

116TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 7347

AN ACT

To designate the medical center of the Department of Veterans Affairs in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as the “Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Kettles Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center”.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. DESIGNATION OF LIEUTENANT COLONEL**
2 **CHARLES S. KETTLES DEPARTMENT OF VET-**
3 **ERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER.**

4 (a) FINDINGS.—Congress finds the following:

5 (1) Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Kettles was
6 born in Ypsilanti, Michigan, on January 9, 1930.

7 (2) Lieutenant Colonel Kettles was drafted to
8 the Army at age 21, and after attending Officer
9 Candidate School, earned his commission as an
10 armor officer in the United States Army Reserve on
11 February 28, 1953.

12 (3) Lieutenant Colonel Kettles graduated from
13 the Army Aviation School in 1953 before serving ac-
14 tive duty tours in South Korea, Japan, and Thai-
15 land.

16 (4) Lieutenant Colonel Kettles volunteered for
17 active duty in 1963 when the United States was en-
18 gaged in the Vietnam War.

19 (5) Some of the awards and decorations earned
20 by Lieutenant Colonel Kettles include the following:

21 (A) The Medal of Honor.

22 (B) The Distinguished Service Cross.

23 (C) The Legion of Merit.

24 (D) The Distinguished Flying Cross.

25 (E) The Bronze Star Medal with one oak
26 leaf cluster.

1 (F) The Air Medal with numeral 27.

2 (G) The Korean Service Medal.

3 (H) The Vietnam Service Medal with one
4 silver service star and one bronze service star.

5 (I) The Master Aviator Badge.

6 (6) The Medal of Honor citation for Lieutenant
7 Colonel Kettles states, “Major Charles S. Kettles
8 distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and
9 intrepidity while serving as Flight Commander,
10 176th Aviation Company (Airmobile) (Light), 14th
11 Combat Aviation Battalion, Americal Division near
12 Duc Pho, Republic of Vietnam. On 15 May 1967,
13 Major Kettles, upon learning that an airborne infantry
14 unit had suffered casualties during an intense
15 firefight with the enemy, immediately volunteered to
16 lead a flight of six UH–1D helicopters to carry rein-
17 forcements to the embattled force and to evacuate
18 wounded personnel. Enemy small arms, automatic
19 weapons, and mortar fire raked the landing zone, in-
20 flicting heavy damage to the helicopters; however,
21 Major Kettles refused to depart until all helicopters
22 were loaded to capacity. He then returned to the
23 battlefield, with full knowledge of the intense enemy
24 fire awaiting his arrival, to bring more reinforce-
25 ments, landing in the midst of enemy mortar and

1 automatic weapons fire that seriously wounded his
2 gunner and severely damaged his aircraft. Upon de-
3 parting, Major Kettles was advised by another heli-
4 copter crew that he had fuel streaming out of his
5 aircraft. Despite the risk posed by the leaking fuel,
6 he nursed the damaged aircraft back to base. Later
7 that day, the Infantry Battalion Commander re-
8 quested immediate, emergency extraction of the re-
9 maining 40 troops, including four members of Major
10 Kettles' unit who were stranded when their heli-
11 copter was destroyed by enemy fire. With only one
12 flyable UH-1 helicopter remaining, Major Kettles
13 volunteered to return to the deadly landing zone for
14 a third time, leading a flight of six evacuation heli-
15 copters, five of which were from the 161st Aviation
16 Company. During the extraction, Major Kettles was
17 informed by the last helicopter that all personnel
18 were onboard, and departed the landing zone accord-
19 ingly. Army gunships supporting the evacuation also
20 departed the area. Once airborne, Major Kettles was
21 advised that eight troops had been unable to reach
22 the evacuation helicopters due to the intense enemy
23 fire. With complete disregard for his own safety,
24 Major Kettles passed the lead to another helicopter
25 and returned to the landing zone to rescue the re-

1 maining troops. Without gunship, artillery, or tac-
2 tical aircraft support, the enemy concentrated all
3 firepower on his lone aircraft, which was imme-
4 diately damaged by a mortar round that shattered
5 both front windshields and the chin bubble and was
6 further raked by small arms and machine gun fire.
7 Despite the intense enemy fire, Major Kettles main-
8 tained control of the aircraft and situation, allowing
9 time for the remaining eight soldiers to board the
10 aircraft. In spite of the severe damage to his heli-
11 copter, Major Kettles once more skillfully guided his
12 heavily damaged aircraft to safety. Without his cou-
13 rageous actions and superior flying skills, the last
14 group of soldiers and his crew would never have
15 made it off the battlefield. Major Kettles' selfless
16 acts of repeated valor and determination are in
17 keeping with the highest traditions of military serv-
18 ice and reflect great credit upon himself and the
19 United States Army.”.

20 (b) DESIGNATION.—The medical center of the De-
21 partment of Veterans Affairs in Ann Arbor, Michigan,
22 shall after the date of the enactment of this Act be known
23 and designated as the “Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Ket-
24 tles Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center” or

1 the “Lieutenant Colonel Charles S. Kettles VA Medical
2 Center”.

3 (c) REFERENCE.—Any reference in any law, regula-
4 tion, map, document, paper, or other record of the United
5 States to the medical center referred to in subsection (b)
6 shall be considered to be a reference to the Lieutenant
7 Colonel Charles S. Kettles Department of Veterans Affairs
8 Medical Center.

Passed the House of Representatives September 23,
2020.

Attest:

Clerk.

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