

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 222

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED FEBRUARY 23, 2021

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman ANNETTE QUIJANO

District 20 (Union)

Assemblyman HERB CONAWAY, JR.

District 7 (Burlington)

Assemblywoman CAROL A. MURPHY

District 7 (Burlington)

SYNOPSIS

Honors life of Tuskegee Airman James A. Cotten.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



AR222 QUIJANO, CONAWAY

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1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** honoring the life of Tuskegee Airman
2 James A. Cotten.
3
4 **WHEREAS**, Chief Master Sergeant James A. Cotten was a member of
5 the famed Tuskegee Airmen during World War II and longtime
6 resident of Willingboro, New Jersey; and
7 **WHEREAS**, Prior to the United States' entry into World War II, Black
8 people were denied the opportunity to assist in military air
9 operations out of the belief they were not sophisticated enough to
10 work with complex aircraft; and
11 **WHEREAS**, In 1940, after lobbying by various civil rights groups,
12 President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that the Army Air
13 Corps would begin training Black pilots at the Tuskegee Army
14 Airfield in Alabama; and
15 **WHEREAS**, Many of the trainees were college graduates who went on
16 to serve as pilots, navigators, bombardiers, instructors, mechanics,
17 control tower operators, and support staff; and
18 **WHEREAS**, The "Tuskegee Airmen" as they were called, flew over
19 15,000 missions during World War II destroying over 250 German
20 planes, 1,000 transportation vehicles, and earning more than 150
21 Distinguished Flying Crosses; and
22 **WHEREAS**, As a result of their brave service, the Tuskegee Airmen
23 helped pave the way for the issuance of Executive Order 9881 by
24 President Harry S. Truman which ordered the desegregation of the
25 Armed Forces in 1948; and
26 **WHEREAS**, Chief Master Sergeant James A. Cotten was drafted into
27 the U.S. Army in 1945 and later assigned to the Army Air Corps,
28 332nd Fighter Interceptor Squadron working as an air operations
29 specialist with the elite all-Black fighter group; and
30 **WHEREAS**, Cotten became the first African-American to be assigned
31 to the 334th Fighter Interceptor Squadron, 4th Fighter Group at
32 Langley Air Force Base in Virginia after the military was
33 desegregated; and
34 **WHEREAS**, He was subsequently assigned to other military
35 installations in Hawaii, New Hampshire, and Newfoundland before
36 retiring from active duty in 1965 while stationed at McGuire Air
37 Force Base in Lakehurst, New Jersey; and
38 **WHEREAS**, For the next 45 years, Cotten continued working for the
39 Department of Defense as a civilian contract administrator at Joint
40 Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst until he retired in 2012 at age 85; and
41 **WHEREAS**, In recognition of his service with the Tuskegee Airmen,
42 Cotten was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2012 and
43 was one of six veterans present at the White House when President
44 Barack Obama honored the unit in 2013; and
45 **WHEREAS**, Cotten has also been awarded the Air Force
46 Commendation Medal, Air Force Good Conduct Medal, Air Force
47 Longevity Service Award, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award,

1 World War II Victory Award, and the National Defense Service
2 Award; and

3 **WHEREAS**, Cotten remained active in his community by serving as a
4 member of the Twenty Plus Retirement Club, a board member of
5 ABCO Federal Credit Union, and a member of the New Jersey
6 Credit Union League Board; and

7 **WHEREAS**, Sadly, Chief Master Sergeant Cotten passed away on
8 August 14, 2020, exactly 75 years after he was first drafted into the
9 Army Air Corps; and

10 **WHEREAS**, As we lose more members of the Greatest Generation each
11 day, it is important to recognize the accomplishments of men like
12 Chief Master Sergeant Cotten who selflessly served our nation
13 while overcoming racial segregation and prejudice; now, therefore,
14

15 **BE IT RESOLVED** by the General Assembly of the State of New
16 Jersey:
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18 1. This House proudly honors Chief Master Sergeant James A.
19 Cotten for his lifetime of service to our nation and for his role in
20 helping bring about the desegregation of the United States Armed
21 Forces as member of the Tuskegee Airmen.
22

23 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
24 shall be transmitted by the Secretary of the Senate to the President
25 of the United States, the United States Secretary of Defense, the
26 Governor, the Adjutant General of the New Jersey Department of
27 Military and Veterans' Affairs, each member of Congress elected
28 from this State, the Director of the National Museum of African
29 American History and Culture, the President of the Tuskegee
30 Airmen National Historical Museum, and to the family of Chief
31 Master Sergeant James A. Cotten.
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34 STATEMENT
35

36 This Senate resolution honors the life of Chief Master Sergeant
37 James A. Cotten. For over 65 years, Chief Master Sergeant Cotten
38 proudly served this nation while bringing about real, long-lasting
39 racial change. As a member of the Tuskegee Airmen, Cotten was
40 part of an elite group of Black aviators who played a critical role in
41 the Allied victory during World War II and paved the way for
42 desegregation of the Armed Forces in 1948. After serving for
43 twenty years in the Army Air Corps, and later in the newly-
44 constituted Air Force, Cotten continued serving his country by
45 working as a civilian contract administrator at Joint Base McGuire-
46 Dix-Lakehurst before retiring in 2012 at age 85. In recognition of
47 his service with the Tuskegee Airmen, Cotten was awarded the
48 Congressional Gold Medal in 2012 and was one of six veterans

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1 present at the White House when President Barack Obama honored
2 the unit in 2013.

3 Sadly, James Cotten passed away on August 14, 2020, exactly 75
4 years after he was first drafted into the United States Army. As we
5 lose more members of the Greatest Generation each day, it is
6 important to recognize the accomplishments of men like Chief
7 Master Sergeant Cotten who selflessly served our nation while
8 overcoming racial segregation and prejudice. His legacy stands as
9 an enduring symbol of triumph over adversity and loyalty to one's
10 country that will inspire citizens of both this State and this nation
11 for decades to come.