



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

1730

IN REPLY REFER TO

Ser N097/02441

23 Dec 02

Dear Colleagues,

I wish you all could spend a few minutes with me today in my office here at the Navy Annex. I wish you could look out my windows at the endless rows of gravestones on the hillside across the way. This view of Arlington National Cemetery is always beautiful. Whenever I look over there, I experience a power in the simple symmetry of the markers that seems to reach across the road and replace the turmoil of the moment with a sense of timeless peace. I'm sure you would feel it, too.

But today, if you were to look out my windows, you would see more. You would see dozens of dedicated people placing tens of thousands of holiday wreaths—one in front of every marker. As far as you can see, small circles of greenery and bright red bows embrace weathered white stones. The beautiful has become the spectacular. What a wonderful tribute this holiday season!

And I pay tribute to you this holiday season as well. Though you cannot come to see what I see, I know that many of you will be traveling to other places. Some of you will be heading home to spend precious time with loved ones. Others of you have kissed your loved ones good-bye and are on your way far from them to meet the spiritual needs of your people in uncertain times and unfamiliar places. Regardless of your circumstances, thank you for your sacrificial service this holiday season.

Or should I say this "season of holidays"? After all, our chaplain/RP community celebrates many different holidays this time of year, some religious and some secular. December has already seen the conclusion of Chanukah, the Jewish Festival of Lights, and 'Eid-ul-Fitr, the Muslim Festival of Fast-Breaking that celebrates the end of Ramadan. The religious portion of this season of holidays will conclude with Christians celebrating Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ.

And then the secular holidays will commence on the 26th, with the Kwanzaa celebration of African-American heritage and Boxing Day festivities for our British and Canadian exchange program chaplains. All of us, of course, will ring in the New Year

together at midnight on January 1st. I hope that all your holidays have been-and will be-rich in meaning and joy.

But I ask you to add one more to your list. Please make New Year's Day a Chaplain Corps Day of Prayer for our country. With our leaders making decisions that keep the same countless lives, and the future of nations, in the balance-with many of you poised on the front lines facing a ruthless enemy-with all of us under the shadow of terrorist threats, we should enter the New Year on our knees in prayer, seeking the guidance and protection of the Eternal, Sovereign God. Let us covenant together to receive with thanksgiving the gift of this new year and prepare the way for God's leadership in it with praise and petition. May God bless us in this year to come as richly as He has throughout the year we are now completing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry C. Black".

BARRY C. BLACK
Rear Admiral, Chaplain Corps
U. S. Navy
Chief of Navy Chaplains