

INSTITUTE OF MILITARY CHAPLAINCY IN THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES AND GREAT BRITAIN

The chaplaincy plays an essential role in the structure of modern armed forces, providing not only spiritual support but also acting as a bridge between the military and religious communities. It contributes significantly to maintaining morale, offering pastoral care, and helping service members cope with the emotional and psychological pressures of military service. Chaplains are often the first point of contact for those in crisis, offering guidance during moments of stress, loss, or moral dilemma.

In countries such as the United States and France, the institution of military clergy is officially recognized and fully supported by the state. These chaplains are integrated into the military hierarchy and participate in the daily life of military units. One of the most developed examples is the Chaplain Corps of the United States Armed Forces. The Pentagon devotes considerable resources to supporting the religious and moral welfare of its troops, acknowledging the chaplain's role in maintaining combat readiness and unit cohesion.

Chaplains in the U.S. are funded through the defense budget and hold a legal status equivalent to that of commissioned officers, allowing them to function effectively within the chain of command. They have access to specialized training institutions and operate their own media outlets to support their work. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, chaplains are entrusted with responsibilities related to moral and psychological support, as well as educational efforts aimed at strengthening the ethical foundations of military service.

In light of Ukraine's ongoing efforts to align with NATO standards, examining the models of chaplaincy in NATO member states becomes especially relevant. The foreign experience offers valuable guidance for the further development of Ukraine's military chaplaincy service and its institutional integration into the Armed Forces.

Keywords: military chaplains, religion, chaplain, Armed Forces, pastoral service, clergy.

Виздрик Віталій Степанович, доктор історичних наук, професор, професор кафедри гуманітарних наук, Національна академія сухопутних військ імені гетьмана Петра Сагайдачного, м. Львів.

Мельник Олександра Михайлівна, кандидат економічних наук, доцент, доцент кафедри гуманітарних наук, Національна академія сухопутних військ імені гетьмана Петра Сагайдачного, м. Львів.

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Introduction: The ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war has significantly accelerated the institutionalization of military chaplaincy within the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This process was formalized through the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Military Chaplaincy" by the Verkhovna Rada («*On the Service of Military Chaplaincy*» Law of Ukraine of November 30, 2021, No. 1915-IX). As a result, each battalion or military unit now has the legal right to include its own chaplain – an ordained military clergyman who provides spiritual care and moral support to service members directly within their operational environment.

Importantly, a military chaplain is not simply a visiting parish priest but a full-fledged member of the armed forces who is enlisted or commissioned and performs chaplaincy duties as part of the military structure. This dual role allows chaplains to not only offer religious guidance but also to serve alongside soldiers under the same conditions, including in active combat zones.

The development of this institution is closely aligned with NATO standards, as military chaplaincy is an integral and established element within the armed forces of all NATO member states. In these countries, chaplains are seen as a vital part of military life, offering spiritual resilience, ethical support, and psychological assistance to service personnel and their families. Their role has long been recognized as essential in maintaining morale and ensuring the holistic well-being of troops, especially during times of war or deployment.

By integrating chaplaincy into its military system, Ukraine is not only responding to urgent wartime needs but also taking a significant step toward harmonizing its defense structure with Euro-Atlantic standards.

The aim of the paper is study of the international experience of chaplaincy service in the European Command of the US Armed Forces.

The main part of the article. The Chaplain Corps of the United States within the U.S. European Command (EUCOM) holds a prominent and well-established position, reflecting the broader importance of military chaplaincy in NATO structures. As part of EUCOM, U.S. military chaplains provide spiritual and moral support to American service members stationed across Europe, while also collaborating with chaplaincy services of NATO allies to foster unity, mutual understanding, and interfaith cooperation within multinational military environments.

In the armed forces of NATO member states, chaplaincy services are structured and regulated according to alliance-wide standards that emphasize the protection of religious freedom, ethical leadership, and the holistic well-being of service members. These standards ensure that chaplains are not only available for spiritual counseling and religious services, but also actively engaged in promoting resilience, supporting psychological health, and addressing ethical concerns that arise during military operations.

NATO armies reflect a commitment to religious diversity and inclusivity. Military chaplaincy within the alliance includes representatives of major world religions, such as Christianity (in its various denominations), Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism. This pluralistic approach ensures that the diverse spiritual needs of soldiers are respected and met, contributing to a more cohesive and morally grounded military force. Chaplains from different faith traditions often work together in joint settings, especially during peacekeeping missions, international deployments, and joint training exercises.

The presence of a well-integrated chaplaincy across NATO forces demonstrates the alliance's recognition of the vital role spiritual care plays in maintaining the morale, discipline, and overall readiness of its personnel (*Karpenko, 2009*).

The International Military Chiefs of Chaplains Conference (IMCCC) was established as a multinational platform to coordinate and enhance the chaplaincy services of NATO member states. It is built on the foundation of cooperation among the military chaplaincy institutions of each NATO country and aims to foster collaboration, mutual support, and standardization across Allied forces. This high-level forum serves not only as a venue for dialogue but also for the development of shared strategies regarding spiritual care, ethical guidance, and religious support in military contexts.

The professional training of chaplains within NATO member states is guided by the educational framework of the NATO SCHOOL Oberammergau, recognized as a global leader in multinational military education and individual training. Chaplain training is conducted in accordance with NATO standards, particularly STANAG 2222 (which outlines the spiritual and moral aspects of military operations) and STANAG 6001 (which regulates language proficiency levels for multinational cooperation) (*The Queen's Regulations for the Royal Air Force – Fifth Edition of 1999*).

The objective of the chaplaincy course is to prepare military chaplains from NATO and partner nations to operate effectively in joint and combined military environments. This includes developing their capabilities in religious counseling, interfaith cooperation, and pastoral care during both peacetime and military operations. Special emphasis is placed on the chaplain's role within multinational task forces, including deployments, peacekeeping missions, and crisis response.

Course content covers a broad range of subjects relevant to the modern military chaplain, including international humanitarian law, military ethics, intercultural competence, and psychological strategies for supporting both commanders and enlisted personnel in fulfilling their missions. Trainees learn how to advise leadership on moral and spiritual matters, manage pluralistic religious environments, and offer psychosocial support in times of stress, combat, or loss.

By standardizing chaplain training across NATO members, the alliance ensures a high level of interoperability and shared understanding among military clergy, ultimately strengthening the moral and ethical foundation of Allied operations.

The chaplaincy services of NATO member states represent a distinct component within both the political and military frameworks of the Alliance. These services are not merely supportive institutions but function as structured entities with defined responsibilities and strategic objectives. Military chaplains operating under NATO mandates are expected to possess a comprehensive understanding of their roles and competencies. Among the key requirements are: the ability to identify NATO command structures and understand their leadership hierarchies; to serve as moral and spiritual advisors to military commanders; to implement methods aimed at preventing or de-escalating conflict situations during mission execution; and to respond appropriately to crises that arise in both operational and non-operational settings. Additionally, chaplains must be well-versed in the overall military structure and principles of command and control.

To promote professional development and interfaith cooperation, annual international conferences are organized in NATO countries. These gatherings bring together representatives from various chaplaincy services and religious denominations across the Alliance. During these conferences, members of different national and denominational chaplain corps share best practices, exchange experiences, and engage in dialogue on contemporary issues

concerning the relationship between religious institutions and the armed forces (*Vashchuk, 2020*).

Such interactions contribute to the enrichment of chaplaincy practices and foster a culture of mutual respect and interdenominational cooperation. These conferences are crucial for maintaining a high standard of spiritual and ethical support within NATO forces and for strengthening the interoperability of chaplaincy services in multinational contexts.

The European Command (EUCOM) of the United States Armed Forces plays a central role in organizing and hosting many of these conferences, as it possesses one of the most developed and institutionally supported military chaplaincy systems. The U.S. model places significant emphasis on the spiritual welfare of service members, viewing chaplaincy as an integral component of personnel care. As noted by *Vashchuk (2020)*, the institutional support provided by the state to the chaplaincy system reflects a broader commitment to the moral and psychological resilience of military personnel (*Vashchuk, 2020*).

Chaplains serving in the U.S. Armed Forces must be endorsed by a recognized religious organization that fulfills three fundamental criteria established by the U.S. Department of Defense. First, the organization must be a legally registered non-profit entity; second, it must have an available candidate who meets the qualifications for military chaplaincy; and third, it must maintain a faith community or congregation that is represented within the U.S. Armed Forces. This ensures that chaplains have both institutional backing and a tangible connection to the religious needs of service members.

The military chaplaincy system in the United States is fully integrated into the defense structure and is financed by the federal budget. Chaplains enjoy a legal status equivalent to that of commissioned officers, which includes corresponding rights, responsibilities, and privileges. This institutional status allows chaplains to operate effectively within military hierarchies and participate in the command structure while maintaining the pastoral independence necessary to serve a diverse and pluralistic force.

The Chaplain Corps of the U.S. Armed Forces possesses its own administrative leadership, as well as dedicated educational institutions where chaplains are trained in theology, ethics, intercultural communication, and crisis counseling. In addition, the Corps maintains

its own media platforms, which serve to disseminate religious, ethical, and mental health-related content across military units.

The core mission of military chaplains is to provide moral and spiritual guidance while also monitoring and supporting the psychological resilience of military personnel. With regard to the officer corps and command-level leadership, chaplains serve in an advisory capacity – offering insights into the customs, rituals, and sensitivities of various faith traditions, which is especially valuable in multicultural and multinational operations.

Beyond their role within military units, chaplains are also tasked with engaging public organizations, participating in civil-military relations, and providing support to local civilian populations during deployments or humanitarian missions. Integral components of the chaplaincy infrastructure include designated spaces for worship and reflection – such as chaplain’s corners, houses of solitude, and prayer shelters. On naval vessels, chaplains are responsible for ensuring that sacred spaces are available for religious observance, thus preserving the spiritual life of sailors and officers alike (*Koropatnik, Mykytyuk, Pavlyuk, Petkov, 2023*).

According to the established requirements set forth by the Canadian and United States defense and religious authorities, individuals aspiring to serve both their faith community and their country as military chaplains must meet a rigorous set of professional and personal criteria. First and foremost, a candidate must be in good physical and mental health, ensuring that they are capable of performing duties in both peacetime and operational environments, including deployments and high-stress situations.

Academically, a chaplain candidate must hold a recognized university degree and have completed a minimum of three years of postgraduate theological education – typically at the master’s level. This academic background is generally equivalent to that provided by a theological seminary or academy and ensures that the individual possesses deep theological knowledge, spiritual maturity, and the ability to engage in interfaith dialogue and pastoral care across a wide spectrum of belief systems.

In addition to academic and physical qualifications, chaplain candidates are expected to demonstrate strong moral character, emotional resilience, and intellectual capacity. They must also show evidence of psychological stability, leadership potential, and a genuine

calling to both religious ministry and military service. These qualities are critical, as chaplains serve not only as spiritual leaders, but also as ethical advisors, counselors, and liaisons between service members and religious communities.

Furthermore, in both the Canadian and American armed forces, a formal endorsement from a recognized religious denomination is required, along with a signed commitment to military service. Typically, chaplains must agree to serve a minimum term of six years under contract. This extended period allows chaplains to build meaningful relationships within their units, develop trust with service members, and contribute effectively to the spiritual, moral, and psychological well-being of the armed forces (*The Queen's Regulations for the Royal Air Force – Fifth Edition of 1999*).

It should be noted that the British Army pays great attention to the service of military chaplains. The Institute of Chaplaincy operates in accordance with the Queen's Regulations for the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. In each garrison of the British Army there are military religious institutions of different denominations, headed by the chief chaplain, who has the rank of major general. He has two deputies, the first responsible for the Roman Catholic direction of the Catholic denomination, and the second for relations with other churches and denominations. According to the Queen's Regulations, military chaplains are not allowed to receive payment for their activities, so chaplains are free to engage in various physical and social activities in the Air Force at will. In addition, a military chaplain should not perform secular duties without the permission of the chief chaplain. In accordance with the Queen's Regulations for the Royal Air Force, chaplains have the right to attend cultural events (*«Queen's Regulations and Orders (QR&O). Volume I – Administration», 2006*).

According to the QUEEN'S REGULATIONS AND ORDERS (QR&O) for the Royal Navy, military chaplains are entrusted with a broad range of responsibilities that go beyond the mere conduct of religious rituals. Their role is both spiritual and pastoral, aimed at supporting the moral and emotional well-being of all service personnel, regardless of religious affiliation.

Key duties include the regular conduct of religious services, such as worship, prayer, and sacraments, in accordance with their faith tradition. Chaplains are also expected to promote spiritual

development among all personnel by preaching, teaching the principles of faith, and offering religious education that is inclusive and relevant to the diverse composition of the armed forces.

In addition to spiritual leadership, chaplains are responsible for the compassionate care of the sick and injured—both in medical facilities and within operational settings. Their pastoral presence during times of illness, injury, or personal crisis provides comfort and support that is often vital to recovery and morale.

A significant aspect of the chaplain's duty is fostering cooperation and mutual respect among chaplains of different denominations and faiths. Interfaith collaboration is essential in a pluralistic military environment and contributes to a culture of tolerance, inclusion, and unity. Chaplains are thus called to recognize and address the spiritual needs of all service members, irrespective of their specific religious background or belief system.

Furthermore, chaplains act as advocates for the protection and facilitation of religious practice within the military, ensuring that service members have access to worship, religious resources, and spiritual counseling. In doing so, they help uphold the principle of freedom of religion and belief, which is a cornerstone of democratic military values («*Queen's Regulations and Orders (QR&O). Volume I – Administration*», 2006).

Conclusions: The prospects for further research lie in the detailed analysis and clarification of the full spectrum of issues—both theoretical and practical—associated with the education, formation, and ongoing professional development of military chaplains. Future studies should examine the curricula, training methodologies, and institutional frameworks used to prepare chaplains for service in diverse and often challenging operational environments. Special attention should be given to the integration of interfaith competencies, psychological resilience training, and ethical decision-making within chaplaincy education programs.

Moreover, a comparative evaluation of chaplaincy models across different NATO member states would offer valuable insights into best practices and shared standards, as well as cultural and denominational distinctions that shape national approaches to spiritual and moral support in the armed forces. Such research could contribute to the development of a more unified and effective training strategy aligned with NATO interoperability objectives.

The analysis of the activities and functions of military chaplains in NATO countries leads to the clear conclusion that the institution of military chaplaincy has become an established and indispensable part of the day-to-day life of armed forces across much of the world. In many NATO states, chaplaincy is not treated as a peripheral service but as a central component of military culture, mission effectiveness, and personnel well-being. It provides essential spiritual care, fosters ethical leadership, and plays a vital role in preserving the psychological health and moral integrity of both individuals and units.

As global security challenges evolve, the relevance and necessity of military chaplains continue to grow, underscoring the need for ongoing research, professionalization, and international cooperation in this important field.

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Виздрик В. С., Мельник О. М.

ІНСТИТУТ ВІЙСЬКОВОГО КАПЕЛАНСТВА У ВІЙСЬКОВІЙ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЇ ЗБРОЙНИХ СИЛ США ТА ВЕЛИКОЇ БРИТАНІЇ

Капеланство відіграє важливу роль у структурі сучасних Збройних Сил, надаючи не лише духовну підтримку, але й будучи мостом між військовими та релігійними громадами. Воно робить значний внесок у підтримання бойового духу, пропонуючи душпастирську опіку та допомагаючи військовослужбовцям впоратися з емоційним і психологічним тиском військової служби. Капелани часто є першими, до кого звертаються ті, хто опинився в кризовій ситуації, пропонуючи настанови в моменти стресу, втрати або моральної дилеми.

У таких країнах, як США і Франція, інститут військового духовенства офіційно визнаний і повністю підтримується державою. Ці капелани інтегровані у військову ієрархію і беруть участь у повсякденному житті військових частин. Одним із найбільш розвинених прикладів є капеланський корпус Збройних Сил США. Пентагон виділяє значні ресурси на підтримку релігійного і морального добробуту своїх військовослужбовців, визнаючи роль капелана в підтримці боєготовності та згуртованості підрозділів.

Капелани в США фінансуються з оборонного бюджету і мають правовий статус, еквівалентний статусу офіцерів, що дозволяє їм ефективно функціонувати в рамках субординації. Вони мають доступ до спеціалізованих навчальних закладів і керують власними засобами масової інформації для підтримки своєї роботи. Аналогічно, у Великій Британії на капеланів покладено обов'язки, пов'язані з морально-психологічною підтримкою, а також просвітницькою діяльністю, спрямованою на зміцнення етичних засад військової служби.

У світі постійних зусиль України, спрямованих на наближення до стандартів НАТО, вивчення моделей капеланства в країнах – членах Альянсу набуває особливої актуальності. Зарубіжний досвід пропонує цінні рекомендації для подальшого розвитку служби військового капеланства в Україні та її інституційної інтеграції у Збройні Сили.

Ключові слова: військові капелани, релігія, капелан, Збройні Сили, душпастирське служіння, духовенство.