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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Retired Navy Chaplain to Receive Freedom Alliance's Defender of Freedom Award**

*Wes Modder to be Recognized for Exceptional Ministry to America's Warriors  
and His Defense of Religious Liberty for Military Personnel*

DULLES, Va. – (Dec. 7, 2016) [Freedom Alliance](#), an organization supporting our nation's injured service members and military families, will present its Defender of Freedom Award – the organization's highest recognition – to LCDR Wes Modder, USN (Ret.) at its annual dinner banquet which takes place on December 8<sup>th</sup> in Arlington, Virginia.

The award is being presented to Modder, a retired Navy chaplain, in recognition of his faithful service to our nation and unwavering commitment to protect religious freedom. Modder has an exceptional service record and has offered spiritual counseling and ministry to some of America's most elite warriors including U.S. Navy SEALs. He is also an example to other military chaplains who are facing increased bureaucratic hostility in the Armed Forces.

"We are pleased to recognize Chaplain Modder for his distinguished military career as well as his ministry to combat warriors and those who serve our country," said Freedom Alliance President Tom Kilgannon. "Chaplains are crucial to the emotional and spiritual well-being of our fighting force and Wes Modder was among the best in the military's ranks. His courage in defeating politically motivated attacks on him and his faith ensure the ability of other chaplains to minister according to their beliefs."

"I'm honored to receive this award," said Modder, "and humbled to stand in the company of those to whom it has previously been given. I'm fortunate to have been able to serve my God and my country at the same time and minister to courageous young men and women who wear our nation's uniform."

On September 6, 2016, after 21 years of distinguished service, Modder retired from the Navy with an honorable discharge and was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal. But before he retired, Modder was forced to fight unjust and politically motivated charges brought against him by



*LCDR Wes Modder, USN (Ret.)  
will be honored with Freedom  
Alliance's Defender of Freedom  
Award.*



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several junior sailors, supervisors, fellow senior Navy chaplains, the Navy Chief of Chaplains notwithstanding and Commanding Officers who took issue with the Biblical teachings Modder shared in private counseling sessions the sailors requested.

The Navy threatened Modder with charges that could have ended his career. Betrayal was the order of the day. During the investigation of a very distinguished chaplain they would change the narrative to false statements to attack this national treasure. After a complete investigation and a long legal fight – in which Modder attracted support from numerous military and religious organizations, as well as elected officials – the Navy fully exonerated him. All charges were dropped and Chaplain Modder was allowed to continue his ministry. Even so, after taking a stand and winning, there are in fact second and third consequences of upholding the Navy's core values which set the stage for retirement and accepting the Lead Pastor position at [Stone Church of Chicago](#).

As Chaplain Modder challenged the charges against him, he was represented by [First Liberty Institute](#), the largest nonprofit legal organization in the nation dedicated to defending religious liberty in America.

Mike Berry, Senior Counsel and Director of Military Affairs, said of Modder's recognition, "Wes Modder represents all that is good in our nation's military. His unwavering commitment to serve and care for his fellow service members, and to take such a bold stand for religious freedom, is an inspiration. First Liberty Institute is honored to stand behind Chaplain Modder."

Prior to becoming a Navy Chaplain in 2000, Modder was a U.S. Marine and served in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm and would deploy many more times in his career. For a two-year period beginning in 2008, Modder deployed multiple times in support of the Navy's elite SEALs, tending to their spiritual counseling during difficult assignments.

His excellence did not go unnoticed. In 2014, he was hand-picked to perform his duties at the Naval Nuclear Power Training Command. That same year, his commander called Modder "The Best of the Best."

The Defender of Freedom Award is named in memory of the late LtGen Edward J. Bronars, USMC, who served as the first chairman of Freedom Alliance and gave a lifetime of service to our country. He was a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and his 32-year career with the Marine Corps included distinguished service in the Korean War and Vietnam War.



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Some of the previous recipients of the Defender of Freedom Award include:

- Captain Scott O'Grady, United States Air Force, for his courage behind enemy lines after his F-16 was shot down while enforcing the NATO no-fly zone over Bosnia in 1995.
- Lloyd "Pete" Bucher, United States Navy, Retired, the commanding officer of the USS *Pueblo* who survived eleven months of torture at the hands of his North Korean captors.
- General Tommy Franks, United States Army Retired, who led U.S. Armed Forces during Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.
- New York City Firefighter Stephen Siller for his bravery in the face of grave danger at the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. (*presented posthumously*)
- Sergeant First Class Sammy Davis, United States Army, Retired, Medal of Honor Recipient, for his extraordinary heroism, immeasurable courage and dedicated service to the United States of America.

#### **About Freedom Alliance**

Freedom Alliance is a charitable organization which provides help and support to wounded troops and military families. Freedom Alliance has awarded more than \$11 million in college scholarships to the children of military heroes killed or disabled in military service and spent millions more helping injured veterans and military families with outdoor recreational therapy trips, Heroes Vacations, care packages for deployed troops, mortgage-free homes, all-terrain wheel chairs and much more. You can learn more about Freedom Alliance at [www.FreedomAlliance.org](http://www.FreedomAlliance.org).

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