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## Training of Military Chaplains for the Armed Forces of Ukraine in Conditions of the Invasion by the Russian Federation

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# TRAINING OF MILITARY CHAPLAINS FOR THE ARMED FORCES OF UKRAINE IN CONDITIONS OF THE INVASION BY THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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## Annotation

The article analyzes the comprehensive training of military chaplains for the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The legislative basis of chaplaincy, and the methods and state of its implementation are characterized. The problems that can befall a military chaplain are identified, in particular the contradiction in the combination of military service and pacifism. The development of chaplaincy in Ukraine is outlined. Active assistance to the chaplaincy began only after the Orange Revolution (2004-2005). The following year, a legislative act was made through the directive “On streamlining issues of meeting the religious needs of the military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.” Later, a sector for work with religious organizations was created under the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine. The relationship between the gradual democratization of society and the development of chaplaincy is examined. In 2021, the Law of Ukraine “On the military chaplaincy service” was adopted, which became the basis for this study. After Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, and the outbreak of war in the East of Ukraine, the institute of chaplaincy began to develop more systematically and dynamically, which is not typical of the previous period. The accumulation of military force by the Russian Federation on the borders of Ukraine, and the real danger of a military invasion, became catalysts for accelerating the quality of registration and functioning of the chaplaincy. The processes of training military chaplains were intensified by volunteer clergy, who joined the Ukrainian Armed Forces since 2014. As a result of the study, the current algorithm for training chaplains for service in the Ukrainian army was determined. The results are presented in a table. It has been established that, in the implementation of this algorithm, several urgent inaccuracies and problems have been identified. Conflicts and misunderstandings mainly arise because of the multi-confessionalism of Ukrainian Christianity, as in those between representatives of the Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox churches. Often, soldiers do not know the difference between these institutions, and, sometimes, battalion commanders do not allow Orthodox or other chaplains to serve because of their own religious beliefs.

**Keywords:** chaplaincy, training of military chaplains, military chaplaincy service, Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU), military tension in Ukraine.

### **Formulation of the Problem**

With the outbreak of hostilities on the territory of Ukraine, and the comprehensive preparation of the Ukrainian army for a war with Russia, the question of the role of military chaplaincy among the Armed Forces of Ukraine was raised. Soldiers also need spiritual support, prompting the Ukrainian government to approve a law that should regulate military chaplaincy at the legal level. Therefore, considering the approved law and the actuality of its implementation in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, we propose to analyze the positive and negative aspects of the work of a military chaplain in the conditions of Russian aggression on the territory of Ukraine.

### **Analysis of Recent Publications**

The study of modern procedures for the training of military chaplains for Ukrainian servicemen reveals a fundamental conflict. On the one hand, military craft is designed to effectively ensure the defense capability of the state. On the other hand, pacifism, or at least the desire for peace, and military service simultaneously intersect in the service of military chaplains. For the most part, in recent studies, scholars focus on different problematic angles in this area. For example, P. Tkachuk notes that

for the Ukrainian state, the development of this direction in a wide range of religious denominations begins in 1996, its active implementation starts after the Orange Revolution (2004-2005) and continues in 2006 in the form of a directive “On streamlining the issues of meeting the religious needs of the military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine” and in 2008, when a sector for working with religious organizations was formed under the Ministry of Defense.<sup>1</sup>

The given dynamics of development testify to the connection between the introduction of military chaplaincy and the democratization of society. A peculiar completion of legislative developments in the direction of regulating the military chaplaincy is the adoption of the Law

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<sup>1</sup> Pavlo Oleksandrovich Tkachuk, “Institute of Military Chaplaincy in Ukraine: Formation, Development in Modern Conditions Hybrid War of the Russian Federation,” in *Modern Historical Science: Changes and Development Synergy of Research Studies* (Riga, Latvia: Baltija Publishing, 2021), 241–61, <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-087-2-11>.

of Ukraine on the Military Chaplaincy Service in 2021,<sup>2</sup> the main aspects of which are considered in this study. Voroshchuk, in studying the formation of the institution of the military clergy in Ukraine, puts forward recommendations on the use of foreign experience in the military chaplaincy service. The main aspects considered by the author are:

- a) formation of the Military Chaplaincy Service as an independent structural unit under the Armed Forces of Ukraine;
- b) the assignment of a military chaplain to the position of officer, namely the spiritual staff;
- c) implementation of the distribution of quotas based on the religious affiliation of the personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.<sup>3</sup>

Mostly these areas are implemented in the current Law of 2021. Scholars Y. Burakov and A. Tomchuk, studying the revival of chaplaincy in the modern Ukrainian army, note that “before the start of the Russian-Ukrainian war (2014), the formation of military chaplaincy had an unsystematic and sporadic character.” Among the key factors in the development of this direction, the authors see the initiative of hundreds of “volunteer priests who, together with well-wishers, went to the front in order to protect the Fatherland.” Scholars note the important role that the chaplaincy in military service has, “a serious spiritual basis for strengthening the moral and psychological state of the troops.”<sup>4</sup> Consequently, social democratization and long-term military tension are the main factors in the development and establishment of the institution of military chaplaincy in Ukraine. Foreign experience in studying the problems of military chaplaincy from different positions illuminates certain considerations. For example, J. Grimell, in a study of the current state of military chaplaincy in Sweden over the last century, notes that the close relationship of chaplains with the regular army continues even after the Church of Sweden was officially separated from the state in 2000. According to him, “an

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<sup>2</sup> Інформаційне управління Апарату Верховної Ради України, “Прийнято Закон ‘Про Службу військового капеланства,’” Офіційний портал Верховної Ради України, November 30, 2021, <https://www.rada.gov.ua/news/Novyny/217100.html>. [Information Department of the Office of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, “Law on the Military Chaplaincy Service Adopted,” Official Portal of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, November 30, 2021,]

<sup>3</sup> О. Ворошчук, “Періодизація становлення інституту військового духовенства (капеланської служби) Збройних Сил України у 1991 – 2017 роках та рекомендації щодо використання досвіду задоволення релігійних потреб військовослужбовців Збройних Сил України у сучасних умовах,” *The Scientific Heritage*, no. 79 (2021): 64–70. [O. Voroshchuk, “Periodization of the formation of the institute of military clergy (chaplaincy) of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 1991-2017 and recommendations for using the experience of meeting the religious needs of servicemen of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in modern conditions,” *The Scientific Heritage*, no. 79 (2021): 64–70.]

<sup>4</sup> Ю. Бураков and О. Томчук, “Відродження капеланства в сучасному українському війську,” *Військово-науковий вісник*, no. 36 (2021): 27–44. [Yu. Burakov and O. Tomchuk, “Revival of Chaplaincy in the Modern Ukrainian Army,” *Military-Scientific Bulletin*, no. 36 (2021): 27–44.]

increase in cultural and ethnic diversity, religious incarnation in military culture are factors of theological tension and the development of personal identity among chaplains.”<sup>5</sup>. C. Schuhmann and J. Wojtkowiak, in a study of humanistic chaplaincy in Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland, Denmark, and North-West Europe in general, note that chaplaincy is often “strongly integrated into state institutions.” The authors note that the “humanist” in humanistic chaplaincy involves the conception of humanistic chaplaincy as a vocation, care for all neighbors, and faith in personal potential,<sup>6</sup> as part of the struggle to preserve humanistic values.

In general, the main concerns for scholars in studying the problems of training military chaplains in Ukraine are the periodization of its development, military chaplaincy as an institution, the use of foreign experience in its development, and its integration into Ukrainian realities. However, Ukrainian, and foreign scholars have not sufficiently considered the peculiarities of training military chaplains for Ukrainian servicemen in the context of military escalation on the borders with Russia. That is why **the purpose of this study** is to determine the current algorithm for training chaplains for service in the Ukrainian army.

### **The Main Results of the Study**

To determine the specifics of the training of military chaplains, one should refer to the legislative framework that regulates the course of processes that, in a legally established vector, unfold in the direction of establishing a regular service of military chaplains at state military institutions. It should be noted that the actual accumulation of Russian troops on the border with Ukraine at the end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 is not a determining factor for the development of the institution of military chaplaincy in Ukraine. However, the potential threats of military exacerbations actualize the revision of approaches to military chaplain service. When considering the studies of past years, Ukrainian scholars emphasize that volunteer clergy, who, with the start of Russian aggression against Ukraine back in 2014 (annexation of Crimea and the territories of Donbass), worked on a volunteer basis to help intensify the process of training of military chaplains. However, with looming threats of a military invasion, the preparation for military service of chaplains must meet the religious needs of military personnel who, in the context of the current Russian-Ukrainian hybrid war, in addition to physiological,

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<sup>5</sup> Jan Grimell, “Military Chaplaincy in Sweden: A Contemporary Perspective,” *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* 28, no. 1 (2022): 81–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854726.2020.1745490>.

<sup>6</sup> C. Schuhmann and J. Wojtkowiak, “Humanist Chaplaincy according to Northwestern European Humanist Chaplains: Towards a Framework for Understanding Chaplaincy in Secular Societies. *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy*,” *Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy* 27, no. 4 (2021): 207–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08854726.2020.1723190>.

also need psychological and spiritual support. Service in military formations addresses several obligations and personal responsibilities; these categories are outlined in the latest current “Law of Ukraine on the Military Chaplaincy Service” of 2021 (Table 1).

**Table 1. Features of the obligations and responsibilities of chaplains in accordance with the Law of Ukraine on the Military Chaplaincy Service<sup>7</sup>**

№	Section / article / provisions	Obligation / responsibility
<b>Section I. General Provisions</b>		
1.	” Military chaplain—a person who, in accordance with the procedure established by this Law, has received a mandate for the right to carry out military chaplain activities, has concluded a contract for military service in the positions of officers (exclusively in the positions of the Military Chaplaincy Service).”	Responsibility of the chaplain through the use of the mandate as a credit of trust on the part of the state and soldiers.
2.	“Spiritual centers—buildings, premises, etc. belonging to military property on the territory of military units (institutions, organizations), designed to meet the spiritual and religious needs of military personnel and their families, determined by written orders of commanders (chiefs) of military units.”	Buildings set aside for the implementation of spiritual purposes are not church property but are identified as part of military property. Military chaplains service first of all the military.
3.	“Spiritual and religious needs—realized special need for ideal intra-motivational motives of activity, personal development, and social interaction, manifested in religious views, ideas, feelings, practices, and ritual actions».	The definition of the essence of spiritual and religious needs is determined exclusively by the voluntary use of the services of chaplains by military personnel.
4.	“Advising the military command on religious issues —the direction of the military chaplaincy to provide the command with professional information on the	Spiritual and religious factors are some of the important elements in maintaining the

<sup>7</sup> “Закон України Про Службу військового капеланства. Верховна Рада України,” Верховна Рада України. Законодавство України, November 30, 2021, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1915-20#Text>. [“Law of Ukraine On the Military Chaplaincy Service. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine,” The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Legislation of Ukraine, November 30, 2021].

	influence of spiritual and religious factors on the performance of certain tasks.”	morale of military personnel, the responsibility of which rests with the chaplain.
5.	“A representative of a religious organization is a clergyman determined by the head of the religious organization who cooperates with the Armed Forces of Ukraine.”	Religious organizations put forward nominations. The chaplain voluntarily enters into a contract with the military.
Section II. Organization of activities and structure of the military chaplaincy service		
6.	“The military chaplaincy service is being created as a separate structure within the Armed Forces of Ukraine.”	
7.	“The maximum number of the Military Chaplaincy Service for the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine, other formations formed in accordance with the laws of Ukraine and the State Border Service of Ukraine cannot be less than 0.15 percent of the maximum number in accordance with the Armed Forces of Ukraine.”	
Section III. Obtaining the right to carry out chaplaincy activities. Forms of implementation of chaplaincy activities		
8.	“A military chaplain may be a citizen of Ukraine who is a clergyman of a religious organization registered in Ukraine and who has received a mandate from the leading center (department) of the relevant religious organization for the right to carry out military chaplain activities.”	
9.	“A mandatory requirement for the position of a military chaplain is the presence of a higher theological education.”	
10.	“Military chaplains of the Armed Forces of Ukraine are trained under a special training program for military chaplains at a special training center.”	

**Table 2. Basic principles of the military chaplaincy service according to the Law of Ukraine on the Military Chaplaincy Service<sup>8</sup>**

<b>№</b>	<b>Fragment of the provision / basic principles</b>
1.	“Observance of the constitutional right of servicemen and workers to freedom of worldview and religion.”

<sup>8</sup> “Закон України Про Службу військового капеланства. Верховна Рада України,” Верховна Рада України. Законодавство України, November 30, 2021, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1915-20#Text>. [“Law of Ukraine On the Military Chaplaincy Service. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine,” The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Legislation of Ukraine, November 30, 2021]

2.	“Equality of representatives of all religions who serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine, other military units formed in accordance with the laws of Ukraine and the State Border Service of Ukraine, in meeting their religious needs.”
3.	“Equality of military chaplains regardless of their affiliation with a religious organization.”
4.	“Tolerant attitude of military chaplains towards representatives of other religious organizations.”
5.	“Inadmissibility of imposing religious or other beliefs/”
6.	“Voluntary participation of military personnel, workers and members of their families in worship services, religious rites.”
7.	“«Equality of military chaplains of different faiths in the use <b>of spiritual centers.</b> ”
8.	“Priority of combat (special) training in planning and carrying out measures to meet the spiritual and religious needs of military personnel.”

**Table 3. Actual duties and rights of military chaplains according to the Law of Ukraine on the Military Chaplaincy Service<sup>9</sup>**

<b>№</b>	<b>Fragment of the position / actual duties of the chaplain</b>
1.	“The military chaplain in peacetime and wartime is responsible for ensuring that the spiritual and religious needs of the personnel are met.”
2.	“Ensure the organization and conduct of prayers, worship, blessings, solemn and memorial events and other religious rites and cults related to the satisfaction of the spiritual and religious needs of military personnel, workers and members of their families.”
3.	“To promote the development of personal and collective moral qualities of personnel.”
4.	“Promoting a healthy lifestyle among military personnel, workers and their families.”
5.	“To acquaint military personnel, workers and members of their families with the basics of religious teachings.”
6.	“To educate military personnel, workers. and members of their family’s tolerant attitude towards people with a different worldview and religious beliefs.”
7.	“Establish interaction with representatives of religious organizations operating in the places of deployment of military units in the interests of meeting the spiritual and religious needs of military personnel, workers and their families.”

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



8.	“Participate in the rehabilitation of personnel in need of psychological assistance.”
9.	“Advise command on religious matters.”
10.	“Issuance of weapons and ammunition to military chaplains is prohibited.”
11.	“Military chaplains cannot be involved in duties, outfits, conducting official investigations and other actions incompatible with their official duties and the status of a clergyman.”

From which denominations are the chaplains in the Ukrainian army? As of October 2020, there were 90 chaplains from the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, and Evangelical Christian churches who served in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. There were 59 registered chaplains from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church—Moscow Patriarchate. The Ukrainian Evangelical Church had 12 chaplains; the exact number of Greek Catholic chaplains was unknown. Another 40 military chaplains have been appointed by the leadership of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Therefore, according to the staff list, 130 chaplains work in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.<sup>10</sup>

It should be noted that all volunteer chaplains from Ukrainian churches work on the provision of the church; only 40 officially appointed military chaplains work under contract and receive a salary from the state. Commenting on this situation, Pastor Gennady Valuev (Evangelical Church of Ukraine) noted the following in an interview with Radio Liberty: “The chaplains are on the provision of the church, since the church is separated from the state. But why? [Pastor Gennady asked the question.] Our church does not have such financial resources. In addition, the chaplains are working to improve the moral and psychological state of the personnel of the Ukrainian army, and this is a state matter.” Moreover, Pastor Evgeny adds: “Not all commanders who are engaged in moral and psychological support like this.”<sup>11</sup> Since officially established military chaplains see volunteer chaplains as competitors, some believe that the army does not need chaplains from the churches at all. Therefore, chaplains who voluntarily decide to go to serve in the army cannot count on a pension after the end of their service.

<sup>10</sup> Олександр Беккер, “102 капелани офіційно працюють у Збройних Силах України,” Армія Inform, December 3, 2021, <https://armyinform.com.ua/2021/12/03/102-kapelany-oficijno-praczuuyut-u-zbrojnyh-sylah-ukrayiny/>. [Oleksandr Becker, “102 Chaplains Officially Work in the Armed Forces of Ukraine,” Army Inform, December 3, 2021,]

<sup>11</sup> Ірина Назарчук, “Капелани в українській армії: чому досі немає закону про капеланську службу?,” Радіо Свобода, May 2, 2021, <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/kapelany-viina-ukraina-zakon/31231055.html>. [Iryna Nazarchuk, “Chaplains in the Ukrainian Army: Why is there still no law on chaplaincy?,” Radio Svoboda, May 2, 2021,]

Another problem that arises in military chaplaincy is the fact that a given chaplain's faith cannot always satisfy the needs of all the military. If the unit has only one Greek Catholic chaplain, then Orthodox soldiers, and even more so Protestants, will not participate in confession or communion with him. In this matter, a discussion often arises between the soldiers themselves, who have spiritual needs but cannot satisfy them because of the difference in faith between the chaplain and individual soldiers. However, despite a number of problems that the Armed Forces of Ukraine have with military chaplaincy, we offer a visual demonstration of the activities of representatives from different faiths.



**Figure 1. The chaplain of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church visited the soldiers in the East of Ukraine**

From January 27 to 30, 2022, the military chaplain of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Father Ruslan Ostafiy, visited military units in the zone of the Operation of the United Forces of Ukraine. Father Ruslan Ostafiy blessed the soldiers with holy water, presented the Holy Scriptures to the military, and caroled with a musical group. “They sang author's, patriotic and folk songs.”<sup>12</sup> This visit raised the morale of the fighters and gave them the opportunity to read the Holy Scriptures in person.

<sup>12</sup> Руслан Остафій, “Капелан УГКЦ з душпастирським візитом відвідав воїнів на сході України,” Департамент військового капеланства Патріаршої курії Української Греко-Католицької Церкви, January 31, 2022, <https://www.kapelanstvo.ugcc.ua/kapelan-uhkts-z-dushpastyrskym-vizytom-vidvidav-voiviv-na-skhodi-ukrainy/>. [Ruslan Ostafiy, “Chaplain of the UGCC paid a pastoral visit to soldiers in eastern Ukraine,” Department of Military Chaplaincy of the Patriarchal Curia of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, January 31, 2022]



**Figure 2. Meeting of Metropolitan John (Chairman of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kiev Patriarchate) with representatives of the first Ukrainian battalion**

After the meeting of representatives of the first Ukrainian battalion with the head of the renewed Synodal Department of the Military Clergy (SUVD), Metropolitan John from the UOC-KP, a misunderstanding arose. When representatives of the battalion wrote about a cooperation agreement, Vladyka John cut it short, publicly declaring that there had been no such agreements and that he was not ready for new meetings. Also, cases of appealing against the actions of chaplains or proselytism were recorded, as not every chaplain has access to the fighters of the units of their confessional affiliation. For example, there is a brigade that includes pastors. When the priest (the Orthodox Kyiv Patriarchate) turned to the brigade commander about holding a service, he was refused. The brigade commander himself was not Orthodox, but the soldiers he led were however, the commander did not allow the priest to communicate with the soldiers. When distributing chaplains, one should focus on the believers of one or another garrison according to a simple principle. If there are 51% representatives of a certain denomination, a chaplain of that denomination should be provided. It is unclear what to do when the soldiers do not distinguish between the Kyiv and Moscow Patriarchates.

## Conclusions

So, the current algorithm for training chaplains for service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is presented in the Law of Ukraine “On the Military Chaplaincy Service,” adopted on November 30, 2021. The first chapter regulates the responsibility of the chaplain using the mandate--as a credit of trust on the part of the state and soldiers. It is emphasized that the buildings set aside for spiritual purposes are not church property but are identified as part of military property. The military chaplain service is determined primarily by the military, and

the definition of the essence of spiritual and religious needs is determined exclusively by the voluntary use of the services of chaplains by military personnel. Spiritual and religious factors are recognized as some of the most important elements in maintaining the morale of military personnel. Proposals for candidates are put forward by religious organizations, and chaplains voluntarily enter into contracts with the military. The military chaplaincy service is formed through a separate structure within the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and its maximum number should be at least 0.15%. A chaplain must be a citizen of Ukraine who is a clergyman of an officially registered religious organization, and who has received from the latter a mandate for the right to perform chaplain service. The chaplain also must have a higher theological education. Public democratization and long-term military tension have become the main factors in the development and establishment of the institution of military chaplaincy in Ukraine; however, at the implementation stage, there are many points that require clarification and resolution.

**Translated from Ukrainian into English by Valentyna Kuryliak and Mariiia Ovchar**

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