

Overview of the Bundeswehr Catholic Military Chaplaincy

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1. Legal Basis

The state wishes military chaplaincy, which is provided by the churches so that servicemen, too, may avail themselves of the right of free practice of religion guaranteed to all citizens.

So Military and Church cooperate within the state's environment regarding religious care and teaching ethics following the principles of religious freedom in Germany.

The Concordat between the Holy See and the German Reich of 20 July 1933 regulates the jurisdiction (Soldiers & Families) and the management of military chaplaincy and the appointment of military chaplains. The Federal Republic of Germany follows these regulations regarding personnel

costs and the organisational expenses, in particular.

The dioceses place part of the church taxes collected from regular and temporary career personnel at the Military Bishop's free disposal for military chaplaincy.

Military chaplaincy is provided on behalf and under the supervision of the churches and constitutes a separate organisational area.

It is specifically emphasised that in conducting their pastoral activities, military chaplains are subject to canon law only, are not bound by government directives and are directed to cooperate with military superiors. A superior's obligation to support military chaplaincy and to cooperate with military chaplains, irrespective of his/her personal views on religious issues, arises from the basic right to freedom of religion, conscience and confession.

Servicemen and women are offered moral guidance and instruction, - a soldier's state of mind is at least as important as his/her military and technical skills.

Teaching ethics and its discussion focuses on both topics from the personal life and experiences of the young people and on serious issues relating to the meaning of soldierly action: what underlies the soldiers' mission, for what 'higher' goal do they risk their lives in extreme cases, what methods and means may they use to carry out orders / missions against the background of ethical constraints? It is therefore important for conscientious soldiers to receive helpful answers to the question of meaning also, and especially, from the moral authority of the Church. The use of weapons and involvement in dangerous situations call for an alert conscience and strong courage.

As a result of Bundeswehr operations abroad, the chaplain accompanies the force during operations abroad, he supports partners

and relatives at home, helps during crises and pastoral care in the event of illness, accident, injury and death.

2. Pastoral Duties

Military chaplaincy is the branch of the church that accompanies soldiers and offers them guidance in life from a Christian viewpoint. As God's creation with his inalienable dignity, he lives in the community with others, whose rights and liberties he has to respect. Military chaplaincy in the Bundeswehr has always seen itself as an integral part of church work, the "Church among Soldiers". It considers its pastoral mission to be the proclamation of the Gospel, of reconciliation and peace among mankind. The spiritual focus is on worship, the sacraments and service to soldiers and their families.

The military chaplain takes care of human beings, regardless of their rank and office – having no military rank himself. For some, he may seem an exotic figure in everyday military life at first encounter. As he is independent of the system of military order, he has his own role, which depends largely on the fact that the soldier can himself decide whom he considers competent in which precise situation and, most importantly, whom he can trust.

3. At Bases Abroad

German soldiers stationed abroad and their families are also fully entitled to pastoral care. Hence, the military chaplaincy also establishes offices at Bundeswehr bases abroad, currently in Mons, Belgium (SHAPE), Naples, Italy and Fort Bliss, TX / Holloman AFB, NM, USA. The full-time military chaplains/chaplain's assistants perform additional tasks that at home are performed by civilian parishes. Civilian Bundeswehr personnel, too, confide their concerns to the military chaplain and may make use of the services offered by the catholic military chaplaincy.

Bundeswehr agencies abroad generally have their own facilities (chaplaincy centres) that are managed and looked after by the respective agency heads as well as by lay personnel. Irrespective of their confession or religion, all Bundeswehr personnel as well as other German citizens living there benefit from the diverse activities of the chaplaincy centres.

The parish / area of responsibility covers a wider area than at home. If all the soldiers and their relatives belonging to the parish are to receive even a minimum of support, the chaplain, pastoral advisor and/or chaplain's assistant will have to be out and about much more, which inevitably leads to vacancies. It is in parishioners' own interest to foster and contribute to parish life. Lay persons in staff circles, chaplaincy district councils and the Community of Catholic Soldiers are called on to share in the responsibility.

Moreover, the intensive contact with the local cleric and the military chaplaincy of the host country opens up new ecumenical experiences for the military chaplain.

4. Pastoral Care During Operations Abroad

The rising number of operations abroad since the early 1990s has resulted in increased pressures on soldiers and their relatives. Military chaplaincy has thus assumed greater

Importance. Military chaplains provide spiritual and emotional support and guidance to soldiers on the missions. The military chaplain is attached to the respective contingent and lives together with the soldiers – Christians and non-Christians alike. He shares everyday life with the soldiers in camp, visits the sick or wounded soldiers in the field hospital and

offers them support when they are faced with the misery of innocent people, with destruction and hopelessness, with dying and death.

He shares the concerns, needs and conflicts that such an operation can entail. Under such circumstances, military chaplaincy proves a very intense challenge. the military

chaplain has to listen, comfort and help so that the soldiers concerned may cope with difficult personal problems in a responsible manner. In addition, soldiers who as young

people distanced themselves from their church, come to “their” chaplains with prising religious questions as a result of being confronted with difficulties, misery, the wounded and death.

The families left at home and the relatives of the soldiers deployed on operations receive special pastoral care from the base chaplain.

Military chaplains work closely together

with Bundeswehr family support centres.

At the end of difficult and perilous missions, he participates in helping soldiers to come to terms with stressful events. Moreover, he maintains close relations with unit surgeons, military psychiatrists and military psychologists as well as legal advisers and social workers. If the circumstances permit, the military chaplain organises and holds character guidance and instruction / discussion groups in the country of deployment, too.

Where possible, he helps to organise and, in particular, shape the content of leisure activities, if necessary in cooperation with the morale, welfare and recreation officer and the “Catholic Association for the Welfare of Military Personnel” (KAS).

Since Bundeswehr operations abroad attract considerable public interest, the military chaplain prepares himself to portray his pastoral mission and the human situation of “his” soldiers in the media.

During operations abroad, soldiers expect a similar quality of pastoral care as at the home base. In addition to being separated from home and their social environment, there are also mental strains that bring some soldiers closer to the limits of human existence and raise ethical, but also religious issues. The chaplain is a popular conversation partner because he can provide

specific counselling. For some people, a new avenue to prayer and worship opens up.

The fact that chaplains accompany an operation has a positive effect on the soldiers' emotional state. In demanding situations, the chaplain's person and his mission cause even unreligious soldiers and those with no affinity to the church to become conscious of the pastoral dimension.

Military chaplains have direct access to the most senior commander (of the German contingent). They advise him in all religious and church affairs as well as in military chaplaincy matters. They should also be consulted on issues concerning *Innere Führung* and be invited to situation briefings. As advisers to military commanders at all levels of responsibility, a special role falls to military chaplains. With their moral competence and their appreciation of ethical issues, they are able to provide valuable assistance to decision makers, especially in difficult situations. They work closely together with medical service officers and military psychologists and social workers.

An important task can fall to the military chaplain – the organisation of humanitarian help for the suffering civilian population in the theatre of operations. In this context, it is important that military chaplains make contact with their own church's aid agencies and initiatives already identified locally. The responsible military commander should always be consulted or informed in such cases.

The military chaplain in the area of deployment will always endeavour to make contact with the country's religious authorities and mediate between the "parties" (as in the Balkans).

In predominantly Islamic regions, the military chaplain approaches the spiritual leader and offers his support in mediating between the forces and the population.

After the unit's return from deployment abroad, it is not only expedient but absolutely necessary that they come to terms with impressions and experiences. Soldiers should not be left without support in this situation. Hence, post-deployment activities are obligatory on the part of employer in the framework of his overall care responsibility, having exposed the soldiers to the hardships and deprivations associated with separation and life in often desolate surroundings with, in some cases, traumatic experiences. Regular reports by the military chaplains from their time accompanying the units are an help in coming to terms with experiences, but also a preventive measure to avoid mistakes and unnecessary difficulties in the future. The experiences made by the chaplains in the operational theatre should also be communicated to the military community to round off their situational awareness with regard to *Innere Führung* in general, and leadership, care and support in particular.

Depending on the course of the operation, the intensive follow-up spiritual support of the soldiers who have returned home or their families may become necessary. The local military chaplain is responsible for this. In the spirit of cooperative pastoral care, he will where possible be supported by a military chaplain who was present in the unit's area of operation. New pastoral duties may eventually arise from deployments: Weddings, family pastoral care, bereavement counselling, support for those with marriage or relationship difficulties. This post-deployment pastoral care may continue over a prolonged period and may offer the deployed chaplain concerned an exceptional opportunity to do full justice to his pastoral mission. The military chaplains, too, need a period of physical and mental recuperation. The military chaplains concerned are also entitled to therapy where necessary by means of which they themselves are helped to come to terms with their experiences during operations. In every case, the deployed chaplain, together with the Office of the Catholic Bishop for the Armed Forces, carries out a careful evaluation of his experiences.

5. Structures and Organisation

The Catholic Bishop for the Bundeswehr

According to the papal statutes, the *Catholic Bishop for the Bundeswehr* in Germany is always the residing diocesan bishop at the same time who is appointed by the Papal Chair in agreement with the Federal Government.

As the diocesan bishop, the military bishop is not an employee of the state, thereby documenting his independence.

The Vicar General for the Armed Forces

The military bishop appoints a *vicar general*, who helps him to manage his area of jurisdiction. Invariably, the bishop freely appoints vicar generals in accordance with canon law. This ensures that the vicar general discharges his responsibilities as intended by the bishop. The Vicar General for the Armed Forces has all the Church authority that canon law provides for a vicar general. On the advice of the military bishop, the state appoints the vicar general as director of the Office of the Catholic Bishop for the Armed Forces, which is a higher federal authority, and as Vicar General for the Armed Forces. This office is part of the curia of the Catholic Bishop for the Bundeswehr, which the military bishop establishes at the seat of the Federal Government.

The Catholic Chief Chaplains

The Catholic Chief Chaplains (CCC) have a supervisory function. They have, as military chaplains, gained the experience they need for their supervisory activity. They are civil servants appointed for life, so as to also put their experience to use and ensure continuity. The CCC hold staff meetings with the chaplains within their deanery (4 plus 1 abroad). These serve the purpose of reciprocal information and of continuing chaplain training in pastoral as well as organisational

terms. Problems that arise among the rank-and-file as a result of the work and cannot be resolved there subsidiarily are discussed on these occasions. The CCC excel through their circumspection and vision, respond to personnel-related and structural changes, and give their advice and support to “their” chaplains.

A Catholic Chief Chaplain is responsible for each deanery, or so-called supervisory district (medium-tier). The Office of the Catholic Bishop for the Armed Forces exercises direct supervision over the elements and units stationed abroad. Currently there are 91 Catholic Chaplain’s Offices, 56 Diocesan priests and 4 from religious orders as well as 25 pastoral advisers serve with us.

Military Chaplains

The chaplains and the organisations where they are active form the basis of the armed forces chaplaincy. They are appointed by the military bishop, who for his part applies to the relevant federal authority for limited civil servant status to be granted (between 6 and 12 years). The military bishop assigns the chaplains their pastoral mission under canon law. In their pastoral activities, chaplains are subject to canon law only and independent as regards government directives.

The chaplains remain incardinated in their diocese or order during their activity in the chaplaincy and also return there once their term within the chaplaincy comes to an end.

The military bishop informs the locally responsible bishops of the names of those chaplains who are active within the dioceses or who are recalled from there. The same applies to reassignments and advancements of these chaplains.

The chaplains have wide-ranging and varied activities: they organise and hold church services, perform official church functions, provide pastoral support for the military personnel in their care, give moral guidance and instruction, and conduct week-long workshops, days of spiritual exercises / retreat, and family weekends. They take part in special celebrative military occasions (oath and pledge ceremonies, memorial church services, etc.) as well as provide support to servicemen and women.

Part-time Chaplains

Part-time chaplains have also been active since the introduction of the chaplaincy into the Bundeswehr. They basically have the same responsibilities and functions as the full-time chaplains. This form of religious support is provided at those locations where only a few full-time chaplains are active, due to the large distances over which the units are stationed and the small number of denominational servicemen and women, and /or because their place of duty is at out-of-the-way locations.

Pastoral Advisors

Laymen and women who, besides having a university degree in theology, have completed a special pastoral training, practise the newly created profession of “pastoral advisor” in the wake of the post-council development. They combine, in a special way, the “secular service” provided by the layperson with religious support and spiritual welfare functions that fall within the responsibility of the Church.

A contractual agreement between the Federal Minister of Defence and the Catholic Bishop for the Bundeswehr allows also pastoral advisors to be employed in chaplaincy activities. To this end, they are seconded for a period of five to eight years on the part of their diocese, in whose employment they remain. They perform diverse functions under the responsibility of a garrison chaplain, who bears the jurisdictional responsibility for several pastoral districts. They carry out intensive pastoral events, take part in church education work, give moral guidance and instruction on their own responsibility, counsel servicemen and women as well as their families and relatives, train church service acolytes, and help to organise the liturgy. They assume social ministry functions and are born members of the circle of associates of the Catholic garrison chaplains or of the pastoral district council. Locally they, along with the appropriate chaplain (who possibly has his permanent seat at a different garrison), are persons whom soldiers and their families can contact.

Chaplain's Assistants

Chaplain's assistants are employed in the office of every garrison chaplain. They are, as employees at the federal level, assigned to the chaplain in order to assist him in his multifarious responsibilities and activities. Their field of activity is described in the chaplain's assistant guidelines, which the state and Church jointly compile and the state issues; the employment relationship is governed by a collective bargaining agreement. The Church, and not the state, determines the suitability and aptitude for ancillary church activities. The superior of the chaplain's assistant is the garrison chaplain, who may, if necessary, delegate certain powers to a pastoral advisor.

The chaplain's assistant acts on behalf of his chaplain and performs organisational and administrative functions on his own. Many chaplains' assistants have done military service themselves and therefore know the concerns and dispositions of the soldiers. Regular contact with agencies of the Bundeswehr, on the one hand, and with the servicemen and women, on the other, make the chaplain's assistant an indispensable associate. If prepared to do so, the chaplain's assistant may also take part as an official member in the garrison chaplain's circle of associates / pastoral district council.

Beyond carrying out ancillary church activities, chaplain's assistants may also be assigned by the military bishop to take on church responsibilities once they have successfully completed the appropriate "Chaplain's Assistant Training Course".

The Church Branch within the FMoD

Within the Legal Affairs Directorate at the Federal Ministry of Defence (FMoD) there is a branch responsible for the chaplaincy (R I 4) that concerns itself with organisational and legal matters and the finances made available by the state. The Catholic Bishop for the Bundeswehr, in agreement with the FMoD, is responsible for the organisation and substantive issues of the chaplaincy, by comparison. The “Church Branch” also performs functions that are relevant to the partnerlike coexistence of the state and Church.

The Curia of the Catholic Bishop for the Bundeswehr

The Papal Statutes relating to the jurisdiction of the Catholic Bishop for the German Bundeswehr specify that the military bishop shall establish his curia as a management and administrative body at the seat of federal government. The curial offices in Berlin (Am Weidendamm 2) house several institutions:

the Office of the Catholic Bishop for the Armed Forces, a higher federal authority subordinate to the Federal Ministry of Defence. It has charge of the central chaplaincy functions. It serves to provide order, leadership and effective organisation for the chaplaincy under the overall responsibility of the military bishop. Besides state administrative tasks, the Office of the Catholic Bishop for the Armed

Forces performs particularly those functions incumbent on an episcopal vicar general's office / ordinariate. The Office of the Catholic Bishop for the Armed Forces is subject to the same general canon law as the curiae of the local bishops and hence enjoys equal standing alongside them; it is managed by a Vicar General for the Armed Forces and performs the state administrative functions connected with chaplaincy work. Tiers of state and Church responsibility coalesce at this state / Church interface.

the *Catholic Chaplaincy*, an institution under public law, is responsible for the finances for the pastoral and off-duty support of the Catholic servicemen and women and their families: The church taxes paid by the regulars and temporary-career volunteers help to finance chaplaincy activities that state funding does not cover. A large portion is used for intensive events, spiritual exercises, weeklong get-togethers, religious weekend events, pilgrimages, family holidays, etc. This money also serves to support bodies set up for the purposes of joint responsibility and cooperation, as well as schemes and projects of the lay apostolate such as the Community of Catholic Soldiers, the support activities of the Catholic Association for the Care and Welfare of Military Personnel / KAS e.V. , the scriptures service of the Catholic chaplaincy, and "action kaserne" (an initiative of the Catholic youth associations within the Confederation of German Catholic Youth. The ak looks positively on universal conscription as contributing towards the preservation of peace).

A meeting and education centre, a Catholic student community establishment and several church or community centres abroad (within NATO), not to forget the Institute for Theology and Peace in Hamburg, depend on the funds allocated from the church budget. Education establishments run by dioceses and orders receive funding when they hold events for servicemen and women and their families. The Catholic chaplaincy also appropriates funds for charitable activities.

the Archive of the Catholic Bishop for the Bundeswehr (staff office alongside the Press Office, Legal Advisor's Office, and Executive Assistant of the Catholic Bishop for the Bundeswehr) has the function of researching the history of the Catholic chaplaincy, of archiving documents and certificates, and of administering and making accessible the textual, video and audio documents that are worthy of archiving. It is here that the documentation on the history of the chaplaincy is gathered and maintained.

The House of the Catholic Bishop for the Bundeswehr, as a 'service provider', provides the external framework for continuation training events, conferences, staff briefings, and meetings convened by the Office of the Catholic Bishop for the Armed Forces.

Community of Catholic Soldiers

The Community of Catholic Soldiers is a professional Catholic association that offers a spiritual home to Catholics in the Bundeswehr and to servicemen and women in the Catholic Church. A lay organisation of the chaplaincy, it lives from the faith of the Church, as presented by the 2nd Vatican Council and interpreted by the Würzburg Synod, modelling itself on the peace and social doctrine of the Catholic Church.

The members are correspondingly committed to the principles of the Community of Catholic Soldiers, which describe an unmistakable soldierly ethos that, in turn, derives from the Catholic social doctrine and conforms to the image of man projected by the Basic Law. Through their membership in the Community of Catholic Soldiers, Catholic servicemen and women show that they are prepared to shoulder their responsibility in the Church and the world. The Community of Catholic Soldiers lives from three "sources" that, as it were, give their programme a structure: *meeting* with kindred spirits (and discussion with people who criticise the position that Christians can be soldiers), *reflection* on the religious roots, on the question of the meaning of human existence, on the mission of the Church / worldly mission and, lastly, *education* by dealing with religious and security-related matters. It attaches importance to camaraderie-promoting and communitybuilding schemes. Not only dependents and close relatives of the servicemen and women can become members of the Catholic Community of

Soldiers but also civilian employees of the Bundeswehr, reservists and pensioners.

The Catholic Community of Soldiers is organised into districts at the “rank-and-file” level (generally local), into regional conferences at the medium level, and as a federal conference at the top decision-making level.

Special Institutions

Catholic Association for Care and Welfare for Military Personnel
KAS e.V.

This independent and non-profit Christian association, motivated by Christian values, is devoted to serving the leisure time needs of the servicemen and women and civil servants of the Bundeswehr and their families, and to meeting with the civilian population in the regions. Through its range of activities the KAS complements the care and welfare provided by the Bundeswehr as an employer and materially supports the pastoral mission of the churches. The KAS, for example, runs *soldiers' leisure time establishments*, organises “*open service facilities*” and *family support services* as well as *support services in countries of deployment* in what are known as OASES. It works closely together with its sister organisation EAS (Protestant Association for Care and Welfare for Military Personnel) and with European partner organisations that have teamed up in the “European Christian Homes Organisation for the Services” (ECHOS).

For this purpose, associations maintain *soldiers' leisure time establishments* as leisure and meeting centres for servicemen and women of all ranks. These are located outside the barracks and serve as “community centres” for attractive leisure-time and cultural activities and meetings. The activities on offer range from social get-togethers to cultural events.

The establishments are run by permanently employed facility managers. The “*open service facilities*“ are located within the barracks in rooms generally made available to the associations.

They are geared to the wishes and requirements of the servicemen and women and also to the local conditions. The “*support services in countries of deployment*” are an offshoot of the “open service facilities”. Both sponsoring associations are present with mobile facilities in the area of deployment and offer servicemen and women of all ranks, nations and denominations a practical possibility to organise leisure time activities during off-duty hours. Both associations additionally offer seminars to which relatives and dependents of soldiers deployed abroad are invited after deployments. The support personnel are also kept informed and undergo continuation training at regular intervals.

The close cooperation between the forces, the armed forces chaplaincy and the KAS is laid down in directives. Dedicated budget funds are available to each soldiers' leisure time

establishment for leisure and cultural activities.

This work is financed by the Catholic Chaplaincy, from subsidies provided by the Federal Ministry of Defence, and from funds generated by soldiers' leisure time establishments and OASES themselves. The association is headquartered in Bonn. The KAS and EAS work closely together as part of the *Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Soldatenbetreuung e.V.* (or BAS: Federal Association for Care and Welfare for Military Personnel).

Institute for Theology and Peace

The Institute for Theology and Peace in Hamburg is an academic institution of the Catholic Church under the sponsorship of the Catholic Chaplaincy. Its research and documentation activities focus on the political and social discussion of peace issues from a theological-ethical perspective.

The Institute for Theology and Peace acquires theological literature and literature on the topic of peace important for theological research, cooperates with national and international research and documentation centres, and promotes research in two areas: it addresses current problem areas of peace and security policy on the one hand, and consolidates the tradition of peace ethics on the other hand.

Central Institute for Marriage and Family in Society

The Central Institute for Marriage and Family in Society is an interdisciplinary research establishment of the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt. Its function is to research the general social conditions in which children and parents live together. It works together with partners in the Church, trade and industry, and politics. Its first main topics include: social competence - family and gainful employment - communal family policy - family and health promotion.

The Office of the Catholic Bishop for the Armed Forces cooperates with the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt and draws on the academic expertise of the Central Institute for Marriage and Family in Society, which did research a project on the topic of “Job-related phases of separation in partnership and family” and “guidelines for the spiritual health of chaplains serving in deployments”