

MILPERSMAN 1730-010

USE OF LAY LEADERS IN RELIGIOUS SERVICES

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References	(a) SECNAVINST 1730.7C (b) SECNAVINST 7010.6A
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1. Policy

a. Under reference (a), commanders shall provide command religious programs (CRP) in support of religious requirements and preferences of authorized personnel. Commanders may appoint lay leaders to accommodate religious diversity inherent in the members of the command. Appointments will be in writing for a specified period of time not to exceed 1 year. Only authorized personnel representing their own religious organization may be appointed.

b. Lay-led religious services are integral to the CRP and subject to command supervision. In most cases, lay-led services constitute a temporary accommodation of specific religious requirements in an operational setting when assigned chaplains are not able to provide.

2. Qualifications and Training

a. Commands shall appoint authorized personnel as lay leaders on the basis of volunteerism, high moral character, motivation, religious interest, and certification by the appointee's religious organization. Commanding officers (COs) shall ensure that lay leaders are trained and supervised by a military chaplain.

b. Religious Program Specialists shall not be assigned as lay leaders.

3. **Terms of Appointment**

a. Appointment of a lay leader responds to an identified requirement and conveys no ecclesiastical status or civilian credentials to the authorized member appointed.

b. The appointment ends when the particular requirement precipitating the appointment has ceased, e.g., at the end of an underway period or when the lay leader is transferred. The commander retains the authority to terminate appointment and remove an individual from their status as lay leader. The command shall terminate the appointment when the conduct of the individual hinders accomplishment of the CRP or reflects adversely upon the command.

4. **Responsibilities**. In supporting the religious requirements for which lay leaders have been appointed, they should first seek the services of a military chaplain or civilian religious ministry professional, or, when this is not possible or practical, seek to arrange transportation to an appropriate service in the vicinity of the command. Lacking these opportunities, lay leaders may provide a religious service for members of their religious organization consistent with their lay status and as authorized by their religious organization.

5. **Religious Services**

a. Under reference (a), religious services are conducted in the manner and forms of religious organizations and led by lay leaders, contract civilian religious ministry professionals, or other authorized personnel.

b. Military chaplains and civilian religious ministry professionals shall ordinarily be the only persons to provide rites, sacraments, or ordinances aboard Navy ships or in Navy activities.

c. Commanders may permit lay leaders to provide specified religious rites, sacraments, or ordinances to their co-religionists if their religious organization permits them to do so. A statement of certification or approval by the religious organization to conduct the religious rite, sacrament, or ordinance must be provided by the lay leader. This permission will be granted after consultation with a military chaplain and to support particular requirements.

6. **Offerings**. Offerings will not be taken at lay-conducted services except as authorized by the CO. Any monies collected will be part of the command religious offering fund and shall be collected, accounted for, and disbursed per reference (b).