

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1256

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 25, 2017

Mr. MARKEY (for himself, Ms. COLLINS, Mr. KING, Mr. INHOFE, Mr. WHITEHOUSE, Mr. VAN HOLLEN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. RISCH, Ms. WARREN, and Mr. KENNEDY) 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
4 (comprised of the 23d Headquarters and Head-
5 quarters Company, Special Troops, the 603d Engi-
6 neer Camouflage Battalion, the 406th Combat Engi-
7 neer Company, the 3132d Signal Service Company
8 and the Signal Company, Special, 23d Head-
9 quarters, Special Troops), and the 3133d Signal
10 Service Company were top-secret units of the United
11 States Army that served in Europe during World
12 War II;

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

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

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

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

1 (6) many Ghost Army soldiers were citizen-sol-
2 diers recruited from art schools, advertising agen-
3 cies, communications companies, and other creative
4 and technical professions;

5 (7) the first 4 members of the 23d Head-
6 quarters, Special Troops, landed on D-Day and 2
7 became casualties while creating false beach landing
8 sites;

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

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

18 (10) Operation Elephant was a prelude to the
19 21 full-scale tactical deceptions completed by the
20 23d Headquarters, Special Troops;

21 (11) often operating on or near the front lines,
22 the 23d Headquarters, Special Troops, used inflat-
23 able tanks, artillery, airplanes and other vehicles, ad-
24 vanced engineered soundtracks, and skillfully crafted
25 radio trickery to create the illusion of a sizable

1 American forces where there were none and to draw
2 the enemy away from Allied troops;

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

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

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

24 (15) in its final mission, Operation Viersen, in
25 March 1945, the 23d Headquarters, Special Troops,

1 conducted a tactical deception operation intended to
2 draw German units down the Rhine River and away
3 from the Ninth Army, allowing the Ninth Army to
4 cross the Rhine into Germany;

5 (16) during Operation Viersen, the 23d Head-
6 quarters, Special Troops, with the assistance of
7 other units, impersonated 40,000 men, or 2 com-
8 plete divisions of American forces, by using fab-
9 ricated radio networks, soundtracks of construction
10 work and artillery fire, and more than 600 inflatable
11 and real vehicles;

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

17 (18) 3 soldiers of the 23d Headquarters, Spe-
18 cial Troops, gave their lives and dozens were injured
19 in carrying out their mission;

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

1 (20) along with an attached platoon of British
2 engineers, who were inflatable decoy specialists, the
3 3133d Signal Service Company used sonic deception
4 to misrepresent troop locations along this defensive
5 line;

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

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

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

19 **SEC. 3. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

20 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The President Pro Tem-
21 pore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Rep-
22 resentatives shall make appropriate arrangements for the
23 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a gold medal of ap-
24 propriate design to the 23d Headquarters, Special Troops
25 and the 3133d Signal Services Company in recognition of

1 unique and highly distinguished service during World War
2 II.

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

8 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

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

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

21 (d) DUPLICATE MEDALS.—Under regulations that
22 the Secretary may promulgate, the Secretary may strike
23 and sell duplicates in bronze of the gold medal struck
24 under this Act, at a price sufficient to cover the cost of

1 the medals, including labor, materials, dies, use of machin-
2 ery, and overhead expenses.

3 **SEC. 4. STATUS OF MEDAL.**

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

7 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purpose of section
8 5134 of title 31, United States Code, all medals struck
9 under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic items.

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