

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 80

*Celebrating the life of Lieutenant Colonel Richard Grover Vaught, USAF, Ret.*

Agreed to by the Senate, March 5, 2026

WHEREAS, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Grover Vaught, USAF, Ret., an unrivaled expert in air mobility who coordinated large-scale movements of personnel and equipment supporting major military operations around the world over the course of his distinguished career in the United States Air Force, died on November 8, 2025; and

WHEREAS, Richard Vaught graduated from Christian Brothers High School in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was a standout track and field athlete and an all-state football player who helped lead the football team to three consecutive undefeated seasons; and

WHEREAS, Richard Vaught continued his education at Vanderbilt University, but left school to return home after his father was injured in a car accident; two years later, he moved to Michigan and worked in the GMC Truck and Coach Division of General Motors while attending Oakland University, from which he earned multiple degrees; and

WHEREAS, Richard Vaught was selected to attend the General Motors College of Manufacturing Management, which is now part of Kettering University, then became a foreman and acting general foreman in car assembly for Pontiac; during his tenure with General Motors, he was awarded three patents in the late 1970s; and

WHEREAS, Richard Vaught joined the United States Air Force in 1980 and was assigned to what is now the 375th Air Mobility Wing at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois, where he supported numerous air transportation operations and pursued a master's degree from Webster University; and

WHEREAS, Richard Vaught next deployed to Incirlik Air Base as the traffic management officer and chief military customs officer for United States military personnel in Turkey, earning the Traffic Management Officer of the Year for the United States Air Forces in Europe award in 1985; and

WHEREAS, in 1986, Richard Vaught was assigned to the 322nd Airlift Division at Ramstein Air Base in Germany as chief of cargo requirements and officer in charge of the aerial port control center, where he controlled all airlift in an area spanning Europe, Africa, and western Asia, and supported Operation Cyclone in Afghanistan during the Afghan-Soviet War; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, Richard Vaught returned to Scott Air Force Base as the primary worldwide war planner for Air Mobility Command; in that capacity, he coordinated airlift for all troops into Panama during Operation Just Cause and built the air bridge that supported the movement of hundreds of thousands of soldiers to the Middle East during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, one of the largest troop movements in United States history; he also oversaw the aerial evacuation of Subic Bay, Philippines, after the eruption of Mount Pinatubo in 1991; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, Richard Vaught served as executive officer of the 628th Air Mobility Support Group and supported all Air Mobility Command squadrons, detachments, and operating locations in Europe, Africa, and southwest Asia; and

WHEREAS, Richard Vaught was subsequently promoted to operations officer for the 608th Aerial Port Squadron, where he supported missions to enforce no-fly zones over Iraq and deliver humanitarian aid to Rwanda; under his leadership, the port was recognized for excellence in handling hazardous materials and its foreign object debris programs; and

WHEREAS, in 1995, Richard Vaught was chosen as commander of southwest Asia for Air Mobility Command in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, supporting all Air Mobility Command squadrons, detachments, and operating locations in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates; and

WHEREAS, after the Khobar Towers bombing in 1996, Richard Vaught promptly organized memorial services and arranged transportation for the remains of the deceased, and moved the 4404th Wing (Provisional) to a secure location while maintaining operational readiness, a feat never accomplished before or since; and

WHEREAS, for these extraordinary accomplishments, Richard Vaught was selected as the Field Grade Officer of the Year, becoming the only officer in the United States Air Force selected as officer of the year as a company grade officer and a field grade officer; and

WHEREAS, Richard Vaught returned to the United States to serve as director of transportation for the Military Postal Service Agency in Arlington, until he was reassigned back at Ramstein Air Base as the primary war planner for the United States Air Forces in Europe; he oversaw missions in the Balkans, coordinated the recovery of sailors killed in the bombing of the USS *Cole* in 2000, and developed plans for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq during the Global War on Terror; and

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WHEREAS, in 2002, Richard Vaught served as the United States representative to the NATO Infrastructure Committee, then spent the last three years of his career as executive officer with NATO's International Military Staff, handling logistics, customs, and security for formal meetings between NATO generals and Russian officials in Moscow, as well as meetings between NATO generals and Ukrainian officials, before his retirement on November 30, 2005; and

WHEREAS, over the course of his 25-year military career, Richard Vaught received the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Air Force Achievement Medal, Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, Air Force Organizational Excellence Award, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, and many other awards and decorations; and

WHEREAS, after his well-earned retirement, Richard Vaught traveled extensively and became an international big game hunter, completing 32 safaris in Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa; and

WHEREAS, Richard Vaught will be fondly remembered and greatly missed by his wife, Patricia, and numerous other family members and friends; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Senate of Virginia hereby note with great sadness the loss of Lieutenant Colonel Richard Grover Vaught, USAF, Ret., a decorated member of the United States Air Force who supported air mobility campaigns around the world; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the family of Lieutenant Colonel Richard Grover Vaught, USAF, Ret., as an expression of the Senate of Virginia's respect for his memory.