



Call to Service for Hindu Chaplains: U.S. Armed Forces Chaplain Corps

This flier serves as a call to service for those interested in earning a commission as an officer in the U.S. Armed Forces as a Hindu Chaplain, and serve military families in a humanitarian role.

“The rising number of South Asians in the U.S. Armed Forces has brought about a critical need to recruit Hindu Chaplains, in order to meet the religious needs of the thousands of Hindus serving with pride in our Nation’s Armed Forces.”

**- Lt Col Ravi Chaudhary
U.S. Air Force**



Background

Department of Defense (DoD) Chaplains fulfill a crucial role for military service members. Military chaplains directly support the free exercise of religion for all members of the armed services and their families. They also provide spiritual care, counseling and ethical leadership to DoD members as they meet the challenges of military deployment and service.

DoD chaplains come from a variety of religious backgrounds such as Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or any of hundreds of religious organizations with endorsers recognized by the Armed Forces Chaplains Board. Chaplains and their staff form a religious support team for military members and their families. They serve as non-combatants, with a charter to improve quality of life for military members serving all over the world. In 2008, Air Force chaplains alone performed more than 147,000 counseling sessions, over 50,000 worship observances, and conducted more than 28,000 religious rites for Airmen and their families.

General Requirements

DoD has established Chinmaya Mission West as an endorsing agency for Hindu Chaplains entering the U.S. Military. To become an Active Duty, Guard or



Reserve Chaplain, Hindu Faith Leaders must be U.S. citizens, less than 42 years of age possess a Bachelors degree consisting of at least 120 semester hours, or 180 quarter hours from an accredited educational institution and a post-baccalaureate graduate degree in the field of theology or related studies consisting of no less than 72 semester hours, or 108 quarter hours from an accredited educational institution. They should have 2 years of Hindu faith leadership experience, and be prepared to meet global mission requirements for the Department of Defense. The prospective chaplain should have a strong knowledge of Hindu principles/basic truths, and also able to work in a pluralistic environment to support troops of all faith groups. Chaplains must also maintain military physical requirements and be ready to accept assignments in the United States and overseas locations. Those who meet entry requirements and are selected to serve will be commissioned in the rank of First Lieutenant and then have opportunities to advance in rank while serving their respective military service: Army, Navy, or Air Force.

Another program within the Chaplaincies of the U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force is the Chaplain Candidate Program. The Chaplain Candidate Program exists within the Military Departments for the purpose of familiarizing graduate students of religion with religious support activities in the military environment. Participants in this program serve as commissioned officers in the Reserve components of the Military Departments and receive opportunities for military training while in graduate school. Chaplain Candidates are not authorized to serve as, or in place of, chaplains. To become an officer in the Chaplain Candidate Programs, Hindu Faith Leaders must be U.S. citizens, no older than 40 years of age and possess a Bachelors degree consisting of no less than 120 semester hours or 180 quarter hours. Be a matriculated student in graduate-level degree-granting religious studies programs of qualifying educational institutions. Normally college seniors can apply before completion of their undergraduate program once they are accepted at the qualifying graduate-degree institution. Upon successful completion of their academic and religious training, participants in the Chaplain Candidate Programs may seek appointment as Chaplains. Those who meet entry requirements will be commissioned in the rank of Second Lieutenant, while serving their respective military service: Army, Navy, or Air Force.

Contact Information and Resources

If you are interested in becoming a military Chaplain, visit the following web sites for frequently asked questions and recruitment of Hindu Chaplains. Contact the POCs listed below for detailed information.

Chinmaya Mission Reps:

Ramachandra K. Bhat (rambhat@aol.com)

Chaturbhuj N. Gidwani (cngidwani@yahoo.com)



Hitul Thaker (Hitul_4@Yahoo.com)

Chinmaya Mission West Website:
<http://www.chinmayamission.org/>

Go to following Service Representatives web sites and press Locate Recruiter and enter your zip code:

Army: <http://www.chaplain.goarmy.com>

Navy: <http://chaplaincare.navy.mil/BecomeANavyChaplain.htm>

Air Force: <http://www.usafhc.af.mil>