

**The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs, Keynote address
Congressional Gold Medal Gala Dinner In Honor of Veterans of the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442 RCT,
and the Military Intelligence Service,
Washington Hilton Hotel, Washington, DC. November 2, 2011.**

Ann [Curry], thank you for that kind introduction-it's good to see you again. Let me also acknowledge:
* Senator Dan Inouye, battle-tested Veteran; severely wounded in combat; recipient of the Medal of Honor, our Nation's highest award for valor; distinguished Senior Senator from Hawai'i; President Pro Tempore of the U.S. Senate. Senator and Irene, it's good to have you with us this evening. *Senator Dan Akaka, combat Veteran of World War II. Thank you for your unwavering support for our serving military and our Veterans, and for your leadership in directing the review of World War II awards for valor to assure justice was served. It's good to have you and Millie with us this evening; * We are also privileged to have with us George Sakato, Hershey Miyamura, and the families of Kiyoshi Muranaga, Kaoru Moto, Robert Kuroda, Sadao Munemori, and Barney Hajiro, seven other recipients of the Medal of Honor for valor in combat;* Senator Barbara Boxer and Congressman Adam Schiff-thanks to you and your co-sponsors, "the Boys," who went to war for all of us six decades ago have now been recognized and honored nationally. Thank you for enabling this American story about loyalty, about patriotism, about honor, about courage, and sacrifice to be told in the wonderful way that it has.

It has generated immense pride in this small, but proud community. * Other Members of Congress; * Secretary Norm and Deni Mineta; * General Tom Bostick, Admiral Harry Harris, and other flag & general officers; * Christine Sato-Yamazaki, granddaughter of 442nd Veteran Dave Kawagoye, and chairperson of the National Veterans Network. Christine has been instrumental in organizing this celebration. Christine, as always, your devotion to these Veterans has been genuine, unstinting, and unwavering for many decades now. * Other devoted members of Christine's team-Terry Shima, General Joe Peterson, General Tony Taguba, Gerald Yamada, and Floyd Mori. Thank you all, and well done; * General Mike Linnington, Commander of the Military District of Washington [MDW]. To you and to all the young MDW troopers who have helped make two days of these events appear effortless, and who will do so again tomorrow, thank you all; * Finally and most importantly, our honorees from the 100th Infantry Battalion, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and the Military Intelligence Service, those who are here this evening, and those who are not, their spouses, children, grandchildren, other family members, and friends. We are truly honored to share in today's ceremony and tonight's gala with you; * So many other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

* Good evening, everyone-what a truly memorable day this has been. We are honoring a most distinguished, unique, and humble group of Veterans to whom we all owe so much. Today's award of the Congressional Gold Medal to these men is, indeed, cause for celebration, because it is so well deserved, because it is such a rare honor, because our honorees are remarkable American patriots, and because it finally puts things right.

I have previously spoken at events honoring these Veterans, and some of you have been at those gatherings, where select units or individuals from this larger population were singled out for honors. What makes today and this award so very special is not only the very high honor being bestowed-one

of the two highest awards any civilian can receive-but, more importantly, this Congressional Gold Medal recognizes every member of the 100th Infantry Battalion, every member of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and every member of the Military Intelligence Service, living and deceased.

The Congressional Gold Medal is an enormous and historic honor. The first recipient, in 1776, was none other than George Washington, the father of our country. Other recipients were such distinguished national heroes as Winfield Scott, Andrew Jackson, Ulysses S. Grant, George Marshall, Douglas MacArthur, Harry Truman, Matthew Ridgway, and included other special units like the Navajo Code Talkers and the Tuskegee Airmen. Today, each member of our three honored units joins these distinguished ranks.

It is difficult, today, to recall the raw intensity of emotion, of fear, of recrimination in the days, weeks, and months following the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Paranoia tinged with bias led to years of clear injustice and unfairness for Americans of Japanese Ancestry [AJAs]. Pearl Harbor reverberated all across this country, testing our confidence as a Nation, our strengths as communities, our trust in one another, and the courage of those who would soon be swept up in a tide of vengeance and retribution. In the years following Pearl Harbor, the courage, commitment, and character of AJAs would be severely tested-tested through the bravery of their fathers, sons, brothers, uncles, and cousins, who fought, bled, died, but ultimately triumphed over adversity. The magnificence of what they accomplished is the stuff of legend.

It behooves all of us to seek out their stories and understand why these men pursued the paths taken. We must learn, while there is still time, to re-tell those stories accurately, without embellishment, so that our grandchildren and their children will know and understand that these were not fairy tales or Hollywood scripts of the fantastic. These were common men who rose to uncommon heights, who put their lives on the line, without fanfare, without seeking credit, to regain our national birthrights for us.

We must educate future generations about the magnificence of what was done by stalwart men of average stature to bequeath to us an eternal gift through their sacrifice-our unquestioned loyalty as American citizens. In their turn, hopefully, those future generations will emulate the behaviors of these Veterans for love of country, love of family, love of community, and finally, as it usually comes down to on any battlefield, love of one another.

The boys who didn't come home are very much present this evening; they share in this honor. We know that none of them had to go. They were, in fact, initially denied the right to defend this Nation in time of war. Good men walked the halls of Congress to reverse misguided, discriminatory policy, and allow young AJAs by the thousands to step forward and do their duty as part of the 100th Infantry Battalion, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the Military Intelligence Service, and other units.

The courage they displayed is simply staggering; we can only guess at the magnitude of their willingness to absorb the rigors of combat and the stings of battle by surveying the awards bestowed upon "One-Puka-Puka!" And "Go for Broke!"-more than 18,000 individual awards from September 1943 to September 1945, including: * 21 Medals of Honor; 52 Distinguished Service Crosses; 560 silver

stars; over 4,000 bronze stars, the last 40 of which were presented by the Army Chief of Staff yesterday; a staggering 9,486 purple hearts for combat wounds; and, an unprecedented seven Presidential Unit Citations. No other regiment, in 237 years of U.S. Army history, has amassed an equivalent battle record, nor is it likely that any other regiment will match this performance, ever.

Members of the Military Intelligence Service were equally valorous. The highly classified nature of their wartime missions masked its existence throughout the war and for decades thereafter; for all intents and purposes, the MIS did not exist. Its much-deserved recognition and honors were deferred in the name of security. To this day, the MIS has never been fully recognized for its operational accomplishments: * Linguist support leading to the aerial ambush of Admiral Yamamoto over the Pacific Ocean; enabling Merrill's Marauders' success in Burma; intelligence preparation of the battlefield for General MacArthur's brilliant island-hopping campaign; contributing to our seizure of the strategic initiative during and after the Battle of Midway. And finally, contributing immensely to the democratization of post-war Japan, leading to its becoming one of our closest and staunchest allies today. You name the campaign, you name the landing, you name the battle-the MIS was there.

Though the crucial roles played by the MIS were not fully revealed until decades after World War II ended, the first MIS Nisei class began training before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Soon after that attack, they shipped out to Hawaii, Alaska, and Australia to begin preparing the way for stopping Japan's operational momentum. By the end of the war, the presence of the MIS was everywhere evident in the Pacific theater of operations. Colonel Sidney Mashbir, commandant of the MIS translator and interpreter section, stated that "the United States of America owes a debt to these men and to their families, which can never be fully repaid." Their exceptional, early service in the Pacific, in fact, helped convince the War Department to create other all-Nisei units, resulting in the formation of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

In the year 2000, nearly 55 years after its decisive contributions to victory in the Pacific, members of the MIS were finally awarded the Presidential Unit Citation they had earned during World War II. The actions of those we honor tonight, their unsurpassed records in combat and the quiet modesty with which they lived their lives after the war, speak eloquently of their character.

Returning home, they lived quiet, humble, and unassuming lives, finding work, raising families, contributing to the well-being of their communities, the aspect of their character that gives today's celebration such special dignity. Again and again, in speaking with their children and grandchildren, I have been told that they rarely spoke of their service, seldom if ever drawing attention to themselves. And even the bravest among the brave, recipients of the Medal of Honor, always deferred to other "true heroes" in their units-their buddies who sacrificed their lives for others and didn't make it home.

I know that today's ceremony brings with it some deep and complex emotions for the Veterans here tonight. Those who survive war know that others, those who fought and died, whose stories are known only to God, never received their deserved recognitions. The Congressional Gold Medal corrects those oversights of history.

In my office at the Department of Veterans Affairs, hangs H. Charles McBarron's famous painting of 100th and 442nd Soldiers rescuing "The Lost Battalion," the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry Regiment, after previous attempts to reach them had failed. In the prelude to and the aftermath of that terrible fight, the 100th / 442nd suffered horrendous casualties. When attached to the 36th Infantry Division in October 1944, their assigned strength was 2,943 men. When pulled from the line on 17 November, a month later, fewer than 800 remained. Casualties included 140 killed, 1,800 wounded, 43 missing, and others too ill to fight-horrific. I keep that painting in a prominent place in my office because it reminds me that brave men sacrificed to give me opportunities I might otherwise never have had, choices about how I might live my life, able to choose my life's work, to compete fully without any cloud of suspicion or concern about loyalty, and to enjoy fully the privileges of my citizenship-never to be taken for granted.

As I have said before, I've waited my entire life for this day to offer all the magnificent warriors of these historic units and their families my deep personal thanks for their service and their examples on how to live my life. And today, that occasion has arrived. To all our honorees-the bonds of trust you forged with your fellow Soldiers in battle are still intact, just as the trail you blazed for other generations remains your legacy. Today's award reminds all of us of the sacrifices you made so that the rest of us could live our lives as we have come to enjoy them over the last 65 years. I am personally indebted to you for the opportunities you gave me. Except for your service and bloody sacrifice, my life's work would not have followed the path that it did.

To the families who endured the indignities of relocation and suspicion about their loyalty, with grace, strength, and quiet dignity, we are indebted to you, as well, for giving us lessons about living our lives with purpose and dignity. From my generation to yours, we thank you. Continue to tell your stories so that the next generations can understand what it took to provide them the opportunity, comfort, and privilege we enjoy today. And remind them that those privileges come with responsibilities.

I am proud to be an American Soldier, proud to serve Veterans, and I am honored to have been here with you this evening. God bless each and every one of you, God bless the young men and women who serve in uniform today, and God bless America. Thank you.

[This was received from John Tobe, Embassy of Japan.]