

The following essay was submitted to the Miami Military Museum by Miami Springs Senior High School 12-grade student Jennifer Cousin.

Congressional Medal of Honor

Humans are consistently executing extravagant, life-threatening activities. It is within our blood to carry ourselves filled with pride and honor. One of the highest honors an individual in the military can receive is the Congressional Medal of Honor. This medal is awarded to those that have risked their lives for others in a very heroic manner in their call of duty.

Death is not an inane matter but is in fact a very spine shuddering subject for most people. There are a total of six military branches: army, navy, marines, coast guard, air force, and space force.¹ Out of all these branches, the medal has only been awarded 3,512 times.² There are millions upon millions of individuals in the United States and the small percentage that have earned the Congressional Medal in the battlefield represents how much of a noteworthy prestige it is to acquire one. We are mortal beings and can pass away at any given moment. However, purposely risking one's life without a hint of doubt nor regret is worthy of recognition.

Without a doubt an extravagant amount of people deserve the honor of being awarded the Congressional Medal by the President for their active duty in the battlefield. However, the acts that go recognized can be unparalleled or unmatched with others. A prime example is Bruce W. Carter. At the age of 19, Carter threw himself on a grenade to save his comrades during a battle in Vietnam.³ This is a grand act of heroism and bravery that is not commonly displayed among the youth. His feet were not bolted to the ground but instead swift as a bird eager to save others from harm's way. This selfless act set forth by Carter exhibits that he truly was worthy of the Medal of Honor. These sorts of actions go recognized because of the Medals awarded. If it weren't for bestowing courageous people just like Carter, they would certainly go unmentioned.

Achieving milestones is not an easy task and takes effort. It is within our human nature to want to be praised and celebrated for our actions. Military personnel are essential to our country.

¹ Johnson, Sydney. "How Many Military Branches Are There and What Does Each Branch Do?" *United Service Organizations*, The USO, 23 Sept. 2020, www.uso.org/stories/2855-how-many-military-branches-are-there-and-what-does-each-do.

² "Medal of Honor: History and Issues." *EveryCRSReport.com*, Congressional Research Service, 18 Aug. 2015, www.everycrsreport.com/reports/95-519.html#:~:text=The%20Medal%20of%20Honor%20is,3%2C512%20times%20to%203%2C493%20recipients.

³ Sisk, Richard. "Marine Who Earned Medal of Honor in Vietnam Finally Receives Burial at Arlington." *Military.com*, www.military.com/daily-news/2020/11/05/marine-who-earned-medal-of-honor-vietnam-finally-receives-burial-arlington.html.

Their defense is a bulwark against foreign enemies. The citizens' support can serve as a buttress for those in the army. The Congressional Medal of Honor can serve as a confidence boost or a goal some might want to reach. As long as blood flows through their veins, anything is within their grasp. Hard work is another aspect the Medal portrays.

Another act worthy of notice is the Congressional Medal of Honor given to Roy Benavidez. He served as a Master Sergeant in the United States Army and took part in the Vietnam War. Roy went through multiple heart wrenching difficulties in his life. In 1965, he was sent to South Vietnam where he stepped on a land mine during a patrol and the doctors said he would never walk again. However, this did not stop him, and he began training at night starting off with crawling to redevelop his ability to walk. The mere thought of him using his elbows and chin goes to show he did not accept his fate. After some time, he started being able to wiggle his toes, leading to his feet, then after multiple months he was able to walk again. His mindset and soul power aided him to accomplish the impossible. Once he was able to walk again, he returned to combat in Vietnam in July 1966. He received his Medal by carrying and dragging half of his wounded comrades to an awaiting aircraft after being attacked.⁴ He protected all of them by firing as he was running alongside the aircraft as it was picking up fellow team members.⁵ His Medal of Honor was given in 1981. Everything he went through displays “no man left behind” and he surpassed any issue when all odds were against him.

The Congressional Medal of Honor given to each individual is a part of history we should never forget. The lives that were lost mean so much to America's history and the families; it is the highest military honor. It allows them to move forward with pride knowing their family member or friend was like an angel casting sunlight over future generations. Some of the ones given the Medal are still alive and do not regret their actions for the people.

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⁴ “Master Sergeant Roy Benavidez.” *Naval History and Heritage Command*, www.history.navy.mil/browse-by-topic/people/namesakes/roy-benavidez.html.

⁵ “Roy P. Benavidez: Vietnam War: U.S. Army: Medal of Honor Recipient.” *Congressional Medal of Honor Society*, www.cmohs.org/recipients/roy-p-benavidez.