



Three Inland-area Tuskegee Airmen receive Congressional Gold Medal

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MARCH AIR RESERVE BASE - Three Inland-area Tuskegee Airmen were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal during a ceremony at March Field Air Museum on Saturday.

Buford Johnson, 79, of Highland, Robert Boyd, 83, of Rialto, and the late Charles Ledbetter, who lived in Moreno Valley, were honored for their service during World War II when the armed forces were still segregated.

The men were unable to attend a March 29 celebration in the rotunda of the nation's Capitol where about 300 Tuskegee Airmen received medals.



The Congressional Gold Medal is the nation's highest and most distinguished civilian award. It was originally awarded for achievement in battle, but became a civilian medal after the institution of the Medal of Honor. Congressional Gold Medal recipients include George Washington, Billy Graham and Colin Powell.

"We have guys that have passed on that I wish could have gotten this. It just came so late ... that's the bad thing. The good thing is that it finally came," Johnson said.



Johnson, Boyd and Ledbetter's daughter Carla Thomas received the medals during a ceremony held by the Buford Johnson Chapter of Tuskegee Airmen, which meets at the museum. The Inland-area chapter was named after Johnson about three months ago.

"It's quite gratifying," Johnson said. "It feels like the country has finally decided, 'Hey, we didn't think you guys could do it, but you did and did it well, and here's your token of appreciation.' "