

# National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces

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***For Immediate Release***

## **NCMAF Urges African American Captain James J.L. Johnson Be Added to Chaplains Monuments at Arlington National Cemetery**

New York, March 9, 2021 – Captain James J.L. Johnson, an African American, is one of the 25 Chaplains that the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) is seeking to add to the existing Protestant Chaplains Monument at Arlington National Cemetery.

The NCMAF has been asking Arlington officials, the Department of the Army, and Congress to update the existing Protestant Chaplains Monument with a new granite plaque that will honor the service Captain Johnson and two dozen other Chaplains affiliated with Protestant denominations who died in service during the Korean War, Vietnam War, the Cold War Period, and in post 9-11 Conflicts.

“Black History Month is a fitting time to remember African Americans who gave their lives in service to their country. Placing yourself in harm’s way is the blank check of military life,” said John H. Lea III, Executive Director of NCMAF. “Chaplain Johnson’s story is particularly poignant because of his contributions as both a spiritual leader and an active member of the armed forces. He should be memorialized at Arlington National Cemetery as part of an updated Protestant Monument on Chaplains Hill.”

Chaplain James J. L. Johnson, National Baptist, was a 33-year-old native of Marlin, Texas, who entered the Army in 1965 and joined the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Vietnam one year later. He attended a religious retreat at Cam Ranh Bay in early 1967 and boarded a C-47 aircraft on March 10<sup>th</sup> to return to his unit. The plane crashed and burned for reasons still unknown. The crew and all passengers, including Chaplain Johnson, were killed.

Chaplain Johnson first joined the military after finishing high school in Texas. He served his country on active duty and active Reserve from 1954 to 1957. After Basic Training at Fort Bliss, TX, Chaplain Johnson served as a Cannoneer at Fort Winfield Scott, CA and a Personnel Administration Clerk at Fort McArthur, CA.

In 1961, he received a B.A. degree in Religion and Philosophy from Bishop College (Dallas, TX). Four years later, in 1965, he received a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Golden State Baptist Theological Seminary (Mill Valley, CA).

After being ordained by the National Baptist Convention in 1966, Chaplain Johnson entered the Army Chaplaincy. He attended the Chaplain Officer Basic Course at Fort Hamilton, NY, and was assigned to BBC 1<sup>st</sup> Bde, Fourth Infantry Division, Fort Lewis, WA.

Chaplain Johnson deployed with his unit to the Republic of Vietnam on September 15, 1966 where he served until his fatal crash six months later. He is buried at Ft Sam Houston, National Cemetery in San Antonio, TX. He is [remembered on the Wall of Faces](#) at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC.

Chaplain Johnson was honored with many awards for his service, including: the National Defense Service Medal, Markman (Carbine) 2<sup>nd</sup> Class AAA Bar, Vietnam Service Medal, Bronze Star (posthumously) “for meritorious service in connection with military operations against a hostile force,” and the National Order of Vietnam, Fifth Class and the Gallantry Cross with Palm.

NCMAF is the successor to the General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel, the group which placed the existing Protestant monument at Arlington. NCMAF member organizations represent a cross-section of religious life in America. Each one recruits and certifies chaplains for service in the Armed Forces.

NCMAF has partnered for six years with several veterans and civic organizations to update the Protestant Chaplains Monument to add the names of 25 chaplains who died in service during the Korean War, Vietnam, the Cold War, and post 9-11 Conflicts, submitting a formal proposal in July 2019. Two of the chaplains who died in the Korean War remain "Missing in Action:" Major Wayne H. Burdue of Sandusky, OH and Captain James W. Connor of Greenville, SC.

The NCMAF has a track record of working successfully with other veterans' organizations to update Chaplains Hill. In 2011, NCMAF combined efforts with the Jewish War Veterans and other organizations to generate legislation unanimously approved by Congress to add the name of Rabbi Goode, who was the only one of the four “Immortal Chaplains” who had not been so honored there, along with 13 other Jewish chaplains who had died in service.

**The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF)** is a professional organization comprised of over 100 religious organizations that seeks to individually sponsor the very best chaplains for service in the military, VA hospitals, and prisons. Our commitment to the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment, and the “free exercise of religion” is our hallmark and our unifying theme. We are the successors of the organization which first placed monuments on Chaplains Hill at Arlington National Cemetery and remain committed to honoring chaplains of all faiths who died in service to our Nation. We welcome your assistance and participation in this uniquely American endeavor. Please contact us through our website: [www.ncmaf.net](http://www.ncmaf.net); or emailing us at [information@ncmaf.com](mailto:information@ncmaf.com)

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