

Report: Ambassador spends too much time on religion

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WASHINGTON (RNS) The U.S. ambassador to Malta, who helped rally Catholic support for President Obama's 2008 campaign, has spent "considerable time" writing on topics beyond the mission of his office, particularly about matters of faith, according to a new State Department investigation.

The report from the department's Office of Inspector General said Ambassador Douglas Kmiec's writings had an "unconventional approach" to the ambassadorship that has caused "friction" with Washington officials.

"Based on a belief that he was given a special mandate to promote President Obama's interfaith initiatives, he has devoted considerable time to writing articles for publication in the United States as well as in Malta, and to presenting his views on subjects outside the bilateral portfolio," reads the February report.

The document was first reported by The Associated Press on Friday (April 8).

The 49-page report was not specific about those writings; some writings posted on his website at Pepperdine University School of Law include references to faith and abortion.

The report notes that Kmiec, who has also faced criticism from fellow Catholics for his defense of Obama's abortion policies, "is respected by Maltese officials and most mission staff."

Kmiec defended himself in a statement he emailed to AP.

"I must say that I am troubled and saddened that a handful of individuals within my department in Washington seem to manifest a hostility to expressions of faith and efforts to promote better interfaith understanding," he said. "Our constitution proudly protects the free exercise of religion -- even for ambassadors."

The White House referred a request for comment to the State Department, which did not immediately respond.