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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN. J.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS AT

MEDAL OF HONOR CEREMONY

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 1974

THE LAST AMERICAN SOLDIER IS HOME FROM THE BATTLEFIELDS
OF VIETNAM. OUR LANDING SHIPS HAVE LONG SINCE DEPARTED THOSE
DISTANT SHORES. AND OUR PLANES HAVE LONG AGO FLOWN THEIR LAST
MISSIONS OF WAR ACROSS THOSE FARAWAY JUNGLES.

LET US FERVENTLY PRAY THAT VIETNAM WAS, INDEED, THE
LAST -- OUR LAST WAR.

WE ARE REMINDED OF VIETNAM TODAY -- OF THAT LONG AND PAINFUL TIME -- BY TWO MEN WHO LIVED IT. AND WHOSE ACTIONS WILL NEVER DIE IN THE ANNALS OF UNITED STATES MILITARY HISTORY. FOR THE NATION THEY SERVED BESTOWS ON THEM TODAY THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR FOR THEIR ACTS OF COURAGE ABOVE AND BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY.

UNITED STATES ARMY WARRANT OFFICER LOUIS R. ROCCO (ROCK-O) -- SERGEANT FIRST CLASS IN VIETNAM -- AND ARMY STAFF SERGEANT JON R. CAVAIANI (KHAV-EYE-ON-EE) -- BY THE COURAGE OF THEIR ACTS, CARRIED FORWARD THE LONG AND PROUD MILITARY TRADITION OF SELFLESS DEDICATION TO THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM.

ARMY WARRANT OFFICER LOUIS R. ROCCO (ROCK-O) DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF ON MAY 24, 1970. HE VOLUNTEERED TO HELP EVACUATE EIGHT CRITICALLY WOUNDED SOUTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS UNDER ATTACK. HIS HELICOPTER CRASH-LANDED AT THE EVACUATION SITE UNDER INTENSE ENEMY FIRE. IGNORING A FRACTURED WRIST AND BROKEN HIP AND A SEVERELY BRUISED BACK, WARRANT OFFICER ROCCO PULLED THE UNCONSCIOUS SURVIVORS FROM THE BURNING WRECKAGE. HIS HANDS WERE SEVERELY BURNED, CAUSING HIM EXCRUCIATING PAIN. HE NEVERTHELESS CARRIED EACH OF HIS UNCONSCIOUS COMRADES MORE THAN TWENTY YARDS THROUGH ENEMY FIRE TO FRIENDLY POSITIONS.

TRAINED IN FIRST AID, HE ADMINISTERED TO THEM BEFORE COLLAPSING INTO UNCONSCIOUSNESS. WARRANT OFFICER ROCCO'S BRAVERY WAS DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR SAVING THREE OF HIS FELLOW SOLDIERS FROM CERTAIN DEATH. HIS GALLANTRY -- DISREGARDING HIS OWN PAIN AND INJURIES -- IS IN THE HIGHEST TRADITIONS OF SELF-SACRIFICE AND COURAGE IN OUR MILITARY SERVICE. AND I SAY TO HIS FAMILY HERE TODAY, YOU ALSO WALK IN THE RESPECT AND ADMIRATION OF YOUR COUNTRY -- AND OF YOUR PRESIDENT.

SERGEANT CAVAIANI WAS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED-IN-ACTION WHEN RECOMMENDED FOR THE MEDAL OF HONOR. IT WAS ONLY LATER LEARNED THAT HE HAD BEEN CAPTURED. HE WAS A PRISONER-OF-WAR FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS AND WAS REPATRIATED ON JULY TENTH, 1973.

ON JUNE FOUR AND FIVE, 1971, HE SERVED AS A PLATOON LEADER - PROVIDING SECURITY FOR AN ISOLATED RADIO RELAY SITE WITHIN ENEMY-HELD TERRITORY. THE SERGEANT'S UNIT WAS ATTACKED BY A SUPERIOR ENEMY FORCE.

FOR THOSE TWO DAYS -- FIRING WITH DIFFERENT WEAPONS -- SERGEANT
CAVAIANI DIRECTED THE EVACUATION OF SOME OF HIS PLATOON BY
HELICOPTER WHILE ORDERING THE OTHERS TO ESCAPE -- MANY WERE ABLE TO
DO SO. HE REMAINED, HOWEVER, EXPOSING HIMSELF TO HEAVY ENEMY
FIRE. SERGEANT CAVAIANI WAS WOUNDED NUMEROUS TIMES, FINALLY
FALLING TO HIS CAPTORS. WE ARE HONORED THAT THE SERGEANT'S
FAMILY IS HERE WITH US TODAY. THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
WISHES TO TELL THEM IN PERSON THAT SERGEANT CAVAIANI IS AN AMERICAN
OF EXTRAORDINARY HEROISM AND HIS VALOR REFLECTS WELL ON ALL OF THEM.

THIS DAY IS WITNESS TO THE FACT THAT THE BRAVEST OF THE
BRAVE STILL RISE FROM AMONG OUR PEOPLE. THAT FREEDOM AND JUSTICE
HAVE SURVIVED AND WILL SURVIVE: THAT PEACE IS STILL OUR MOST
PRECIOUS AND ENDURING GOAL. AND THAT WE -- THE AMERICAN
PEOPLE -- WILL FOREVER CHERISH THE NOBLE IDEALS ENTRUSTED TO US
THESE PAST TWO CENTURIES BY OUR FOREFATHERS. THESE IDEALS DO
NOT SLEEP. THEY ARE NOT SILENT. THEY LIVE AMONG US HERE TODAY
IN THE PRESENCE OF JON ROBERT CAVAIANI AND LOUIS RICHARD ROCCO --
AND THEIR FAMILIES.

THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY WILL NOW READ THE CITATIONS.

END OF TEXT