



## National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces

### MISSION

*NCMAF connects  
member faith groups with  
military and VA chaplaincies,  
and celebrates the  
religious diversity of the  
United States of America.*

### VISION

*NCMAF will advocate  
for the First Amendment  
and provide a unified voice  
on religious freedom  
and religious diversity.*

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# Rabbi Irv Elson

**CAPT (RET) CHC, USN**

**Executive Committee Member-At-Large**

Rabbi Irving A. Elson was born in Mexico City, Mexico, in 1960. He was educated at Yeshiva University in New York, and earned his AA and BA in 1982, majoring in Psychology and Jewish Studies. He entered a MA program at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York, and was awarded an MA in Hebrew Literature in 1984. During this time, he also spent a year of postgraduate study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem from 1983-1984. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America ordained him a rabbi in 1987.

Commissioned an Ensign in the Naval Reserve in 1982, Chaplain Elson came on active duty in June of 1987. Throughout his military career, he was the only Hispanic American rabbi in the Department of Defense. His assignments were as follows: Marine Corps Base, Camp S. D. Butler (III MEF), Okinawa, Japan; Naval Station Charleston, S. C.; COMSIXTHFLT, Gaeta, Italy; Naval Education and Training Center, Newport, R. I.; Naval Recruiting Command, Area ONE, Scotia, NY; and as Staff Chaplain at the United States Naval Academy.

In August of 2002, Chaplain Elson reported for duty with the I Marine Expeditionary Force. In January of 2003, Rabbi Elson deployed to Kuwait and eventually Iraq for Operation Iraqi Freedom as Jewish Chaplain for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. As the only Jewish Chaplain serving with Marines in Iraq, and chaplain for 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, Rabbi Elson participated in numerous combat engagements throughout the conflict. Rabbi Elson returned to Iraq in September of 2004 where he served as Jewish Chaplain for IMEF during the Battle for Fallujah.

In June of 2005, Rabbi Elson became the Deputy Command Chaplain at the US Naval Academy. Rabbi Elson was selected for promotion to Captain in May of 2006. In July of 2007 he became the first Force Chaplain for Commander Naval Air Forces followed by an assignment in August of 2010 as Wing Chaplain, III Marine Aircraft Wing. Chaplain Elson returned to the I Marine Expeditionary Force as the Force Chaplain in November of 2012. During these last two tours,

CAPT Elson made multiple deployments to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

In April of 2014 CAPT Elson was selected as Deputy Chaplain of the Marine Corps. Rabbi Elson retired from the Navy in December of 2016 after 35 years of faithful service.

In January of 2017, Rabbi Elson was appointed the Director of the JWB Jewish Chaplains Council, tasked with the DoD endorsement, training and support of Jewish chaplains in the DoD, DVA, Bureau of Prisons and the United States Secret Service.

Rabbi Elson's hobbies include civil aviation (he holds a commercial pilot's license with over 2200 hrs. of flight time) and cross-country skiing. He is fluent in Spanish, and Hebrew. He has been married for the past 35 years to Fran Dishler, and has three children, Jacob, 28, and Aliza, 25 and Abigail 19.