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National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces contact –

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**WORKING HEADLINE: On 81st Anniversary of “Four Chaplains Day” the NCMAF calls on Army Secretary Christine Wormuth to update the Chaplains Monuments at Arlington National Cemetery as directed by Congress.**

DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C., JANUARY, 2024...

During the bleak second year of WWII, on the night of Feb. 3, 1943, the troopship Dorchester was torpedoed in icy North Atlantic waters off Iceland resulting in the deaths of the famed “Four Chaplains” among 675 Army soldiers, civilians and crew that perished.

Lt. George Fox, a Methodist; Lt. Alexander Goode, a Jewish Rabbi; Lt. John Washington, a Roman Catholic Priest; and Lt. Clark Poling, a Dutch Reformed minister were brought together by their shared mission to serve their soldiers. They were noted by survivors for the heroism they displayed, rallying passengers from the ship, giving up their own life jackets, one gave away his gloves, doing all they could to save others, they were last seen huddled together praying.

The heroic story of the “Four Chaplains” became an iconic inspiration to all Americans during World War II. It is now commemorated on the first Sunday in February.

Chaplains have been recognized by dedicated monuments located in Section 2 at Arlington National Cemetery since the 1980s. In 2011 the Jewish Chaplains monument was dedicated when it was identified by Sons of the American Legion members that the name of Rabbi Lt. Goode was not recognized.

**The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF)** championed legislation that was approved by Congress and supported by the Chief of Chaplains of each branch of the Armed Services. The bill noted that the names of 81 military chaplains who died during their service should be added to the existing Monuments in Section 2 of Arlington National Cemetery.

The US Congress with bipartisan, nearly unanimous support, in the 2021 and 2022 National Defense Authorization Acts signed by President Joe Biden directed that these names be added to the Arlington National Cemetery Chaplains Hill Monuments.

The project has received the endorsement of The American Legion Executive Committee, the Association of the US Army, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Navy League Council of NY among leading veterans and military service organizations.

The NCMAF urge the managers of Arlington Cemetery to comply with these Congressional orders to honor the names of chaplains who died in service from Korea to Iraq and Afghanistan.

In avoiding the task, Arlington National Cemetery and Army officials cite an obscure requirement that veterans must be deceased for at least 25 years to be added to a monument at the Cemetery.

Attorneys for the NCMAF believe that Army Secretary Christine Wormuth has the authority to waive the law allowing the names of Chaplains who died during Iraq, Afghanistan and other recent service to be recognized on Chaplains Hill. They are the heroes of today's young veterans.

NCMAF calls for Secretary Wormuth to provide Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and the American people a report on when the updates to Chaplains Hill approved by the President will be carried out.

Leaders of the NCMAF speak out.

Rabbi Harold Robinson, Ch, RADM, USN, (Ret.) shared, "The reluctance for Arlington Cemetery officials to honor the brave efforts of our fallen chaplains is hard to fathom and unacceptable. We strive to collaborate with officials at Arlington Cemetery and the Secretary of the Army."

The Right Reverend Derek Jones, Bishop of the Armed Forces & Chaplaincy and Chair of the NCMAF Board of Directors underscored "We do not understand, given the authorization on Capitol Hill and the consent of The White House, why the Secretary of the Army and her department would not immediately approve securing the memory of our fallen clergy." He added, "The President and Congress have indicated they want to honor these heroes."

"The observation of the heroics on the troopship Dorchester reminds us to secure the memory of these fallen military chaplains who paid the ultimate price with their lives," said Father Robert R. Cannon, Ch, Col, USAF (Ret.), Catholic representative to the NCMAF.

NCMAF has the financing and materials to update the monument at no cost to the Government or Arlington Cemetery. It would replace the aging concrete Protestant Chaplains Monument with a new granite piece in the same shape and size as the current one.

The Dignity Memorial Company has agreed to provide the new granite monument and provide installation. To urge your Congressperson to take action, visit <https://tinyurl.com/5n6u87v6> for contact information.

The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) is the umbrella organization for 95 U.S. faith groups and the professional clergy representatives who endorse Military and V.A. chaplains. It has erected several monuments on Chaplains Hill in Arlington National Cemetery honoring chaplains who have perished while in our Nation's service.

During the last 75 years, monuments were placed to honor Roman Catholic and Jewish chaplains, reflecting the ongoing sacrifice of these warriors of faith. More information about the NCMAF (NCMAF.net) and this project is available on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/NCMAF>.

