

THE DAILY CALLER

Congressmen, military chaplains denounce same-sex ceremony on La. base

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By Caroline May

Two Republican congressmen and a military chaplains' organization are crying foul after the U.S. Army confirmed that an Army chaplain officiated a same-sex wedding ceremony for two female soldiers last month in the base chapel at Fort Polk, La.

"The liberal social experiment with our military continues. A same-sex marriage-like ceremony should not have occurred at Fort Polk, especially since the people of Louisiana have made it abundantly clear that our state does not recognize same-sex marriages or civil unions," Louisiana Republican Rep. John Fleming said on Wednesday.

"My frustration is compounded by the fact that a social agenda, which has nothing to do with military readiness or our national defense, is being imposed on our men and women in uniform."

Fort Polk is in Fleming's district. The congressman speculated that after the replacement of the "don't ask, don't tell" policy regarding gays and lesbians serving in the military, incidents like this are "inevitable."

Like Fleming, the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty — which discovered the incident — noted that the ceremony highlighted a need for legislation making clear that military bases are not the place for same-sex marriage or marriage-like ceremonies.

"The Department of Defense is bowing to a political agenda to turn our nation's military into a social experiment," said Ron Crews, executive director for the Chaplain Alliance for Religious Liberty. "It is time for the American public to say, 'Enough!'"

Missouri Republican Rep. Todd Akin, who has pushed to protect traditional marriage on military bases, also denounced the ceremony.

"It is very concerning that a same-sex ceremony would occur on a military base in a state where the definition of marriage has been clearly defined as between one man and one woman," Akin said. "This action is clearly in contravention of state law, and also violates the Defense Department policies issued last fall. This appears to be a case where political agenda has trumped the rule of law, which is absolutely unacceptable."

Akin encouraged the Senate to follow in the House's footsteps and pass legislation preventing military facilities from being used for same-sex wedding ceremonies.

With the repeal of "don't ask, don't tell," the Department of Defense announced that military chaplains would be allowed to perform same-sex marriages on military bases as long as they were not held in violation of local law.

The Associated Press reported Wednesday evening that a Fort Polk spokesman said the event was a commitment ceremony and the base chapel understood it as such.