



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY PERSONNEL
JOHN McHUGH, NEW YORK
CHAIRMAN**

PRESS RELEASE

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Statement of Chairman John M. McHugh

Hearing on the Religious Climate at the U.S. Air Force Academy

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Rep. John M. McHugh, Chairman of the Military Personnel Subcommittee, released the following remarks regarding today's hearing:

“During the previous two years, it has become increasingly clear that the U.S. Air Force Academy has been struggling to find the appropriate balance between the right to exercise religious beliefs and the constitutional bar to establishing a religion.

“The June 22, 2005 report of the Headquarters Air Force Review Group led by Lieutenant General Roger Brady, the Air Force’s Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, reaffirms the challenge confronting the Academy. The report did not conclude that overt religious discrimination had occurred, but it did confirm three areas of concern:

- Some Academy staff had overreached from their leadership position and made statements concerning faith at inappropriate times.
- The Academy was not sufficiently sensitive to the needs of minority religions and needed to accommodate those needs in scheduling and other areas.
- Some cadets had demonstrated a tendency toward religious intolerance that needed to be corrected.

“By all accounts, the Air Force recognizes that these areas require immediate attention and I am confident that they will find solutions to each of these concerns. However, we in the Congress must recognize that these are very difficult issues that have been debated throughout our nation’s history.

“The Military Personnel Subcommittee is committed to seeing these issues through to a successful conclusion and will provide the Air Force any assistance that they may require. I believe it is possible to address these concerns and still protect the free expression of religious beliefs and the robust discussion of faith, ethics, and religion so critical to educating the cadets about the values that we demand in our officers.”

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