with regard to the image of women, which foster what has become a veritable industry of sexual exploitation in the developed countries.

The Polish-born Roman Pontiff recently said this about prostitution and human trafficking, “The disturbing tendency to treat prostitution as a business or industry not only contributes to the trade in human beings, but is itself evidence of a growing tendency to detach freedom from the moral law and to reduce the rich mystery of human sexuality to a mere commodity.”¹⁰ Ten years ago, the same Pope, speaking in Baltimore,

⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 22* (2004).

⁸ *Id.* at 563.

⁹ Implementing the Department of Defense “Zero Tolerance” Policy With Regard to Trafficking in Humans Before the House Committee on Armed Services and the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Sept. 21, 2004)(statement of Joseph E. Schmitz, Inspector General of the Department of Defense)(citing Donald Rumsfeld, Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments, *Combating Trafficking in Persons* (Sept. 16, 2004); Paul Wolfowitz, Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments, *Combating Trafficking in Persons in the Department of Defense* (Jan. 30, 2004)).

¹⁰ For Pope John Paul’s quote, see Delia Gallagher, *Toward Freedom – Ending the Traffic in Human Beings*, *INSIDE THE VATICAN* (Aug.-Sept. 2002) at 38.

Maryland, had urged every generation of Americans to acknowledge “the moral truths which make freedom possible,” starting with those “truths” acknowledged in our own Declaration of Independence and reiterated in Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address,¹¹ which together with the Emancipation Proclamation sounded the death knell of legalized slavery in the United States of America.

As chaplains, you are in a unique position to inspire members of our armed forces to live morally courageous and virtuous lives. In the words of Aristotle, “the virtues we get by first exercising them, as also happens in the case of the arts as well. For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre-players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts.”¹²

Exercising virtues on a daily basis requires courage, training, and discipline. You must, as they like to say today, “Not only talk the talk, but walk the walk.”

George Washington’s Inspector General during the American Revolutionary War walked the walk and talked the talk, although he never spoke English. Baron Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben of Prussia began training the fledgling American militia in 1778, ultimately instilling into our citizen-soldiers, according to the inscription on a monument in downtown Washington D.C., the military training and discipline with which they won their independence.

More than 100 years later, President William Howard Taft said this about our first effective Inspector General, “The effects of Steuben’s instruction in the American Army teaches us a lesson that is well for us to keep in mind, and that is that no people, no matter how warlike in spirit and ambition, in natural courage and self-confidence, can be made at once, by uniform and guns, a military force. Until they learn drill and discipline, they are a mob, and the theory that they can be made into an army overnight has cost this nation billions of dollars and thousands of lives.”¹³

Likewise, we cannot assume today that our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines will automatically make good moral choices. They must be taught to do so by repetition. Until our service members learn to respect the inherent dignity of each human person, the theory that they will do the right thing under temptation has put billions of dollars into the pockets of human traffickers and destroyed hundreds of thousands of lives.

Like the foundational legal documents of the United States of America, the preamble of the United Nations Charter “reaffirm[s] faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women.”¹⁴

¹¹ John Paul II, Homily in Oriole’s Park at Camden Yards 7 (Oct. 8, 1995), available at <http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/pope0264is.htm>.

¹² 2 ARISTOTLE, NICOMACHEAN ETHICS, ch. 1, 1103a 33 – 1103b 3 (Richard McKeon ed., 1947).

¹³ William Howard Taft, Address of the President of the United States, *reprinted in* UNVEILING OF THE STATUE OF BARON VON STEUBEN (1910).

¹⁴ U.N. CHARTER preamble, available at <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>.

The ongoing trade in human persons is an affront to fundamental human rights and to the dignity and worth of the human person.

As military chaplains, you ought to be leaders in the ongoing efforts to inculcate into all of our military service members a well-founded sense of respect for the dignity of every human person. Armed with the unique moral authority that comes with your position, you have the ability to influence the lives of our service men and women. They listen to you. They respect you. And they need you, especially now.

A recent survey my professional staff conducted among the men and women of all of our three U.S. service academies found that the chaplain is the person to whom cadets and midshipmen would most likely go in order to discuss a problem.¹⁵

Based on my experience as Inspector General, I have three suggestions for you for proactively suppressing prostitution and human trafficking:

- First, take on these tough moral challenges directly. Don't wait for the men and women in uniform to come to you. Speak about the devastating effects of prostitution and human trafficking, both physical and spiritual, in your sermons. Let those in your organizations know that by practicing certain types of behavior once condoned as commonplace, they are enabling human slavery.
- Second, practice what you preach by setting a good example in your day-to-day lives, especially in "the little things." Let me give you an example. You are meeting with a group of junior service members and one of them makes a flippant comment about foreign entertainers or prostitution. You may be tempted to ignore it or overlook it because you don't want to alienate that individual or some of the other members of the group. My advice – don't be afraid to correct them on the spot. Don't be afraid to draw the moral line in the sand. These young service men and women not only need it, they expect it. Remember, "you can't lead anyone else further than you have gone yourself."¹⁶ As religious leaders, you should be paradigms of virtue.
- Third, work together. Transforming cultures that are conducive to sexual slavery is no easy task. Hard work lies ahead of us, but thousand of destitute women and children will continue to suffer from the scourge of sexual slavery until we stand up for their dignity. We should never forget the resounding words of Edmund Burke: "the only think necessary for the

¹⁵ See Inspector General of the Department of Defense, Three Academy Sexual Assault and Leadership Survey, Question 16 (2005) at D.2-6 [14].

¹⁶ BaseballLibrary.com biography of Gene Mauch, *available at* http://www.baseballlibrary.com/baseballlibrary/ballplayers/M/Mauch_Gene.stm.

triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”¹⁷ We cannot solve the problem of human trafficking by ourselves. It will take a global effort and require a great deal of moral courage and, dare I say to an audience of military chaplains, the grace of God.

Chaplains as a group have long exhibited exceptional courage, especially in the face of danger. Most American chaplains are familiar with the story of the *USS Dorchester*, but I am going to retell it to you today anyway because the heroic actions of those four military chaplains should be an inspiration to us all.

On February 3, 1943, the *USS Dorchester* would become another statistic in the “ships-lost-at-sea” column, but unlike others before it, what took place on deck of the *Dorchester* would live on forever. At about 1 a.m., the *USS Dorchester*, a troop transport with over 900 service members aboard on its way to Greenland, was hit by a torpedo fired by a German submarine and was sinking in the icy waters of the North Atlantic. Many on board died instantly, while others were trapped below the deck.

Chaos ensued – fire, smoke, and the screaming of the wounded. Fear filled the air. Some men panicked and jumped into the waters without life jackets; others were frozen in fear and refused to leave the sinking vessel. Taking on water rapidly, the ship began listing to starboard. Overcrowded lifeboats capsized, and rafts drifted away before anyone could reach them.

In the midst of the confusion and terror, four chaplains – Protestant Ministers George Lansing Fox and Clark Poling, a Catholic Priest, Father John Washington, and Rabbi Alex Goode – moved about the ship, exuding composure while calming frightened men, directing bewildered soldiers to lifeboats, and distributing life jackets with calm precision. Soon, the supply of jackets was exhausted, yet four young soldiers, afraid and without life vests, stood waiting.

Without hesitation, the chaplains removed their own life jackets and gave them to the young soldiers. Then, according to one survivor, the four chaplains joined some of the other men trapped onboard for prayers that “sounded like a babble of English, Hebrew and Latin.”

These four men of faith had given away their only means of saving themselves in order to save others. Men rowing away from the sinking ship in lifeboats saw the chaplains clinging to each other on the slanting deck. Their arms were linked together and their heads were bowed as they prayed to the one God whom each of them loved and served.

¹⁷ WorldofQuotes.com citing Edmund Burke, available at <http://www.worldofquotes.com/author/Edmund-Burke/1/>.

The Dorchester sank beneath the icy waters of the North Atlantic, carrying with it the four chaplains and some 675 servicemen.¹⁸

Although many of you knew the story of the heroic chaplains aboard the USS Dorchester, what you probably do not know is the sacrifice made by one Charles W. David, an enlisted man serving on one of the escorting Coast Guard cutters.

When the escorts finally did arrive on the scene, David plunged repeatedly into the freezing sea to rescue survivors of the Dorchester. He subsequently died of exposure.¹⁹

What is so special about David's heroics is that he was an African-American and most of the men he sacrificed his life to save were white. At the time the U.S. services were still segregated and David, a mess attendant, did not enjoy all of the blessings of liberty all Americans now enjoy under our Constitution and the laws of the United States. Yet he gave his life so that others could live. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for another."²⁰

A week ago today, President George W. Bush in his State of the Union speech reminded us that, "Our founders dedicated [our] country to the cause of human dignity, the rights of every person, and the possibilities of every life. This conviction leads us into the world to help the afflicted, and defend the peace, and confound the designs of evil men."²¹ These are principles that should guide every individual of every nation – these are principles antithetical to human slavery in any form.

The members of each of our armed forces need you as military chaplains to reinforce in them what Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, on the recent 60th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps, explained based on the life of one Auschwitz survivor – "In extreme situations when human lives and dignity are at stake, neutrality is a sin. It helps the killers, not the victims."²²

Likewise, for those of us who are in a position to do something to combat human slavery, however small our contribution, neutrality is a sin.

¹⁸ Aaron Leibel, *A rare brand of heroism*, JEWISH LEDGER (reviewing DAN KURZMAN, NO GREATER GLORY: THE FOUR IMMORTAL CHAPLAINS AND THE SINKING OF THE DORCHESTER IN WORLD WAR II (2004), available at http://www.jewishledger.com/articles/2005/01/12/book_reviews/book15.prt); see also Civitan Online at www.civitaninternational.com/templates/cuscivitan/Details.asp?id=23844&PID=94871&RID=8537.

¹⁹The African American Registry (Daybook for February 3rd), available at www.aaregistry.com/african_american_history/1385/Charles_David_hero_of_the_USS_Dorchester.

²⁰ John 15:12-13.

²¹ President George W. Bush, State of the Union (Feb. 2, 2005), available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html>.

²² Paul Wolfowitz, 60th Anniversary of Liberation of Nazi Death Camps (Jan. 24, 2005), available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2005/sp20050124-depsecdef1021.html>.

In closing, I pray that each of you military chaplains will utilize your special offices to teach and train both your leaders and your troops: (a) to focus on “first things,” including the principle of individual liberty; and (b) never to turn a blind eye to that “special evil” we call trafficking in persons, also known as human slavery.