

**COMMANDER DIRECTED
REPORT OF INVESTIGATION
PREPARED BY**

IO

CONCERNING

**CONTEMPTUOUS WORDS AGAINST THE PRESIDENT &
CONDUCT UNBECOMING OF AN OFFICER**

21 MARCH 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tab A: Appointment and Tasking Letters

Tab B: Authority and Scope

Tab C: Background

Tab D: Findings, Analysis, and Conclusions

Tab E: Recommendations

Tab F: Testimonies

Index of Witnesses

F-1 Captain

F-2 Captain

F-3 Senior Airman

F-4 Technical Sergeant

F-5 Airman First Class

F-6 Senior Airman

F-7 Captain

F-8 Major

F-9 Staff Sergeant

F-10 Captain Forrest Doss

F-11 Senior Airman

Tab G: Evidence

G-1 Crew List for prior three months and email correspondence

G-2 June 2024 Mission – Applicable Paperwork

G-3 January 2025 Mission – Applicable Paperwork

G-4 Original Complaint from Captain

G-5 Original Complaint from Captain

G-6 Original Complaint from Technical Sergeant

Tab H: Technical Review (Not Applicable)

Tab I: Legal Review

Tab J: Appointing Authority Approval and Actions

Tab K: Administrative Documents (None)

Tab B: Authority and Scope Commanders have the inherent authority to conduct a CDI to investigate matters under their command, unless preempted by higher authority. Pursuant to this authority, Lieutenant Colonel _____ appointed Major _____ on 13 February 2025 to conduct the Investigation into behaviors of Captain _____ met with the legal advisor on 21 February 2025, prior to beginning his investigation. The CDI was conducted from 24 February 2025 until 21 March 2025. On 21 March 2025, the draft ROI was sent to legal for review.

Allegations:

Allegation 1: In that Capt Forrest Doss, did, at or near various locations in _____ and the _____ between on or about 8 January 2025 and on or about 11 January 2025, use orally and publicly the following contemptuous words against the President, to wit: "...President Biden was meeting with the Pope to falsely portray himself as a religious leader, that President Biden was dishonest, manipulative, and lacking any religious morals, President Biden was a fake Christian, and that he was a feeble old man who shouldn't be president..." or words to that effect, in violation of Article 88, UCMJ.

Allegation 2: In that Capt Forrest Doss did, at or near various locations in North America, Europe, and the Middle East, between on or about 24 June 2024 and on or about 30 June 2024 and between on or about 8 January 2025 and on or about 11 January 2025, communicate inappropriate and unprofessional comments regarding religion, women, or sexual orientation towards other _____ crewmembers, and that said conduct was unbecoming of an officer, in violation of Article 133, UCMJ.

Tab C: Background All members named in this case are assigned to the [redacted] Airlift Squadron [redacted], [redacted]. All members named in this case were also assigned to at least one flight crew with the subject between 24 June 2024 and 11 January 2025.

This case involved three primary complainants: Captain [redacted] (Tab F-1), Captain [redacted] (Tab F-2), and Technical Sergeant [redacted] (Tab F-4). The allegations involved one subject, Captain Forrest Doss. Captain Doss completed the Instructor Aircraft Commander Course at Altus AFB, Oklahoma on or around 31 October 2024 (Tab G-1). He was a Mission Pilot in for a mission in June 2024 (Tab G-2) and an Instructor Pilot for a mission in January 2025 (Tab G-3). The investigation was initiated after the complainants submitted written complaints about Captain Doss to the Squadron Commander between 11 and 15 January 2025. (Tabs G-4, G-5, G-6).

In both June 2024 and January 2025, Captain Doss flew on two different missions to locations in [redacted] (Tabs G-2, G-3). During these missions, Captain Doss engaged in conversation with his crew about religion and politics, and allegedly made comments towards the sitting president (Tabs F-1, F-2), the LGBT community (Tabs F-4, F-7, F-8, F-12), overweight people (Tabs F-1, G-4), and non-Christians (Tabs F-1, F-4). Captain Doss denies speaking ill of any of the aforementioned groups (Tab F-10). These lines of conversation were deemed inappropriate by some crewmembers (Tabs F-1, F-2, F-4, F-8, F-12), but others were not offended (Tabs F-3, F-5, F-6, F-7, F-9).

After a mission flown on 10 January 2025 from [redacted] to [redacted] Captain Doss was removed from the crew by authority of the Aircraft Commander, Captain [redacted] to prevent further potential Crew Resource Management (CRM) breakdowns (Tabs F-2, G-3). The decision to remove Captain Doss from the crew was known and supported by the Operations Officer, the Senior Enlisted Leader, and the Squadron Commander, who happened to be in Ramstein at the same time the crew was there (Tab F-2).

Captain Doss is a devout Catholic (F-10, F-11). All witnesses testify that they know Captain Doss is Catholic, and Captain Doss acknowledges his faith is well known in the squadron (Tabs F-1 through F-11). The testimonies conflicted as to whether conversations of this nature are a trend with Captain Doss (Tabs F-3, F-5, F-6, F-7, F-8). Captain Doss does regularly field questions about his faith and the teachings of the Catholic Church (F-10). There exists a list of crewmembers who have requested to not fly with him. The list of crewmembers was not available for use during this investigation due to the list keeper's fear that releasing the list would break the trust between him and the crew force.

Tab D: Findings, Analysis, and Conclusions.

Allegation 1. In that Capt Forrest Doss, did, at or near various locations in North America, Europe, and the Middle East, between on or about 8 January 2025 and on or about 11 January 2025, use orally and publicly the following contemptuous words against the President, to wit: "...President Biden was meeting with the Pope to falsely portray himself as a religious leader, that President Biden was dishonest, manipulative, and lacking any religious morals, President Biden was a fake Christian, and that he was a feeble old man who shouldn't be president..." or words to that effect, in violation of Article 88, UCMJ.

Facts.

On or around 8 January 2025, the crew of _____ was scheduled to depart _____ to _____.

Sometime during flight, there was a malfunction with the aircraft that forced the crew to return to parking (Tabs F-1, F-2, G-4). The crew compliment was as follows: Captain _____ (Aircraft Commander), Captain Doss (Instructor Pilot), Captain _____ (Instructor Pilot), Technical Sergeant _____ (Loadmaster), Senior Airman _____ (Loadmaster), Airman First Class _____ (Loadmaster), Senior Airman _____ (Crew Chief), and Senior Airman _____ (Tab G-3). _____ were unavailable for testimony.

The investigating officer (IO) determined the following was the configuration of the aircraft: Doss and _____ were sitting in the flight deck and were primarily operating the aircraft (Tabs F-1, F-2). _____ was also on the flight deck (Tab F-2). The remainder of the crew was in the cargo compartment (Tabs F-4, G-3).

During this taxi to parking, a joke was made by an unknown crewmember about breaking at _____ instead of _____ (Tab F-1). _____ brought up that Jubilee was going to occur when they would have been there (a quadranscentennial Catholic celebration) and how it would be fun to go (Tab F-1). _____ to continue the conversation, brought up the character *Luce*, the official Catholic mascot of 2025 Jubilee and queried about President Biden's Catholic faith (Tabs F-6, F-10). Doss, having discussed faith _____ the past, began to expound and answer question (Tabs F-6, F-10). Doss used the term "*a Catholic in good standing*," a very specific term in the Catholic faith (F-10). The IO inferred that Doss questioned President Biden's "standing" as a Catholic in this discourse. Further analysis of this discourse is in the next section.

Captain Doss claims any words of critique during this conversation were directed at Pope Francis rather than President Biden (Tab F-10).

Some of the crew received Doss's discourse as expressing that President was a "bad Catholic" (Tabs F-1, F-2). The IO was unable to corroborate the alleged statements that President Biden was a "feeble old man who shouldn't be president," "forgetful," or anything else to the effect of his portrayal as a religious leader or mental or physical state of being. The crew promptly stopped the conversation and _____ removed his headset (Tabs F-2, F-4, F-6, F-10). The crew also expressed distaste because an on-topic conversation was occurring during taxi (Tabs F-1,

F-2, F-4).

Applicable Rules

Article 88, UCMJ

Any commissioned officer who uses contemptuous words against the President, the Vice President, Congress, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of a military department, the Secretary of Homeland Security, or the Governor or legislature of any State, Commonwealth, or possession in which he is on duty or present shall be punished as a court-martial may direct.

Manual for Courts-Martial (2024 Edition) [excerpt]

14. Article 88 (10 U.S.C. 888)—Contempt toward officials

b. *Elements.* [...] (4) That the words used were contemptuous, either in themselves or by virtue of the circumstances under which they were used.

c. *Explanation.* The official or legislature against whom the words are used must be occupying one of the offices or be one of the legislatures named in Article 88 at the time of the offense. Neither “Congress” nor “legislature” includes its members individually. “Governor” does not include “lieutenant governor.” It is immaterial whether the words are used against the official in an official or private capacity. If not personally contemptuous, adverse criticism of one of the officials or legislatures named in the article in the course of a political discussion, even though emphatically expressed, may not be charged as a violation of the article. Similarly, expressions of opinion made in a purely private conversation should not ordinarily be charged. Giving broad circulation to a written publication containing contemptuous words of the kind made punishable by this article, or the utterance of contemptuous words of this kind in the presence of military subordinates, aggravates the offense. The truth or falsity of the statements is immaterial.

Definition: Contemptuous

Adj. Manifesting, feeling, or expressing deep hatred or disapproval: feeling or showing contempt. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contemptuous>)

Definition: One in Good Standing (Catholic Church)

n. One who including honors the Lord’s Day and holy days of obligation, participates in the sacrament of reconciliation at least once every year, receives the Eucharist during the Easter season, fasts on Good Friday and Ash Wednesday, and supports the material needs of the church. (<https://uscatholic.org/articles/201906/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-catholic-in-good-standing/>)

Definition: scandal (Catholic Church)

n. An attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil. The person who gives scandal becomes his neighbor's tempter. He damages virtue and integrity; he may even draw his brother into spiritual death (<https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/understanding-scandal>)

Air Force Manual 11-202, Volume 3, *Flight Operations, Air Mobility Command Supplement*, 10 January 2022

30.5.4. Sterile Cockpit. Aircrew should minimize non-essential cockpit conversations and extraneous activities that could interfere with flight duties when operating below 18,000 feet MSL, during critical phases of flight, during periods of increased workload 354 AFMAN11-202V3_AMCSUP 29 JULY 2024 and during all taxi operations. Exception: N/A during non-critical periods of low workload in level cruise flight, regardless of altitude.

Air Force Manual 11-2C-17, Volume 3, *C-17 Operations Procedures*, 19 August 2024

5.9.2. Aircraft Interphone (ICS). Primary crewmembers will actively monitor ICS during critical phases of flight and remain connected to ICS during all phases of flight, unless crew duties dictate otherwise. (T-2) Crewmembers will advise the PF before checking off interphone or operating in ISOLATE. (T-2) Crewmembers will ensure personnel on headset, or within listening distance, are cleared prior to discussing classified information over interphone. (T-2)

Analysis.

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The IO concluded that a preponderance of the evidence does not support that the words or statements associated with Captain Doss are contemptuous of the president. None of the corroborated statements met the stipulations of Article 88, the applicable excerpt from Manual for Courts Martial, or the definition of "contemptuous words."

Therefore, allegation 1 is **NOT SUBSTANTIATED**.

Allegation 2: In that Capt Forrest Doss did, at or near various locations in North America, Europe, and the Middle East, between on or about 24 June 2024 and on or about 30 June 2024 and between on or about 8 January 2025 and on or about 11 January 2025, communicate inappropriate and unprofessional comments regarding religion, women, or sexual orientation towards other crewmembers, and that said conduct was unbecoming of an officer, in violation of Article 133, UCMJ.

Facts.

From 24 through 30 June 2024, Captain Doss flew as the Aircraft Commander on a mission with the callsign (Tab G-2). The crew compliment was as follows: Captain (Aircraft Commander), Major (Instructor Pilot), Captain (Copilot), Technical Sergeant (Loadmaster), Airman First Class (Loadmaster), Major (Flight Physiologist), and Staff Sergeant (Crew Chief) (Tab G-2). During this mission, there were three oceanic crossings in which the crew engaged in conversation (Tabs F-8, F-10).

During one of the crossings, Doss asked a crewmember to hand him his prayer book, or breviary (Tabs F-8, F-10). This began a conversation in which and were curious about the book and Doss's faith (Tabs F-5, F-7, F-8, F-9, F-10). At first, the questions and conversations were academic, and there was genuine curiosity towards Doss's religious convictions, and the conversation was primarily between Doss, and (Tabs F-7, F-8, F-9, F-10).

As the conversations progressed, the questions flowed into topics such as adult entertainment establishments, aliens, evolution, and sexuality (Tabs F-5, F-7, F-8, F-10). Captain Doss expressed his religious views on all topics, which were reportedly in line with the teachings of the Catholic Church (Tabs F-6, F-9, F-10). The topic of homosexual conversion therapy arose (Tabs F-7, F-8, F-10). These discussions were estimated to go on between two and four hours (Tabs F-8, F-9).

Most testimonies report this conversation was purely academic and curious in nature, and typical of oceanic crossings (Tabs F-5, F-6, F-7, F-9, F-10). One deemed the discourse partially inappropriate (Tab F-7), and one deemed it aggressive and broadly offensive (Tab F-4). Regardless of the propriety of the conversation, recognized the conversation had the potential to get heated, and elected to forbid the topic of religion when Doss was momentarily off headset, and the topic was changed when Doss returned (Tabs F-8, F-9). decision to truncate the conversation about religion on the mission in June did not adversely affect the crew's ability to accomplish the mission.

At no time during the mission in June 2024 did any crewmember pull Doss aside to give verbal counseling on the nature of his conversations and the potential impact of them on the social or crew dynamic despite both a request to do so, and counseling toward other crewmembers about Doss (Tabs F-7, F-8).

Senior Airman (Loadmaster) flew with Captain Doss from 3 December 2024 through 2 January 2025, and expressed how pleasant, well spoken, and levelheaded he was.

also commented that his conversations primarily revolved around previous experiences in the jet, and that although politics may have arisen, it was never a point of contention (Tab F-3).

Senior Airman _____ (Crew Chief) flew with Captain Doss from 31 December through 11 January 2025 (Tabs F-12, G-1). He expressed that Captain Doss would go off on religious tangents from time to time, and, despite being amused by some of them, surmised that Captain Doss harbored genuine animosity against the homosexual community (Tab F-12). Inferences on why there were differences in personal accounts between Senior Airman _____ and Senior Airman _____ will be detailed in the analysis section.

On or about 8 January 2025, Doss flew as an instructor pilot on a mission with callsign _____ (Tabs G-3, G-5). Refer to the *Facts* section of the previous allegation for the crew compliment. Before the preflight portion of the mission, Doss was instructing _____ about the nuances of departing McGuire, and was cited as an excellent instructor (Tabs F-1, F-2).

During the preflight portion of the mission on or around 8 January 2025, an unknown event led Doss to allegedly comment "that's gay," and, when met with disgust, he was reported to reply with something to the effect of "there's more where that came from" (paraphrase) (Tabs F-1, F-2). The IO infers from the witness testimony that the reported retort by Doss was referring to his unwillingness to curtail his conversation about sexual orientation or other controversial topics (Tabs F-1, F-2). Although the IO determines this exchange could be deemed unprofessional, it does not singularly substantiate the allegation. The rest of the conversation in this phase of the mission was recounted in the previous allegation and does not apply to this allegation.

On 10 January 2025, during the first oceanic portion of the mission, conversation arose between _____ and Captain Doss about the new food options at _____, as Captain _____ had not been there in quite some time (Tabs F-1, F-2). There were discussions about chemicals in food and the differences between American and European food additives (Tabs F-1, F-2). Captain Doss brought up Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., to which Captain _____ replied, "I really don't want to get political" (Tabs F-1, F-2). Captain Doss continued to speak about food regulations and listeria outbreaks (Tabs F-2, G-4, G-5). He then continued about overweight people, their lack of discipline regarding food, and the obesity problem in the United States (Tabs F-1, F-2, F-4, G-4, G-5). Captain _____ took this discourse personally as she had recovered from a health complication that had led to uncontrolled weight gain, unbeknownst to the crew. She attempted to deescalate the conversation by telling her story (Tabs F-1, F-2). Unfortunately, the IO was unable to corroborate this account with anyone not on the flight deck, as the remainder of the crew was sleeping or otherwise indisposed (Tabs F-4, F-6, F-12). The IO could not determine how the conversation ended.

Upon landing at _____ there was a noticeable rift in the crew dynamic (Tabs F-1, F-2, F-4, F-12). Due to time constraints, the crew elected to eat dinner in uniform, and ate at an establishment where other _____ stage crews were eating (Tabs F-1, F-2, F-6). Religious-themed

conversation continued primarily between [redacted] and Doss, but [redacted] was unable to understand the verbiage or concepts Captain Doss was expressing (Tab F-6). At another time, Doss was conversing with [redacted] about relationships, and Doss was reported to express that, "[he only] speaks to Catholic women because they were the only ones with morals" (Tab F-12).

At no time during the mission in January 2025 did any crewmember pull Doss aside to give verbal counseling or show concern regarding the nature and tone of his conversations and their potential impact to the social dynamic of the crew, despite guidance from the Squadron Operations Officer (Tabs F-1, F-2, F-4).

On 10 January 2025, after consulting the Squadron Operations Officer, the Senior Enlisted Leader, and the Squadron Commander after landing in [redacted] [redacted] elected to remove Doss from the crew, citing concerns about crew dynamic and CRM breakdown (Tabs F-1, F-2, F-4). The following morning, Doss was escorted off the flight deck and returned to home station (Tabs F-1, F-2, F-4, F-12). [redacted] decision to remove Doss from the crew in January did not adversely affect the crew's ability to accomplish the mission.

Applicable Rules

Article 133, UCMJ

Any commissioned officer, cadet, or midshipman who is convicted of conduct unbecoming an officer shall be punished as a court-martial may direct.

Manual for Courts-Martial (2024 Edition) [excerpt]

1 90. Article 133 (10 U.S.C. 933)—Conduct unbecoming an officer

c. Explanation.

(1) Officership generally. As used in the phrase “conduct unbecoming an officer” in this article, “officer” refers to a “commissioned officer, cadet, or midshipman.”

(2) Nature of the offense. The focus of this article is conduct that is likely to seriously compromise the accused’s standing as an officer. A military officer holds a particular position of responsibility in the armed forces, and one critically important responsibility of a military officer is to inspire the trust and respect of the personnel who must obey the officer’s orders. Conduct violative of this article is action or behavior in an official capacity that, in dishonoring or disgracing the person as an officer, seriously compromises the officer’s character, or action or behavior in an unofficial or private capacity that, in dishonoring or disgracing the officer personally, seriously compromises the person’s standing as an officer. This article includes misconduct that approximates, but may not meet every element of, another enumerated offense. An officer’s conduct need not violate other provisions of the UCMJ or be otherwise criminal to violate Article 133. The gravamen of the offense is that the officer’s conduct disgraces the officer personally or brings dishonor to the military profession in a manner that affects the officer’s fitness to command the obedience of the officer’s subordinates so as to effectively complete the military mission. The absence of a “custom of the service,” statute, regulation, or order expressly prohibiting certain conduct is not dispositive of whether the officer was on sufficient notice that such conduct was unbecoming.

(3) Examples of offenses. Instances of violation of this article include knowingly making a false official statement; dishonorable failure to pay a debt; cheating on an exam; opening and reading a letter of another without authority; using insulting or defamatory language to another officer in that officer’s presence or about that officer to other military persons; being drunk and disorderly in a public place; committing or attempting to commit a crime involving moral turpitude; and failing without good cause to support the officer’s family.

DODI 1300.17, Religious Liberty in the Military Services 1.2. (b)

In accordance with Section 533 (a) (1) of Public Law 112-239, as amended, the DoD Components will accommodate individual expressions of sincerely held beliefs (conscience, moral principles, or religious beliefs) which do not have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, good order and discipline, or health and safety. A Service member's expression of such beliefs may not, in so far as practicable, be used as the basis of any adverse personnel action, discrimination, or denial of promotion, schooling, training, or assignment.

Definition: complementarianism (Catholic Church)

n. A theological view that holds men and women to have different but complementary roles and responsibilities in marriage, family life, religious leadership, and civil government (<https://relearn.org/biblical-patriarchy-vs-complementarianism-a-quick-look-at-their-distinctions/>)

Analysis.

The analysis will be in sections to address each of the main portions of the allegation.

To recount from the analysis from the previous allegation, Doss carries a reputation as a well-read and devout Catholic and sometimes using theological language with which others may not be familiar (Tabs F-6, F-11). He has also demonstrated difficulty interpreting social cues, which can affect interpersonal interactions (Tabs F-1, F-2, F-6, F-7, F-11, F-12). He also seems to explain in great detail his viewpoints on discussion topics, given as an instructor (or priest) would to a class rather than a one-on-one conversation (Tabs F-4, F-8, F-10). Doss's written testimony contains highly religious and ecclesiastical language and supports the notion that he regularly uses this language in conversation (Tab F-10).

The IO determined that Captain Doss has sincerely held beliefs that are protected by DODI 1300.17. Doss's weakness in recognizing social cues paired with strong passion for his faith led to breakdowns in CRM in all instances. However, this shortcoming neither seriously compromised Captain Doss's standing as an officer, disgraced him, nor brought dishonor to the military profession, therefore does not apply to Article 133, UCMJ. His conversations were deemed by the ranking crewmembers of two crews to be a threat to CRM, but not safety of flight. Therefore, the allegation 2 is **NOT SUBSTANTIATED.**

Tab E. Recommendations.

Recommend:

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- Captain Doss receives verbal counseling on appropriate conversation and engages in personal study on interpersonal and nonverbal communication.
 - o Resources can include literature from Vanessa Van Edwards, Malcolm Gladwell, Harvard Business Review on Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Kahneman, James Clear, and Steven Covey.
- Captain Doss engages in self-study on how to express his personal religious views to a secular audience and to avoiding specific, highly contextual terms that can be easily misconstrued to a secular or non-Catholic audience.
- Airlift Squadron limit interaction between Captain Doss and Technical Sergeant
- Airlift Squadron Aircraft Commanders and instructors of all specialties receive deliberate and continuing education on conflict resolution and Crew Resource Management (CRM) in addition to the minimum prescribed by the Air Force. CRM education should include deep dives into civilian academic papers and case studies on CRM analysis and incidents involving poor CRM.
 - o Resources can include literature from Tony Kern, the FAA (e.g., essay by Helmreich and Wilhelm), various airlines, and various institutions of higher education.

Investigating Officer