



THE HONORABLE DENNIS ROSS (FL-15)
229 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Office: 202-225-1252
<http://dennisross.house.gov>

Member's Day Hearing: April 14, 2015

Members of the Armed Services Committee, thank you for your time and for this opportunity to speak regarding the FY2016 National Defense Authorization Act.

This year I introduced H.R. 1337, legislation to waive the time limitations for the award of the Distinguished-Service Cross to Edward Grady Halcomb for acts of extraordinary heroism during the Korean War. I want to offer my great thanks to my friend Rep. Rich Nugent, and the rest of the Members of this Committee, for including this legislation in the base text of the FY2016 NDAA.

The Distinguished Service Cross is the second highest military decoration that can be awarded to a member of the United States Army and for years, my staff has worked with longtime Mulberry, Florida resident Grady Halcomb, who proudly served during the Korean War, to be awarded a Distinguished Service Cross.

Recently, I received confirmation from the Secretary of the Army, John McHugh, who personally affirmed that Grady Halcomb should be awarded with the Distinguished Service Cross for his valor in the service. However, there is a time limitation in U.S. Code currently preventing this award from being presented to Mr. Halcomb. To address this, I introduced legislation to ensure this American hero will receive the award he earned in service to his country and in his efforts to save the lives of fellow service members so many years ago.

On July 27, 1950 Private Halcomb fought in the battle of Anui as a member of Company B, 1st Battalion, and 29th Infantry Regiment. This battle resulted in the worst single unit American fatality rate of the Korean War, with only 24 of 235 (10.2%) soldiers surviving. Enemy forces captured Private Halcomb after he was wounded and most of his unit was killed.

As a POW:

- After capture, Grady Halcomb endured a 150 mile march from Anui to Seoul with little food or water.
- In the Seoul prison, the private assumed—via competence and inexplicable stamina—the role of chief medic.
- At age 19, Grady Halcomb supervised nine other medics, and cared for up to 376 American prisoners.
- At great personal risk, Grady Halcomb exposed himself daily to disease and infections, while depleting his own strength by virtually never leaving his patients' side for over a two month period in garrison, or on the 120 mile death march from Seoul to Pyongyang.
- When forced to leave Seoul to begin the death march, he rallied the feeble soldiers and escorted them until they caught up with the main POW column.

- The private physically braced up fellow prisoners who were unable to walk due to malnutrition and disease, despite suffering from the same medical maladies.
- Lastly, then-Private Halcomb successfully helped plan and execute a daring escape with four other prisoners in Pyongyang despite the presence of overwhelming enemy forces.

Awarding the Distinguished Service Cross to Edward Grady Halcomb is a long overdue honor for a man who risked his own health and safety as a POW during his times in Seoul, on the death march, and at the death camp in Pyongyang to care for and defend his fellow prisoners. I want to thank Secretary McHugh and his staff at the Pentagon and all of you here on the Armed Services Committee for working with my staff to include this important and needed provision in this year's NDAA.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.