

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1421

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 23d Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133d Signal Service Company in recognition of their unique and distinguished service as a “Ghost Army” that conducted deception operations in Europe during World War II.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MAY 13, 2019

Mr. MARKEY (for himself, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. KING, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. KENNEDY, Mrs. SHAHEEN, Mr. SCHUMER, and Ms. WARREN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

A BILL

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 23d Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133d Signal Service Company in recognition of their unique and distinguished service as a “Ghost Army” that conducted deception operations in Europe during World War II.

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

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Ghost Army Congres-
5 sional Gold Medal Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds that—

3 (1) the 23d Headquarters Special Troops (com-
4 prised of the 23d Headquarters and Headquarters
5 Company, Special Troops, the 603d Engineer Cam-
6 ouflage Battalion, the 406th Combat Engineer Com-
7 pany, the 3132d Signal Service Company, and the
8 Signal Company, Special, 23d Headquarters, Special
9 Troops) and the 3133d Signal Service Company
10 were top-secret units of the United States Army that
11 served in Europe during World War II;

12 (2) the 23d Headquarters Special Troops was
13 actively engaged in battlefield operations from June
14 of 1944 through March of 1945;

15 (3) the 3133d Signal Service Company was en-
16 gaged in operations in Italy in 1945;

17 (4) the deceptive activities of these units were
18 integral to several Allied victories across Europe and
19 reduced casualties;

20 (5) in evaluating the performance of these units
21 after World War II, an Army analysis found that
22 “Rarely, if ever, has there been a group of such a
23 few men which had so great an influence on the out-
24 come of a major military campaign.”;

25 (6) many Ghost Army soldiers were citizen-sol-
26 diers recruited from art schools, advertising agen-

1 cies, communications companies, and other creative
2 and technical professions;

3 (7) the first 4 members of the 23d Head-
4 quarters Special Troops landed on D-Day and two
5 became casualties while creating false beach landing
6 sites;

7 (8) the 23d Headquarters Special Troops secret
8 deception operations commenced in France on June
9 14, 1944, when Task Force Mason (a 17-man de-
10 tachment of the 23d led by First Lieutenant Ber-
11 nard Mason) landed at Omaha Beach;

12 (9) Task Force Mason conducted Operation
13 Elephant from July 1 to 4, 1944, to draw enemy
14 fire and protect the 980th Field Artillery Battalion
15 (VIII Corps) as part of the Normandy Campaign;

16 (10) Operation Elephant was a prelude to the
17 21 full-scale tactical deceptions completed by the
18 23d Headquarters Special Troops;

19 (11) often operating on or near the front lines,
20 the 23d Headquarters Special Troops used inflatable
21 tanks, artillery, airplanes and other vehicles, ad-
22 vanced engineered soundtracks, and skillfully crafted
23 radio trickery to create the illusion of sizable Amer-
24 ican forces where there were none and to draw the
25 enemy away from Allied troops;

1 (12) the 3132d and the 3133d Signal Service
2 Companies, activated in Pine Camp (now Fort
3 Drum), New York, at the Army Experimental Sta-
4 tion in March 1944, were the only 2 active duty
5 “sonic deception” ground combat units in World
6 War II;

7 (13) soldiers of the 23d Headquarters Special
8 Troops impersonated other, larger Army units by
9 sewing counterfeit patches onto their uniforms,
10 painting false markings on their vehicles, and cre-
11 ating phony headquarters staffed by fake generals,
12 all in an effort to feed false information to Axis
13 spies;

14 (14) during the Battle of the Bulge, the 23d
15 Headquarters Special Troops created counterfeit
16 radio traffic in an effort to deceive the enemy of the
17 movement of elements of General George S. Patton’s
18 Third Army as it shifted to break through to the
19 101st Airborne Division and elements of 10th Ar-
20 mored Division in the besieged Belgian town of Bas-
21 togne;

22 (15) in its final mission, Operation Viersen, in
23 March 1945, the 23d Headquarters Special Troops
24 conducted a tactical deception operation intended to
25 draw German units down the Rhine River and away

1 from the Ninth Army, allowing the Ninth Army to
2 cross the Rhine into Germany;

3 (16) during Operation Viersen, the 23d Head-
4 quarters Special Troops with the assistance of other
5 units, impersonated 40,000 men, or 2 complete divi-
6 sions of American forces, by using fabricated radio
7 networks, soundtracks of construction work and ar-
8 tillery fire, and more than 600 inflatable and real
9 vehicles;

10 (17) according to a military intelligence officer
11 of the 79th Infantry, “There is no doubt that Oper-
12 ation Viersen materially assisted in deceiving the
13 enemy with regard to the real dispositions and inten-
14 tions of this Army.”;

15 (18) 3 soldiers of the 23d Headquarters Special
16 Troops gave their lives and dozens were injured in
17 carrying out their mission;

18 (19) in April 1945, the 3133d Signal Service
19 Company conducted Operation Craftsman in support
20 of Operation Second Wind, the successful Allied ef-
21 fort to break through the German defensive position
22 to the north of Florence, Italy, known as the Gothic
23 Line;

24 (20) along with an attached platoon of British
25 engineers, who were inflatable decoy specialists, the

1 3133d Signal Service Company used sonic deception
2 to misrepresent troop locations along this defensive
3 line;

4 (21) the activities of the 23d Headquarters
5 Special Troops and the 3133d Signal Service Com-
6 pany remained highly classified for more than 40
7 years after the war and were never formally recog-
8 nized;

9 (22) the extraordinary accomplishments of this
10 unit are deserving of belated official recognition; and

11 (23) the United States is eternally grateful to
12 the soldiers of the 23d Headquarters Special Troops
13 and the 3133d Signal Service Company for their
14 proficient use of innovative tactics during World
15 War II, which saved lives and made significant con-
16 tributions to the defeat of the Axis powers.

17 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

18 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The President Pro Tem-
19 pore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Rep-
20 resentatives shall make appropriate arrangements for the
21 award, on behalf of Congress, of a gold medal of appro-
22 priate design to the 23d Headquarters Special Troops and
23 the 3133d Signal Services Company in recognition of
24 unique and highly distinguished service during World War
25 II.

1 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
2 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
3 Treasury (in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”) shall
4 strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and
5 inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

6 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

7 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
8 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal
9 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution, where
10 it shall be available for display as appropriate and
11 made available for research.

12 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of
13 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution should
14 make the gold medal received under paragraph (1)
15 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
16 locations associated with the 23d Headquarters Spe-
17 cial Troops and the 3133d Signal Services Company.

18 (d) DUPLICATE MEDALS.—Under regulations that
19 the Secretary may promulgate, the Secretary may strike
20 and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck
21 under this Act, at a price sufficient to cover the cost of
22 the medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machin-
23 ery, and overhead expenses.

1 **SEC. 4. STATUS OF MEDAL.**

2 (a) NATIONAL MEDAL.—The gold medal struck
3 under this Act shall be a national medal for the purposes
4 of chapter 51 of title 31, United States Code.

5 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purpose of section
6 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
7 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

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