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US-Israel war on Iran

US troops were told war on Iran was 'all part of God's divine plan', watchdog alleges

Religious freedom group says 200 troops sent complaints of superiors using extremist Christian rhetoric to justify war

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Plumes of smoke from two simultaneous strikes rise over Tehran, Iran, on 2 March 2026. Photograph: Mohsen Ganji/AP

US military commanders have been invoking extremist Christian rhetoric about biblical "end times" to justify involvement in the Iran war to troops, according to complaints made to a watchdog group.

The Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) says it has received more than 200 complaints from service members across all branches of the armed forces, including the marines, air force and space force.

One complainant, identified as a noncommissioned officer (NCO) in a unit that could be deployed "at any moment to join" operations against Iran, told MRFF in a complaint viewed by the Guardian that their commander had "urged us to tell our troops that this was 'all part of God's divine plan' and he specifically referenced numerous citations out of the Book of Revelation referring to Armageddon and the imminent return of Jesus Christ".



"He said that 'President Trump has been anointed by Jesus to light the signal fire in Iran to cause Armageddon and mark his return to Earth'", the NCO added.

The NCO's complaint was filed on behalf of 15 troops, including 11 Christians, one Muslim person and one Jewish person. The complaint was first shared by MRFF with Jonathan Larsen, an independent journalist.

"Anytime Israel or the US is involved in the Middle East, we get this stuff about Christian nationalists who've taken over our government, and certainly our US military," Mikey Weinstein, MRFF's president, who is an air force veteran, told the Guardian.

"Military members are not really able to stand up for themselves, because your military superior is not your shift manager at Starbucks," he added.

In a statement, Weinstein suggested the reports indicate an increase in Christian extremism in the military, noting that the complainants "report the unrestricted euphoria of their commanders" who perceive a "biblically-sanctioned" war that is clearly the undeniable sign of the expeditious approach of the fundamentalist Christian 'End Times'."

He said that the complaints show a clear violation of the separation of church and state.

Pete Hegseth, the US defense secretary, is known for his embrace of Christian nationalism. He previously endorsed the doctrine of "sphere sovereignty", a worldview derived from the extremist beliefs of Christian reconstructionism (CR). The philosophy calls for capital punishment for homosexuality and strictly patriarchal families and churches.

In August 2025, Hegseth reposted a CNN segment on X focusing on pastor Doug Wilson, a Christian nationalist who co-founded the Idaho-based Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC). In the segment, Wilson says he does not believe women should hold leadership positions in the military or be able to fill high-profile combat roles.

"I would like to see this nation being a Christian nation, and I would like this world to be a Christian world," Wilson said.

In response to a request for comment on the complaints, the Pentagon did not reply, instead sharing public clips of Hegseth discussing the operation in Iran.

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