



CHAPLAIN'S OFFICE
JTF-GTMO/CHAP
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RELIGIOUS MINISTRY ITEM LIST

Churches and organizations often want to send care packages to the troops overseas. Chaplains often are in charge of distributing these boxes. Some are full of wonderful things. Delivering these items gives an opportunity for chaplains to face time with their troops. Some boxes have items that, while well intentioned, often get thrown out because they are spoiled, invite pests, are impractical, or prohibited.

Here are some helpful guidelines for sending care packages to troops along with a short list of common do and don't send items. First, know to whom you are sending your package. Many deployed units maintain the contact information for the Commanding Officer (CO), Executive Officer (XO), Senior Enlisted Leader (SEL), and Chaplain on the unit's official web page. Start by sending an e-mail to the chaplain asking what his or her troops would like or need. You can send this via the CO, XO, or SEL if necessary. Needs, wants, permissible, and prohibited items vary by location and commander. Second, send toiletries make sure to send them separately from food. Long mail routes and fluctuations in temperatures can leave even the best wrapped granola bars tasting like soap. Finally, notes or cards should not contain your names, addresses, or emails. Items sometimes wind up in the wrong hands. Your personal information getting into the hands of the enemy is unsafe.

SEND (based on input from troops at GTMO)	DON'T SEND
Starbucks VIAs	Socks, T-Shirts, etc., unless specifically requested by the unit or chaplain
Individual crystal light/kool aid packets designed for water bottles	Jars or bottles of food such as jam, jelly, peanut butter, honey, etc.
Playing Cards, small word search, Sudoku, or crossword puzzle books	Magazines, books, board games, puzzles
Laffy taffy	Hard candy
Peanuts (individual packs)	Old candy
Pistachios (individual packs)	Seasonal Candy (Halloween, Easter, etc)
Almonds (individual packs)	Chocolate
Cashews (individual packs)	Gum
Beef jerky (small or individual packs)	Carmels (or anything with Carmel)
Oreos (individual packs)	Homemade items (they don't survive the mail)
Protein bars, power bars, breakfast bars	Canned food (soup, ravioli, etc)
Cheerios, all kinds (individual boxes)	Notes with personal emails or addresses.
Healthy snacks of any kind: individually packaged items made with real fruit or whole grain or similar ingredients.	Notes that are seasonal (Christmas, Easter, Valentines Day, etc) as boxes can be delayed up to 6 months.
A small note of thanks and "we are thinking of you" or words to that effect with your <i>organization's</i> name and hometown.	Notes addressed to "soldier" as many of our personnel are Airmen, Sailors, Marines, and Coast Guard.
Personal hygiene kits: one quart sized ziplock bag with <i>travel size</i> shave cream, wipes, powder, soap, shampoo, hand sanitizer, razors and an extra ziplock.	Any full size personal hygiene item. Please no large bottles of powder, shave cream, Costco packs of razors, full bottles of shampoo, etc.