

Huffman, Raskin Lead Call for Investigation of "Armageddon" Briefings

Thirty Democrats ask Pentagon inspector general to investigate military briefings allegedly casting Iran as a Christian holy war

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Rep. Jared Huffman (D-CA), co-chair of the Congressional Freethought Caucus, participated in a March 28, 2024, Labor Dept. event in Eureka, CA. (Alyson Fligg / Labor Dept. [photo](#).)

Members of Congress this morning asked the Pentagon's top watchdog to investigate allegations of military briefings tying the Iran war to end-times prophecies, including the return of Jesus.

The letter was led by Reps. Jared Huffman (D-CA) and Jamie Raskin (D-MD). The two co-chair the Congressional Freethought Caucus, which advocates for constitutional and other legal safeguards of secularism and freedom from religion.

Thirty Democrats signed on, including former Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), previously a supporter of controversial religious observances in Congress, most notably the National Prayer Breakfast. Former Progressive Caucus Chair Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) is one notable progressive signatory, along with Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN), who is Muslim.

Most of the signatories, like a disproportionate number of members of Congress, are Christian.

The request for Pentagon Inspector General Platte B. Moring III to investigate the allegations follows my [report](#) Monday about complainants who came forward to the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF).

In an email to the MRFF, one non-commissioned officer wrote that his commander said at a briefing:

"President Trump has been anointed by Jesus to light the signal fire in Iran to cause Armageddon and mark his return to Earth."

MRFF President and Founder Mikey Weinstein has [said](#) that since the U.S. attacked Iran on Saturday, his group has received more than 200 complaints originating from 50 installations at every branch of the military.

As I [reported](#) Wednesday, Weinstein says 14 calls came in reporting at least five instances, within three branches, of commanders suddenly getting word out on Saturday of Bible studies to be held the following day. The timing and abruptness suggested that the study sessions would

contextualize the Iran attacks biblically, although none of the MRFF complainants reported attending the Bible studies.

In today's letter, Huffman, Raskin, and the other signatories ask Moring to investigate six different aspects of the allegations:

1. Whether any officers claimed that the U.S. attack was part of "a religious prophecy, divine plan, or apocalyptic religious event," and where in the chain of command these statements came from.
2. Whether any of these statements violate Pentagon policies on religious neutrality, proselytizing, or abuse of command authority.
3. How widespread such communications have been.
4. Whether servicemembers feared retaliation or were retaliated against.
5. What training commanders receive in remaining neutral about religion in their briefings and other communications, and
6. What measures might be needed to make sure religion isn't being used "to justify or frame U.S. military operations."

The letter says,

"If accurate, these outrageous statements—justifying a war based on interpretations of biblical prophecies, and informing troops that they are risking their lives to advance a specific religious vision—raises not only glaring Constitutional concerns, but potential violations of Department of Defense regulations..."

In fact, apocalyptic religious messaging occurs so often within the military — especially at times of conflict and, for obvious reasons, especially in the Middle East — that it would be unusual if it didn't occur this time around, too.

Within a week of the Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel — and the massive Israel military response — the MRFF was getting [complaints](#). One airman told the MRFF that his commander said:

"[The] will of the Lord Jesus is manifesting itself at this very moment in Gaza and Israel."

Today's letter warns that the Defense Department "has long recognized that proselytizing by commanders can undermine trust within units and erode the professionalism that is essential to effective military operations."

And it places the MRFF complaints within the context of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth flaunting religiosity in his official capacity. Hegseth heads a diverse military consisting of more than a million active-duty service members of every religious denomination and none at all.

The Huffman/Raskin letter says that Hegseth and other officials "have publicly framed Middle East policy in explicitly religious terms."

This, the letter says, “along with rhetoric suggesting a prophetic or religious dimension to geopolitical conflicts—risks emboldening similar messaging within military ranks.”

On Tuesday, in response to my report the day before about holy-war rhetoric, Huffman gave me a statement saying:

Perhaps this can be a wake-up call for Americans who somehow missed all the other wake-up calls - the rightwing Christian coup on January 6th, 2021, all the radical end-times prophets Trump has empowered and surrounded himself with, the crazed Capitol Ministry “bible studies” happening twice weekly in the White House and Congress where unhinged extremists “teach” policy makers that all of this destruction, chaos, greed and cruelty is God’s will, the sham “Religious Liberty Commission” Trump has empanelled, the bogus “Anti-Christian Bias Task Force” that is looming over the federal workforce like a rightwing culture cop, and a lot more...

“This is a moment for every journalist, every lawmaker, and every American to break the taboo of calling out and confronting the dangerous threat of Christian nationalism before this madness causes unthinkable damage to our country and the world.” [Full statement below.]

Huffman noted that the Freethought Caucus outnumbers the House Freedom Caucus. The latter, among the most far right of House Republicans, receive far more media coverage than do the Freethought Caucus advocates for secular values.

Referring to the caucus reaction to the “Armageddon” briefings, Huffman said, “The most common reaction is, why isn’t mainstream media talking about this?”

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) is a non-governmental, non-partisan group that also lobbies against religious incursions into the government. On Wednesday, FFRF Action Fund President Annie Laurie Gaylor said about the alleged briefings,

“The machinery of war cannot be entrusted to those who see global conflict as prophetic fulfillment.”

But Weinstein is skeptical that a Pentagon IG investigation will happen or be pursued seriously.

He called it, “problematic as to whether our clients are going to feel that they will get any justice from the Inspector General personnel who are completely beholden to the chief church-state abuser himself; Pete Hegseth.”

Just last week, Moring was [reported](#) to have delayed deciding on whether to investigate the Pentagon’s illegal bombings, without warning or due process, of suspected drug boats, [killing](#) 151 people in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

Moring reportedly said that the proposed investigation sounded as if it could get political.

Weinstein called for Hegseth to be removed immediately, but there's no indication Pres. Donald Trump is inclined to do so, having signed off on Hegseth's policies and having embraced Christian nationalism at the highest ranks of the administration.

The White House didn't even condemn the White House Bible study, [sponsored](#) by Hegseth, that [teaches](#) that the Jews killed Jesus.

The Honorable Platte B. Moring III
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense
4800 Mark Center Drive
Alexandria, VA 22350

Dear Inspector General Moring:

We write regarding recent reports of disturbing discourse within the military that the current war in Iran is justified by biblical end-times prophecies. We write to request a full investigation into any alleged incidents to reassure the American people that their military officers are serving as professionals accountable to the Constitution.

Some commanders have reportedly told subordinates that the American and Israeli attacks will hasten the return of Jesus Christ, and have cited passages from the Book of Revelation and instructed officers to tell their troops that current combat operations are all part of God's divine plan.^{[1](#)} If accurate, these outrageous statements—justifying a war based on interpretations of biblical prophecies, and informing troops that they are risking their lives to advance a specific religious vision—raises not only glaring Constitutional concerns, but potential violations of Department of Defense regulations regarding religious neutrality and breaches of professional obligations and standards expected of military leadership. Members of the United States Armed Forces swear an oath to support and defend our secular Constitution—not any specific religious doctrines—and servicemembers must be able to carry out their duties free from coercive religious messaging by their chain of command.

Our military, like our nation, reflects a diversity of religious beliefs and perspectives including many non-Christians and non-religious individuals. The Department of Defense has long recognized that proselytizing by commanders can undermine trust within units and erode the professionalism that is essential to effective military operations.^{[2](#)}

These allegations are also part of a broader political climate in which Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and senior civilian officials have publicly framed Middle East policy in explicitly religious terms.^{[3](#)} Public statements by administration officials and allies invoking biblical claims about Israel and the region—along with rhetoric suggesting a prophetic or religious dimension to geopolitical conflicts—risks emboldening similar messaging within military ranks.

We urge you to assess whether Secretary Hegseth's extreme religious rhetoric has metastasized into segments of the military chain of command in ways that contravene constitutional

protections, departmental rules and standards, or professional military norms. We specifically request that the Department of Defense Office of Inspector General investigate the following:

1. **Whether military commanders or other officers have made statements to subordinates asserting that U.S. military operations against Iran are part of a religious prophecy, divine plan, or apocalyptic religious event, and if so, where such communications originated within the chain of command.**
2. **Whether any such statements constitute violations of Department of Defense policies, including DoD Instruction 1300.17 “Religious Liberty in the Military Services,” regarding religious neutrality, improper proselytizing, or abuse of command authority.**
3. **The scope and geographic distribution of complaints received within the Department of Defense regarding religiously framed messaging related to the Iran conflict.**
4. **Whether servicemembers who reported these concerns experienced retaliation or fear of retaliation within their units.**
5. **What training, guidance, or oversight currently exists to ensure commanders maintain religious neutrality in operational briefings, command communications, and other official settings.**
6. **Whether additional guidance or action is warranted to ensure that personal religious beliefs are not used to justify or frame U.S. military operations.**

At a time when billions of dollars and untold numbers of lives hang in the balance while the Trump administration wages a war of choice in Iran, the imperative of maintaining strict separation of church and state and protecting the religious freedom of our troops is especially critical. We must ensure that military operations are guided by facts and the law, not end-times prophecy and extreme religious beliefs.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your commitment to accountability within the Department of Defense.

Sincerely,

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Chrissy Houlahan
Member of Congress

Emily Randall
Member of Congress

Becca Balint
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Derek T. Tran
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
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Sean Casten
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Steve Cohen
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Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Andrea Salinas
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Dave Min
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Lizzie Fletcher
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Suzanne Bonamici
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Mike Levin
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Veronica Escobar
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Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Lloyd Doggett
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Nancy Pelosi
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Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress

Kelly Morrison
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Norma J. Torres
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Pramila Jayapal
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Zoe Lofgren
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Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress