

Vermont Guard's helicopters were in Iraq, General Dubie coordinated with other State Guards to get the help Vermont needed.

The Guard's intensive rescue and aid mission eventually evolved into a longer-term recovery and rebuilding mission. Skillfully and tirelessly, Vermont citizen-soldiers set to work removing debris and rebuilding roads and infrastructure.

General Dubie commanded some 500 activated Guard members in the wake of Irene. But that does not account for other ongoing missions in 2011, or the substantial contribution the Vermont Guard has made to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—including a major activation to Afghanistan in 2010. In honoring General Dubie as Vermonter of the Year, we pay tribute to the tremendous sacrifice made both in State and overseas by Vermont National Guard members and their families.

True to form, General Dubie, despite his extensive experience with dangerous overseas missions, has called the Irene deployment the proudest mission of his career because he was able to directly help so many of his fellow Vermonters.

MG Michael Dubie is a proven leader and he embodies the best of Vermont. I am proud to recognize his hard work and I wish him continued success in his career.

I ask unanimous consent that the Burlington Free Press article entitled "Maj. Gen. Dubie is Vermonter of the Year" be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Burlington Free Press, Jan. 1, 2012]

**MAJ. GEN. DUBIE IS VERMONTER OF THE YEAR**

As the Vermonter of the Year, we select Maj. Gen. Michael Dubie, adjutant general of the Vermont National Guard, as the representative of the team of men and women of the Guard and the many civilians who worked together to help Vermont recover from Tropical Storm Irene.

In our lifetime, Tropical Storm Irene is arguably the biggest and most dominant local news story. Three people lost their lives during the storm. Vermont National Guard 1st Sgt. Shawn Stocker lost his life working to respond. Thousands lost their homes, their businesses and many of their possessions. Thousands more suffered property damage. Irene washed away some roads, damaged many others and rendered useless the state office complex in Waterbury.

Who would have thought that our state could recover so well in less than 90 days!

Vermonters owe this recovery to so many. State and local government leaders have done their jobs well. In every community impacted by the storm, there were at least a few civilians who devoted most of their time and energy for many weeks helping their community respond and recover. Hundreds of volunteers from all over our state and beyond stepped up to do extraordinary things. They collectively demonstrated both the indomitable spirit of Vermonters and our love for community.

Approximately 500 Vermont National Guard members were activated as well. We are especially mindful that this activation is in addition to Air Guard deployments to

Norway and Korea, ongoing Vermont National Guard missions in Djibouti, Kosovo, Macedonia and Senegal, helicopter rescues in Iraq—all in 2011—and following the major activation to Afghanistan in 2010. Let us also remember, as the Iraq War officially comes to its end, the tremendous sacrifice made by Vermont National Guard members and their families while serving our country during these past nine years.

As Dubie said in nominating the men and women of the Vermont National Guard, "As you know, we are a team. It is what makes us so strong." In responding to Tropical Storm Irene, the Vermont "team" also included many civilians. Together, the Vermont National Guard and the community members searched and rescued and then delivered supplies to people in otherwise unreachable locations. Then they began reconstruction. In addition to the National Guard, all of these volunteers should be commended and thanked for their efforts.

We can choose only one person, however, as Vermonter of the Year. Because so many people did so much, the selection committee found it hard to identify a single individual to recognize. So we choose Maj. Gen. Michael Dubie to honor them all.

**ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS**

**RECOGNIZING THE "MAJOR CHARLES ROBERT SOLTES JR., O.D. BLIND REHABILITATION CENTER"**

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to commemorate the dedication of the "Major Charles Robert Soltes Jr., O.D. Department of Veterans Affairs Blind Rehabilitation Center."

As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives during the 111th Congress, I strongly supported the bill that ultimately became P.L. 111-164. That law designated the Department of Veterans Affairs Blind Rehabilitation Center in Long Beach, CA, as the "Major Charles Robert Soltes, Jr., O.D. Department of Veterans Affairs Blind Rehabilitation Center."

Naming this facility after MAJ Charles Robert Soltes, Jr. is an appropriate expression of our support for our blinded veterans. In 2004, while deployed in Iraq, MAJ Soltes was serving in the 426th Civil Affairs Battalion in the U.S. Army when the vehicle he was traveling in was struck by an improvised explosive device, costing him his life.

MAJ Soltes was the first Army optometrist to be killed in action while on active duty. He left behind a long-lasting legacy in the veteran community. His sacrifices remain an inspiration, particularly amongst the approximately 157,000 veterans in the United States who are legally blind and the more than one million veterans suffering from debilitating low vision.

Mr. President, I was the son of a World War II veteran and before entering public service, I practiced optometry in Rogers, AR. With that background, I hold an immense respect for, and a particularly strong interest in, the care that VA blind rehabilitation centers provide our wounded warriors.

Approximately 60 percent of veterans with known combat-related Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and 30 percent with noncombat-related TBI report vision symptoms. As eye injuries continue to plague our servicemembers overseas, our VA eye care providers play a vital role in the medical service our veterans receive.

This week, the VA health care system adds one more location where those who have given so much for our freedoms can seek help with their vision problems. The dedication of this facility as the "Major Charles Robert Soltes Jr., O.D. Department of Veterans Affairs Blind Rehabilitation Center" is a fitting tribute to a fallen hero who committed his life to our country and the health and wellbeing of his fellow Americans. The service and sacrifice of MAJ Soltes will not be forgotten and his dedication to country and mankind will live on through the increased care for our Nation's blind veterans.●

**REMEMBERING ETTA JAMES**

• Mrs. BOXER. Mr. President, today I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring the life and artistry of Etta James, the legendary singer and entertainer who moved and delighted music lovers for more than half a century. She died in her hometown of Riverside, CA last week at the age of 73 after a long and valiant battle with leukemia.

Born Jamesetta Hawkins in Los Angeles in 1938, she began singing in the St. Paul Baptist Church choir at age 5 and recorded her first hit record, "The Wallflower (Roll With Me Henry)," when she was just 15. Etta James was equally at home singing rhythm & blues classics like "Something's Got a Hold on Me," soulful ballads such as "All I Could Do Was Cry," and passionate love songs including the incomparable "At Last."

I was fortunate enough to grow up with her music, dancing to "The Wallflower" in high school, "At Last" as a newlywed, and "Tell Mama" as a young mother. As she continued to tour and record, later generations marveled at her talents, reveled in her exuberant performances, and admired her indomitable spirit.

Through her music, Etta James brought the joys and sorrows of life home to millions of fans all over the world. She will be deeply missed, but her music will live on in our hearts and souls.

On behalf of the people of California, I send my deepest condolences to her husband, Artis Mills; her two sons, Donto and Sametto James; and her four grandchildren.●

**TRIBUTE TO MASTER SERGEANT TRAVIS RIDDICK**

• Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to a fallen son of Iowa,