

Senate Resolution 466

By: Senators Harbison of the 15th, Karinshak of the 48th, Davenport of the 44th, Dugan of the 30th, Payne of the 54th and others

ADOPTED SENATE

A RESOLUTION

1 Commending the 75th anniversary of the WWII Merrill's Marauders mission and urging the
2 United States Congress to award the Congressional Gold Medal; and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, in August, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister
4 Winston Churchill proposed creation of a top-secret, "expendable" American ground unit to
5 engage in a "long-range penetration mission" behind enemy lines in Japanese occupied
6 Burma to cut off communications and supply lines and capture northern Burma's only
7 strategic, all-weather Myitkyina airfield; and

8 WHEREAS, President Roosevelt issued a 1943 call for volunteers for "a dangerous and
9 hazardous mission," answered by approximately 3,000 American Infantrymen from stateside,
10 the Caribbean, and the South Pacific, representing 15 ethnic groups from every state and
11 including a Bataan Death March survivor, Nisei interpreters, a Native American code talker,
12 and Pearl Harbor survivors; and

13 WHEREAS, the top-secret unit, expecting no survivors, was officially designated in January,
14 1944, as the 5307th Composite Unit Provisional (CUP), code-named "Galahad," which later
15 became known as "Merrill's Marauders," after their leader, Brigadier General Frank D.
16 Merrill; and

17 WHEREAS, in February, 1944, the Marauders began their approximately 1,000 mile march
18 through dense Burmese jungle and up the Himalayan Mountains with no artillery support,
19 carrying only what they could pack on their backs or mules, and would become the first
20 Americans to engage the Japanese on the ground in Asia and the first Americans to fight
21 there since the 1900 Boxer Rebellion; and

22 WHEREAS, the Marauders fought valiantly during their five-month march to the Myitkyina
23 airfield, defeating the much larger and better equipped elite Japanese 18th Division in five
24 major and 30 minor engagements, and no other WWII U.S. combat force, except the First

25 Marine Division which took and held Guadalcanal for four months, experienced as much
26 uninterrupted jungle fighting; and

27 WHEREAS, the Marauders endured starvation, disease, monsoons, and isolation, which were
28 exacerbated by inadequate aerial resupply drops, and malaria, typhus, dysentery, and other
29 jungle maladies inflicted more casualties on the Marauders than the Japanese; and

30 WHEREAS, only several hundred Marauders remained fit enough, after climbing the
31 Himalaya's disease infested, 6,100 foot Naura Hkyat Pass, to seize their objective of the
32 Myitkyina airfield, which enabled supplies to be flown into Burma to connect the Ledo and
33 Burma roads so a crucial Allied pathway could be forged into China; and

34 WHEREAS, on August 10, 1944, when the 5307th CUP was deactivated, without even a
35 formation, only about 100 skeletal-looking Merrill's Marauders were left in Burma with the
36 remainder evacuated due to jungle diseases, exhaustion, and malnutrition; and

37 WHEREAS, for their bravery, sacrifice, and success, Merrill's Marauders were awarded
38 numerous medals and decorations, including the Presidential Unit Citation, and each member
39 of the 5307th CUP has the "rare distinction" of being awarded a Bronze Star; and

40 WHEREAS, although Merrill's Marauders were a short-lived commando unit, the legacy of
41 their bravery is honored by the Army's 75th Ranger Regiment, which traces its lineage to the
42 5307th CUP, wears the Merrill's Marauders patch as their crest, and named their military
43 intelligence building "Melillo Hall" in honor of Georgia's last original Merrill's Marauder,
44 Vincent Melillo; and

45 WHEREAS, Georgia is honored to commemorate 2019 as the 75th anniversary of the
46 Merrill's Marauders mission in the China Burma India Theater, known today as the Forgotten
47 Theater of WWII, and salutes the state's large Ranger presence: the 75th Ranger Regiment,
48 3rd Ranger Battalion, and Airborne Ranger Training Brigade, all at Ft. Benning; Camp
49 Merrill in Dahlongega; and 1st Ranger Battalion, Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah; and

50 WHEREAS, U.S. Representative Peter T. King (R-NY) introduced H.R. 906 with
51 Congressman Sanford Bishop (D-GA) as a major cosponsor, and U.S. Senator Johnny
52 Isakson (R-GA) introduced S. 743 in the 116th Congress, the "Merrill's Marauders
53 Congressional Gold Medal Act," and this third attempt might be the last since only 13 out
54 of the original 3,000 Merrill's Marauders are still living.

55 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
56 commend the 75th anniversary of the WWII Merrill's Marauders mission and urge the
57 Congress of the United States to act favorably on legislation to award the Congressional Gold
58 Medal, the highest honor Congress can bestow, to Merrill's Marauders.

59 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
60 to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to President Donald
61 J. Trump, Vice President Michael Pence, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, Majority
62 Leader Mitch McConnell, and each senator and representative from Georgia in the Congress
63 of the United States.