



WHO IS THE IRON WARRIOR

CONVERSATIONS WITH THE IRON WARRIOR:

28-29 AUGUST 2026

NATIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR MUSEUM

ARLINGTON, TEXAS

JAMES C. CAPERS, JR

MAJOR, USMC (RET), VIETNAM WAR

2026 CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT

BACKGROUND AND LEGEND:

Capers was born on August 25, 1937, in South Carolina to a family of sharecroppers during the Jim Crow era. He later moved to Baltimore where he would meet the love of his life and future wife Dottie and decide to enlist in the Marines. This would be the start of a legendary career that overcame obstacles and broke barriers on and off the battlefield as one of the greatest Marines to ever serve.

While serving, he would be selected to join the elite Force Recon Marine unit where he excelled, breaking training records, participating in 64 long range reconnaissance patrols and five major campaigns in Vietnam. He was a natural leader and father figure to Team Broadminded, a specialized group of Force Recon Marines. Capers & Team Broadminded were routinely selected to go on the most dangerous and clandestine missions in Vietnam.



Missions included a POW rescue ordered by President Johnson, amphibious assaults in the DMZ, recovery of a B-57 rumored to have a nuclear bomb, and search and destroy patrols in Phu Loc.

A soft-spoken man, his commendations offer an inspiring view of his heroism and self-sacrifice. Nominated for the Medal of Honor, he has been awarded the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and Combat V, three Purple Hearts, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry, a Joint Service Commendation Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, three Good Conduct Ribbons, Battle Stars, Navy Commendation Medal, Navy Achievement Medal, CG Certificate of Merit, multiple letters of Merit, Appreciation, and Commendation.

As an African American his achievements included being the first African American to command a Marine Recon company and the first enlisted African American Marine Officer to receive a battlefield commission.

In the fall of 1967, still recovering from combat injuries, Major James Capers was selected to represent the U.S. Marines in a national recruiting campaign. With full integration completed only in 1960, Capers' image became the Marine Corps most popular recruitment campaign.

Following Vietnam, Capers participated in many Cold War covert operations as a field agent in Eastern Europe and Africa. Details of these operations remain classified today.

Major Capers' son Gary passed away in 2003, and his wife Dottie died in 2009. Both are buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Capers celebrated his 50th anniversary with Dottie one week before her passing.

In 2010, Major James Capers Jr. was one of only 14 members inducted into the inaugural class of U.S. Special Operations Command's Commando Hall of Honor at a ceremony at the USSOCOM headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida. Major Capers Jr. is recognized as a pioneer in Recon training tactics which are still used by Special Operations forces around the world.

He and the surviving members of Team Broadminded meet annually to celebrate and honor those who have passed. There are only two members of Team Broadminded remaining alive today. Capers currently resides in North Carolina and continues to be part of the special operations community.



CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR CITATION: DETAILS

- **RANK: MAJOR (RANK AT TIME OF ACTION: SECOND LIEUTENANT)**
- **CONFLICT/ERA: VIETNAM WAR**
- **UNIT/COMMAND:**
3D RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION,
3D MARINE DIVISION
- **MILITARY SERVICE BRANCH: U.S. MARINE CORPS**
- **MEDAL OF HONOR ACTION DATE: MARCH 31 - APRIL 3, 1967**
- **MEDAL OF HONOR ACTION PLACE: VICINITY OF PHU LOC, VIETNAM**

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as a Team Leader with 3d Force Reconnaissance Company, 3d Reconnaissance Battalion in the Republic of Vietnam from 31 March to 3 April 1967. Tasked to locate a North Vietnamese regimental base camp southwest of Phu Loc and provide observation for the flank of Company M, 3d Battalion, 26th Marines, Second Lieutenant Capers maneuvered his nine-man team on a four-day patrol through rugged enemy territory. The team had contact with 20 enemy soldiers on the first day of patrol, and two additional contacts on the second day, resulting in one severely wounded team member. Despite being outnumbered by enemy forces, Second Lieutenant Capers relentlessly pursued his vigilant and tenacious adversary, and called for fire on an enemy base camp to thwart an impending attack on Company M. On the last day of the patrol, his team was engaged by a numerically superior enemy force with an initial attack from claymore mines, coupled with direct and indirect fire. Despite severe pain and blood loss caused by the multiple fragmentation and gunshot wounds he sustained, Second Lieutenant Capers bravely continued to lead his team and maintain the initiative. Even after being administered morphine, he continued to coordinate supporting fires and his team's movement to a helicopter extraction site. While struggling to maintain consciousness and still under enemy attack, Second Lieutenant Capers maintained command of the situation to ensure all of his Marines were evacuated before he, barely able to stand, finally boarded the helicopter. By his bold leadership, undaunted courage, and complete dedication to duty, Second Lieutenant Capers reflected great credit upon himself and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service.