ONE CONSTITUTION AVENUE, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20002
LOCAL: 202.479.2200
TOLL-FREE: 800.809.9448
FAX: 202.547.7767

CONTACT: DAVID SMALL
COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR
202.646.7719
800.809.9448 EXT. 719
dsmall@roa.org

PRESS RELEASE

Feb 2, 2010

New Orleans Reservist to Deliver Prayer to Congress

WASHINGTON -- The Reserve Officers Association of the United States announced today Chaplain (Cmdr.) Phillip "Endel" Lee Jr., U.S. Navy Reserve, as its Chaplain Vincent Robert Capodanno National Chaplain of the Year for 2009.

Chaplain Lee, as part of his recognition, will deliver a prayer Feb. 9. at 2 p.m. to Congress in the Capitol building. Rep. Anh Cao (R-La.), sponsored Chaplain Lee as the guest chaplain of the day for the U.S. House of Representatives. Chaplain Lee currently serves as the deputy chaplain, Marine Forces Reserve in New Orleans.

"I am humbled to be counted among those in the U.S. Armed Forces serving our country and the cause of freedom around the world," said Chaplain Lee. "I pray this affirmation of the spiritual support chaplains provide will inspire others to serve as hero-helpers in like manner. Hopefully our service members and their families are also encouraged by such efforts as they endure the tragedies of war and the often unseen consequences of battle on the soul. SEMPER FI!"

Chaplain Lee enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve in 1982, accepting a direct commission after graduating the University of Mobile in 1985. After obtaining his Master's of Divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth, TX, he joined the Navy Reserve as a Chaplain in 1993. Chaplain Lee has seen significant periods of active duty over the past nine years. Such duty began with Operation Guarding Liberty and service with the U.S. Coast Guard in New York City immediately after Sept. 11, 2001. He then deployed in 2005 for Operation Iraqi Freedom as the Camp Fallujah protestant coordinator and battalion chaplain, 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force. Upon returning from that deployment, he participated in Hurricane Katrina response with the U.S. Coast Guard's District 8 on the gulf coast. In 2008 he served with the Naval Special Warfare Development Group and then transitioned to his current assignment.

In his civilian career, he serves as the national coordinator with the Disaster Relief Chaplaincy of the Southern Baptist denomination.

Chaplain Lee also holds a Master's of Religious Education and a Doctor of Philosophy, both from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. He resides with his wife, the former Kathy J. Perkins of Bay Minnette, Ala., with their two sons Hunter, 19, and Cody, 17, in Mobile, Ala.

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Each year, ROA recognizes the chaplain who distinguishes himself by his contribution to the welfare, morale, and effectiveness of the military services. The award is named for Navy Chaplain (Lt) Vincent Robert Capodanno, a recipient of the Medal of Honor for his service in Vietnam during Operation Swift in the Que Son Valley. There, on Sept. 4, 1967, elements of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines were outnumbered by a large North Vietnamese unit. Wounded himself during the battle, Father Capodanno went among those wounded and dying, giving last rites and taking care of his Marines only yards from an enemy machinegun and was killed.

ROA's Chaplain of the Year Award will be presented to Chaplain Lee here at ROA's national convention Feb. 8 during the general assembly by ROA president, retired Rear Adm. Paul T. Kayye.

The Reserve Officers Association is the 63,000-member professional association for all uniformed services of the United States. Chartered by Congress and in existence since 1922, ROA advises and educates the Congress, the President, and the American people on national security, with unique expertise on issues that affect the 1.5 million men and women now serving in America's Reserve Components.

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Photos of the awards ceremony will be available upon request after ROA's convention by emailing eminton@roa.org. Media can coordinate with Rep. Cao's office for photos prior to the Congressional prayer by calling (202) 225-6636 and speaking to Cheyenne Steel.