

Award the Congressional Gold Medal to the U.S. Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society

From: The Honorable Niki Tsongas

Sent By: thomas.temple@mail.house.gov

Bill: H.R. 632

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Endorsed by the Military Officer's (MOAA) Association of America in 2014

Dear Colleague,

I invite you to join me as a cosponsor of H.R. 632, the U.S. Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society Recognition Act of 2015, which authorizes awarding the Congressional Gold Medal to the U.S. Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society (AFEES) in recognition of the ceaseless efforts of American aircrew members to escape captivity and evade capture by the enemy forces in occupied countries during our foreign wars, and the brave resistance organizations and patriotic nationals of those foreign countries who assisted them.

Formed in 1964, the U.S. Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society is an organization created by aircrew members who evaded capture by enemy forces during foreign wars with the assistance of resistance organizations and patriotic nationals of foreign countries. This organization includes downed aircrew members and people who directly aided them in escape and evasion. AFEES has more than 600 members, including members from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

In 2014, the President of the Military Officer's Association of America (MOAA), Vice Admiral Norbert R. Ryan, Jr. (Ret), stated that, "The awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal is appropriate recognition of their bravery, tenacity and personal sacrifices in the defense of our Nation."

Each downed aircrew member's story is different, but the narrative for each member has one common thread: American aircrew members evading capture or escaping captivity with the assistance of brave people living in an occupied country. During nearly all foreign wars, members of our Air Forces have been forced to eject, crash land, or abandon their aircraft in an occupied country or territory. Those downed aircrew members had to evade capture by enemy forces, often times while suffering from critical injuries. Of the downed aircrew members that were captured, many escaped from the enemy force that was holding them. Many times, downed aircrew members were aided in evasion and escape by resistance organizations and patriotic nationals in those occupied countries. Thousands of brave, ordinary people in the occupied countries took extraordinary risks at huge costs to help these aircrew members.

Please join me in cosponsoring legislation to award these aircrew members and the brave people who aided them with a congressional gold medal recognizing their bravery and personal sacrifice when American needed them most. If you have any questions or would like to be a cosponsor,

please have your staff contact Senior Master Sergeant Tom Temple at Thomas.Temple@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

NIKI TSONGAS

Member of Congress