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**SJR-7 Military and veterans.** (2019-2020)

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**Senate Joint Resolution No. 7**

**CHAPTER 102**

Relative to the Merrill's Marauders Congressional Gold Medal Act.

[ Filed with Secretary of State June 28, 2019. ]

**LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST**

SJR 7, Glazer. Military and veterans.

This measure would urge the United States Congress to act favorably in regard to legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal to the Merrill's Marauders.

Fiscal Committee: no

WHEREAS, In August 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and other allied leaders proposed the creation of an American ground unit that would engage in a long range penetration mission in Japanese-occupied Burma to cut off Japanese communications and supply lines and capture the Japanese-held airfield and town of Myitkyina; and

WHEREAS, President Roosevelt issued a call for volunteers for "a dangerous and hazardous mission," that was answered by approximately 3,000 American soldiers representing 15 ethnic groups from every state, among them Bataan Death March survivors, Nisei interpreters, and Native American code talkers, forming a unit officially designated as the 5307th Composite Unit, code named "Galahad," and later to become known as Merrill's Marauders, after its leader, Brigadier General Frank Merrill; and

WHEREAS, Future members of Merrill's Marauders continued their training at Camp Stoneman, a United States Army military facility located in Pittsburg, California, that served as a major staging area for the United States Army in World War II for the Pacific Theater of Operations, and named after George Stoneman, a cavalry commander during the Civil War and a Governor of California; and

WHEREAS, In February 1944 the Marauders began their approximately 1,000 mile trek through the dense Burmese jungle, with no artillery support and carrying their supplies on their backs or on the pack saddles of mules, as the first Americans to engage the Japanese on mainland Asia since the 1900 Boxer Rebellion; and

WHEREAS, Over the course of their five-month trek to Myitkyina, the Marauders fought victoriously against larger and better equipped units of the Japanese 18th Division through 5 major and 30 minor engagements, experiencing more uninterrupted jungle fighting than any other World War II United States combat force, with the exception of the 1st Marine Division that took and held Guadalcanal for 4 months; and

WHEREAS, During their march to Myitkyina, the Marauders faced hunger and disease that were exacerbated by inadequate aerial supply drops, while malaria, typhus, and dysentery inflicted more casualties on Merrill's Marauders than the Japanese; and

WHEREAS, By August 1944, Merrill's Marauders accomplished their mission, successfully disrupting Japanese supply and communication lines and taking the town of Myitkyina and the Myitkyina airstrip, the only all-weather airstrip in northern Burma; and

WHEREAS, After taking Myitkyina, only 130 Merrill's Marauders were fit for duty, and all remaining Merrill's Marauders still in action were evacuated to hospitals due to tropical diseases, exhaustion, and malnutrition; and

WHEREAS, For their bravery and accomplishments, Merrill's Marauders were awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation, later designated as the Presidential Unit Citation, and each of Merrill's Marauders also earned a Bronze Star with a V or Valor device; and

WHEREAS, Though Merrill's Marauders were operational for only a few months, the legacy of their bravery is honored by the United States Army through the modern day 75th Ranger Regiment, which traces its lineage directly to the 5307 Composite Unit, and the Rangers wear the Merrill's Marauders patch as their crest; and

WHEREAS, On February 27, 2019, Gilbert Howland, one of the last 13 living members of Merrill's Marauders and a triple Combat Infantryman Badge recipient, who served in World War II, Korea, and two tours in Vietnam, placed a wreath at the Camp Stoneman Memorial at the Pittsburg Historical Museum to commemorate 2019 as the 75th anniversary of the 1944 Merrill's Marauders mission in the China Burma India Theater, called the "forgotten theater of World War II," and

WHEREAS, On January 30, 2019, United States Representative Peter T. King, introduced House Resolution 906 in the 116th Congress, the Merrill's Marauders Congressional Gold Medal Act, with the Senate Companion bill from Senator Johnny Isakson is expected shortly, in a third and perhaps final attempt at this recognition with only 13 of the original 3,000 Merrill's Marauders still living; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and the Assembly of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature urges the Congress of the United States to act favorably in regard to legislation to award the Congressional Gold Medal, the highest honor Congress can bestow, to Merrill's Marauders; and be it further

Resolved, That the Secretary of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the Senate, and to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States.