

No. R-214. House concurrent resolution commemorating the bravery of the Vermont-trained First Special Service Force.

(H.C.R.175)

Offered by: Representatives Jerome of Brandon, Austin of Colchester, Bancroft of Westford, Batchelor of Derby, Chase of Colchester, Christie of Hartford, Colston of Winooski, Cordes of Lincoln, Dickinson of St. Albans Town, Durfee of Shaftsbury, Gardner of Richmond, Giambatista of Essex, Harrison of Chittenden, Hashim of Dummerston, Kimbell of Woodstock, Kornheiser of Brattleboro, LaClair of Barre Town, McCoy of Poultney, O'Brien of Tunbridge, O'Sullivan of Burlington, Page of Newport City, Redmond of Essex, Seymour of Sutton, Shaw of Pittsford, Terenzini of Rutland Town, and Toleno of Brattleboro

Whereas, one of the most amazing stories of World War II is the incredible heroism of the Vermont-trained First Special Service Force that was established in July 1942, and

Whereas, this unusual binational force was composed of approximately 60 percent American and 40 percent Canadian volunteers, whose prior outdoor professional lives had proved their compatibility for extremely demanding military operations, and

Whereas, Fort William Henry Harrison, a National Guard post in Montana, was the Force's original training facility, and

Whereas, in May 1943, the Force moved its training to Fort Ethan Allen in Colchester, and while based in Vermont, a stay that was interrupted by a brief deployment to the Aleutian Islands, the Force's members took vigorous 50-mile hikes in the Green Mountains and completed rubber-raft training on Lake Champlain in preparation for duty in Europe, and

Whereas, having landed in Naples, Italy, 600 members of the Force, on December 2, 1943, ascended the extremely steep trail up Monte la Difensa, north of Naples and south of Rome, carrying 90-pound packs, and

Whereas, in the early hours of December 3, 1943, the Force, in a mere two hours, routed the Germans from this key mountaintop and supposedly impenetrable stronghold, and

Whereas, in the following weeks, the Force, having earned the German's respect as the "Black Devils," valiantly fought to secure other well-defended Italian mountaintops, proved critical early in 1944 at the Battle of Anzio, and was at the forefront of the Allies' capture of Rome, and

Whereas, although deactivated in 1944, the Force won thousands of military decorations, a 2015 Congressional Gold Medal, and was the subject of books and the 1968 feature film *The Devil's Brigade*, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly commemorates the bravery of the Vermont-trained First Special Service Force, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to Eugene Childers of Brandon whose father, Espy Eugene Childers, perished in Italy as a First Special Service Force member, and to the First Special Service Force Association in Helena, Montana.