

US Army Chaplain Resigns in Protest Over Drones, 'Policy of Unaccountable Killing'

By [Andrea Germanos](#)

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"I resign because I refuse to support U.S. policy of preventive war, permanent military supremacy and global power projection. "

An Army chaplain has resigned in protest over the United States "policy of unaccountable killing" through drone warfare and the nation's continued investment into nuclear weapons, which "threaten the existence of humankind and the earth."

In his [letter sent](#) April 12, 2016 to President Barack Obama, Rev. John Antal, a Unitarian Universalist Church minister in Rock Tavern, New York, wrote, "The Executive Branch continues to claim the right to kill anyone, anywhere on earth, at any time, for secret reasons, based on secret evidence, in a secret process, undertaken by unidentified officials."

Antal served as a chaplain from September 2012 to February 2013 at the Kandahar Airbase in southern Afghanistan. "While deployed," he [wrote](#) in Feb. 2015 to the *Times Herald-Record*, "I concluded our drone strikes disproportionately kill innocent people."

Less than a month after I deployed to Afghanistan, on Oct. 24, 2012, a grandmother who lived over the hill from our base camp was out gathering okra in a field when she was killed by a U.S. drone strike.

Or was she?

Official sources claimed they killed "militants" that day; I didn't see her, or anyone else, die. All I saw were the drones, taking off, landing, and circling around. I did not even hear the explosion.

Months later I watched the testimony of 13-year-old Zubair Rehman, describing how he saw his grandmother blown to bits by two hellfire missiles on the day in question, asking his American audience: "Why?"

They didn't have an answer.

He added:

From the perspective of both religious wisdom and military values, drone warfare, as conducted by the United States today, is a betrayal of what is right. My faith affirms the inherent worth and dignity of all people, everywhere. I believe Americans who share that affirmation have a responsibility to advocate for a U.S. foreign policy that reflects our regard for human dignity. Military

leadership also has a responsibility to advocate for a method of war-fighting consistent with military values like respect, integrity, and personal courage. Too often, I worry, our program of drone warfare falls short of these ideals.

"I resign because I refuse to support U.S. policy of preventive war, permanent military supremacy, and global power projection," his letter of resignation states.

Military.com, which spoke to Antal on Wednesday, [reports](#) that he "remains a chaplain with the 354th Transportation Battalion at Fort Totten, New York" while his resignation is being processed.

Stopping drone strikes and providing transparency for ones that already took place is essential, Antal wrote last year.

We owe this to Zubair, and the thousands like him. We owe this to our service members who yearn to fight justly. We owe this to the many veterans like myself living in moral pain.

His full letter of resignation is below:

MEMORANDUM FOR Commander-in-Chief, The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20500

THRU U.S. Army Resources Command, ATTN; AHRC-OPL-P, 1600 Spearhead Division Avenue, Ft. Knox, KY 40122

SUBJECT: Resignation in Protest

Dear Mr. President:

I hereby resign my commission as an Officer in the United States Army.

I resign because I refuse to support U.S. armed drone policy. The Executive Branch continues to claim the right to kill anyone, anywhere on earth, at any time, for secret reasons, based on secret evidence, in a secret process, undertaken by unidentified officials. I refuse to support this policy of unaccountable killing.

I resign because I refuse to support U.S. nuclear weapon policy. The Executive Branch continues to invest billions of dollars into nuclear weapons, which threaten the existence of humankind and the earth. I refuse to support this policy of terror and mutually assured destruction.

I resign because I refuse to support U.S. policy of preventive war, permanent military supremacy and global power projection. The Executive branch continues to claim extra-constitutional authority and impunity from international law. I refuse to support this policy of imperial overstretch.

I resign because I refuse to serve as an empire chaplain. I cannot reconcile these policies with either my sworn duty to protect and defend America and our constitutional democracy or my covenantal commitment to the core principles of my religion faith. These principles include: justice, equity and compassion in human relations, a free and responsible search for truth; and the inherent worth and dignity of every person.

Respectfully submitted,

Christopher John Antal

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