

# Chaplain Admiral: Navy Growing Chaplain Force by 90 to Staff Destroyers



PEARL HARBOR (July 7, 2022) U.S. Navy Chief of Chaplains, Rear Adm. Gregory Todd speaks to partner-nation members during the International Chaplaincy Symposium at Joint Base Pearl Harbor as part of Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022. Twenty-six nations, 38 ships, four submarines, more than 170 aircraft and 25,000 personnel are participating in RIMPAC from June 29 to Aug. 4 in and around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California. The world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC provides a unique training opportunity while fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships among participants critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security on the world's oceans. RIMPAC 2022 is the 28th exercise in the series that began in 1971. (U.S. Navy photo courtesy of Royal Australian Navy LSIS Kylie Jagiello)

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ARLINGTON, Va. –The U.S. Navy’s chief of chaplains said the service expects to increase the number of serving chaplains by 90 over the next five years in order to provide chaplains to the guided-missile destroyer (DDG) fleet as those ships deploy.

Two years ago the commander, Naval Surface Forces, requested that the Navy provide chaplains to DDGs. Previously, sea-going billets for chaplains were typically limited to ships – such as aircraft carriers and amphibious warfare ships – that had large crews.

Rear Adm. Gregory N. Todd, chief of chaplains, speaking in an online conversation with retired Rear Adm. Frank Thorp IV, President and CEO of the U.S. Navy Memorial in Washington as one of the memorial’s SITREP Speaker Series events, said the program to assign chaplains to deploying DDGs is in place and is showing good results.

“The data that is coming as a result of that is a reduction in a lot of the bad behavior—NJP [non-judicial punishment, low morale issues, retention issues,” Todd said. “It’s apparent that the chaplains on board are change agents. Can we pinpoint exactly how that change happens? Not yet. But we do know that there is some sort of concurrent effect of attending to people’s spirituality or spiritual readiness within that [DDG’s] command, creating a venue where it’s okay and then its resultant impact on some of their negative behaviors.”

## **First Increase in Chaplains Since Cold War**

Todd oversees a force of about 1,100 chaplains – active and reserve – plus enlisted religion affairs specialists that provide service to 570,000 Sailors, Marines and Coast Guardsmen and their families.

The increase in the number of chaplains is the first time the force has grown since the end of the Cold War, Todd said.

“The Navy is hiring, and I’m trying to beat the bushes to the religious organizations of America,” the admiral said. “Send us your best. It’s a great opportunity; it’s a great place to work.

“If I were to hold up what’s unique about this ministry, it’s the interaction with 18-to-25-year-olds,” he said. “We’re just immersed in a world of leadership. ... It’s operating in the public square, not confined to the church on the corner. Here we are, interacting with the whole Navy trying to impact the institution for the better.”

Todd said the Coast Guard “has put us on notice that they intend to ask for more [chaplains], and the Marine Corps as well is looking at the question of adding more chaplains. So, right now, there is a realization that spiritual readiness does have an impact on the operational forces. If you attend to individual readiness in the aggregate, you’ll also build the readiness of the unit and the team.”

Earlier in his career, Todd served as Chaplain of the Coast Guard and Chaplain of the Marine Corps.