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HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 81

Offered February 6, 2026

Commending the United States Army dustoff crews of the Vietnam War.

Patron—Guzman

WHEREAS, the United States Army dustoff crews of the Vietnam War, elite aeromedical teams who revolutionized battlefield medicine through their refinement of helicopter evacuations, received a Congressional Gold Medal in 2024; and

WHEREAS, the history of battlefield medical evacuations (medevac) dates back to the Roman Empire, and modern medevac systems have their roots in the horse-drawn ambulances and triage units developed by the Great Army of Napoleon; and

WHEREAS, the United States effectively utilized motorized ambulances in World War I and World War II and pioneered the use of rotary-wing medevac aircraft during the Korean War, with distinctive bubble-canopied Bell helicopters transporting the wounded to Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals; and

WHEREAS, during the Vietnam War, the United States perfected helicopter evacuations through technological innovations, including the development of the venerable Bell UH-1 Iroquois, better known as the “Huey,” and the visionary contributions of exceptional leaders, such as United States Army Major Charles Livingston Kelley; and

WHEREAS, as commander of the 57th Medical Detachment (Helicopter Ambulance), Major Kelley instituted systems that replaced echeloned evacuation and triage procedures with near-immediate transport of wounded soldiers from the battlefield to appropriate medical care; these helicopter evacuation systems became a model for other such units in the United States Army and other branches of the United States Armed Forces; and

WHEREAS, known by their radio callsigns “medevac” or “dustoff,” these air ambulance units provided dedicated, rapid-reaction medevac services throughout Vietnam and were credited with evacuating more than 900,000 soldiers, allies, and civilians between May 1962 and March 1973; and

WHEREAS, United States Army dustoff crews consisted of a pilot, crew chief, and medic, all of whom were intrepid, courageous, and highly skilled—able to operate their Hueys in extreme conditions, land them on almost any terrain to pick up the wounded, and provide emergency care en route to ready medical facilities; and

WHEREAS, the vital work of the United States Army dustoff crews often proved to be the difference between life and death for wounded personnel by ensuring care within the “golden hour,” the critical period of time immediately after receiving a traumatic injury; and

WHEREAS, during the Vietnam War, some United States Army dustoff crews operated so efficiently that they were able to deliver a patient to a waiting medical facility in an average of 50 minutes from the receipt of the mission, which saved the lives of countless personnel and remains a proud benchmark for helicopter medevac crews today; and

WHEREAS, United States Army dustoff crews were consistently exposed to combat situations in the course of their duties; many battles during the Vietnam War raged at night, and these crews often found themselves searching for a landing zone in complete darkness, in bad weather, or over mountainous terrain, all while being the target of intense enemy fire as they attempted to rescue the wounded; and

WHEREAS, consequently, United States Army dustoff crews suffered a rate of aircraft loss that was more than three times that of all other types of combat helicopter missions in Vietnam, and crewmembers had a one in three chance of being wounded or killed during their tours of duty; and

WHEREAS, United States Army dustoff crew members are also some of the most highly decorated soldiers in United States military history; and

WHEREAS, Major Kelley posthumously received the Distinguished Service Cross and the Silver Star after he was killed in action while maneuvering his aircraft to save a wounded United States soldier and several Vietnamese soldiers; his bold final words after being warned to stay away from the landing zone due to the ferocity of enemy fire, “When I have your wounded,” have continued to inspire helicopter medevac crews to this day, representing their gallantry, indomitable spirit, and unique devotion to the well-being of their fellow soldiers; and

WHEREAS, members of the United States Armed Forces on the ground in Vietnam had their battlefield prowess reinforced knowing that there were heroic United States Army dustoff crews just a few minutes from the fight, which was instrumental to their confidence and morale; and

WHEREAS, on the home front, military families in the United States knew that their loved ones would receive the quickest and best possible care in the event of an injury, thanks to the United States Army dustoff crews; and

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59 WHEREAS, the willingness of United States Army dustoff crews to also risk their lives to save civilians
60 left an immeasurably positive impression on the people of Vietnam and exemplified the finest ideals of
61 compassion and humanity; and

62 WHEREAS, members of United States Army dustoff crews of the Vietnam War hailed from communities
63 across the United States and represented numerous ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds; now,
64 therefore, be it

65 RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the United States Army dustoff crews of the Vietnam War
66 hereby be commended on receiving a Congressional Gold Medal for their extraordinary service and life-
67 saving actions; and, be it

68 RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for
69 presentation to representatives of United States Army dustoff crews of the Vietnam War as an expression of
70 the House of Delegates' admiration for their unique contributions to the development of battlefield medicine.