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THE PRESIDENT

welcomes you to

THE WHITE HOUSE

on the occasion of the presentation of the

MEDAL OF HONOR

to

MAJOR

CHARLES S. KETTLES

UNITED STATES ARMY



Monday, July 18, 2016

CITATION

*The President of the United States of America,
authorized by Act of Congress,
March 3, 1863, has awarded in the name of Congress
the Medal of Honor to*

MAJOR
CHARLES S. KETTLES
UNITED STATES ARMY

*For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life
above and beyond the call of duty:*

Major Charles S. Kettles distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity while serving as Flight Commander, 176th Aviation Company (Airmobile) (Light), 14th Combat Aviation Battalion, Americal Division near Duc Pho, Republic of Vietnam. On 15 May 1967, Major Kettles, upon learning that an airborne infantry unit had suffered casualties during an intense firefight with the enemy, immediately volunteered to lead a flight of six UH-1D helicopters to carry reinforcements to the embattled force and to evacuate wounded personnel. Enemy small arms, automatic weapons, and mortar fire raked the landing zone, inflicting heavy damage to the helicopters; however, Major Kettles refused to depart until all helicopters were loaded to capacity. He then returned to the battlefield, with full knowledge of the intense enemy fire awaiting his arrival, to bring more reinforcements, landing in the midst of enemy mortar and automatic weapons fire that seriously wounded his gunner and severely damaged his aircraft. Upon departing, Major Kettles was advised by another helicopter crew that he had fuel streaming out of his aircraft. Despite the risk posed by the leaking fuel, he nursed the damaged aircraft back to base. Later that day, the Infantry Battalion Commander requested immediate, emergency extraction of the remaining 40 troops, including four members of Major Kettles' unit who were stranded when their helicopter was destroyed by enemy fire. With only one flyable UH-1 helicopter remaining, Major Kettles volunteered to return to the deadly landing zone for a third time, leading a flight of six evacuation helicopters, five of which were from the 161st Aviation Company. During the extraction, Major Kettles was informed by the last helicopter that all personnel were onboard, and departed the landing zone accordingly. Army gunships supporting the evacuation also departed the area. Once airborne, Major Kettles was advised that eight troops had been unable to reach the evacuation helicopters due to the intense enemy fire. With complete disregard for his own safety, Major Kettles passed the lead to another helicopter and returned to the landing zone to rescue the remaining troops. Without gunship, artillery, or tactical aircraft support, the enemy concentrated all firepower on his lone aircraft, which was immediately damaged by a mortar round that shattered both front windshields and the chin bubble and was further raked by small arms and machine gun fire. Despite the intense enemy fire, Major Kettles maintained control of the aircraft and situation, allowing time for the remaining eight soldiers to board the aircraft. In spite of the severe damage to his helicopter, Major Kettles once more skillfully guided his heavily damaged aircraft to safety. Without his courageous actions and superior flying skills, the last group of soldiers and his crew would never have made it off the battlefield. Major Kettles' selfless acts of repeated valor and determination are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Army.

PROGRAM

Invocation

Chaplain (MG) Paul K. Hurley
Chief of Chaplains, U.S. Army

Remarks by The President

Presentation of the MEDAL OF HONOR

Benediction

Chaplain (MG) Paul K. Hurley
Chief of Chaplains, U.S. Army



CRITERIA FOR AWARD

The Medal of Honor is awarded by the President in the name of Congress to a person who, while a member of the Armed Forces, distinguishes himself or herself conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States; while engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or while serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party. The deed performed must have been one of personal bravery or self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his or her comrades and must have involved risk of life. Incontestable proof of the performance of service is exacted and each recommendation for award of this decoration is considered on the standard of extraordinary merit.

