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Former head chaplain charged with sex assault

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OTTAWA -- The former head of the Canadian Forces chaplain branch, a Catholic, has been charged with sexual assault following alleged incidents 38 years ago at Canadian Forces Base Borden.

The current chaplain general, Brig. Gen. David Kettle, a Presbyterian minister, said his office is cooperating fully in an investigation by the Military Police and the Catholic Military Ordinariate of Canada.

After his arrest in Barrie, Ontario, Msgr. Roger Bazin was charged with buggery, gross indecency and indecent assault on a male, according to the Canadian Forces National Investigation Service.

A captain at the time of the alleged crimes in 1972, Msgr. Bazin, now retired from the chaplaincy, rose to the rank of brigadier general and was head of the military chaplaincy from 1992 to 1995.

"As the present chaplain general, I was shocked by these allegations," Rev. Kettle said. "I take very seriously the charges laid against a former chaplain general for alleged actions committed while serving as a unit chaplain in 1972."

The investigation stemmed from June 2009 allegations against Msgr. Bazin. He is scheduled to appear in Barrie provincial court April 28.

"The military police consider this to be a serious matter and will thoroughly investigate any such allegations," said the Canadian Forces provost marshal, Col. Tim Grubb, in a statement. "These types of alleged acts, if proven, are illegal and represent unacceptable conduct."

Rev. Kettle said he was "certain that I speak for all chaplains when I say that my heart goes out to the victims of such crimes, and their families."

In his statement, Rev. Kettle said chaplains undergo a thorough selection process before being accepted into the military.

"The Interfaith Committee on Canadian Military Chaplaincy ... is committed to ensuring that chaplains in the Canadian Forces uphold, for the welfare of all, the highest moral standard as dictated in the Code of Ethics for Chaplains," he said.

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