

# House declares American GI "Person of the Century"

The U.S. House of Representatives voted unanimously, 397-0, April 10 to name the American "GI" as the "Person of the Century" in their Concurrent Resolution 282 with the Senate.

Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base are in the district of House sponsor Rep. Robin Hayes of North Carolina. "I am continually impressed and made proud by their dedication, commitment and patriotism," he said in introducing his resolution.

"We are just turning the corner on a period in which we ask the American GI to do more and more with less and less," Hayes continued. "As I have gotten to know these brave men and women, one statement continues to ring in my ears. The statement made during a military personnel hearing at the Norfolk (Va.) Naval Base was, 'Sir whatever you give us, we will get the job done.'

"The spirit of the American GI — soldier, sailor, airman and Marine — that 'can-do spirit,' is why we

honor today the American GI as the 'Citizen of the Century,'" he said.

Rep. Mike Thompson of California extended "GI" to members of the Coast Guard and Merchant Marine, saying, "It was the American GI, known at different periods of the century by names such as doughboys, Yanks, Buffalo Soldiers, Rough Riders or the American Expeditionary Force, who carried America's value system abroad and demonstrated unselfish courage aiding those who struggled against tyranny and oppression.

"Indeed, there is probably not a region of the world whose people have not benefited from the presence of the American GI during the 20th century," he said.

Rep. Jim Gibbons of Nevada, a co-sponsor and one of the 10 House supporters who spoke in favor of the resolution, is a veteran Vietnam and Gulf War pilot.

"The United States, through two hot world wars and a long Cold War, and numerous wars and conflicts in

all the far-flung reaches of this troubled globe, has been called the 'arsenal of democracy,'" he said. "The American GI was the bearer of those arms and our American flag. He was, and still is, the guardian of our and our allies' security and freedom."

"The sacrifice, dedication and honor of our soldiers has been a lamp unto the world, the shining beacon of liberty," Gibbons concluded.

"The American GI kept our flame of freedom burning brightly through the grim and dark skies; through blood, sweat and tears; through times of adulation and sadly, through times of unreasonable contempt. But stand they did," he said.

"Throughout this sad and bloody century, it was the GI — the American citizen soldier — who left hearth and home, put his or her personal plans on hold, and traveled to every corner of the world to save the concept of democracy and preserve the value of freedom," said supporter Rep. Jim Kolbe of Arizona.

"Despots and dictators throughout this century were halted in their tracks and driven back to their lairs because Americans were not, as they thought, too soft and decadent to resist their battle-hardened armies."

He concluded: "There have been many great people this century who have symbolized the struggle for freedom in the 20th century — Churchill, Roosevelt, Reagan — but it is the millions of people behind them, the American GIs, who actually delivered on that promise."

Rep. Mac Thornberry of Texas raised the only dissenting voice and vote present on the roll call.

"I would support a resolution which recognized their contributions," he said in preface. "I would far prefer a more tangible showing of appreciation, such as fulfilling the promises of health care made to those who served."

The House referred the resolution April 11 to the Senate Judiciary Committee. (AFPN)

## How does it feel to know that you, as a "GI," have been named person of the century?

(All responses are from members of the 437<sup>th</sup> Communications Squadron)



Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class Erik Sonnenberg

"I think it's great for all GIs to be noticed for all their hard work and dedication over the past 100 years. I hope it gives the civilian world a different view on the military and the sacrifices we make."



Airman 1<sup>st</sup> Class David Winner

"I'm not surprised because military men and women are the most worthy of the title 'Person of the Century.' These people have sacrificed their lives to ensure and uphold the existence of freedom that's eminent among Americans and other nations throughout the world."



Staff Sgt. Gregg Driggers

"The concept itself is great. Many have paid the ultimate price to defend this great country; however, I believe they're trying to make up for years of abuse. They've taken many of our benefits and replaced them with a title. It's nice, but it will be of little use when I retire."



Staff Sgt. Gerald Thompson

"With all the great military accomplishments and leaders over the past century, I think it's well deserved. But I also feel that our benefits are more important and this is a smoke screen to avoid the real concerns of service members - our benefits and our people."



Senior Master Sgt. Terrie Powell

"I think the recognition is well deserved and long overdue. No other company or business asks its workers and their families to make the kind of sacrifices we in the military make."



2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Celeste Rodriguez

"Our veterans are actually the ones who earned this honor. With the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of World War II and the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vietnam War, I'd like to see resolution 282 increase efforts to take care of our vets, they certainly deserve it."

## EAF continued from page 1

130s, KC-135s, KC-10s and C-21s. Williams said Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units play a crucial role in providing aircraft for AEFs — 44 percent of the C-130s are Reserve or ANG, while 33 percent of the KC-135s are Reserve or ANG.

Swapping out AEFs every 90 days for Operations Northern and Southern Watch in-

volves dozens of missions flown by AMC aircraft, including C-17s.

Williams said the number of missions should drop as AEF planning and scheduling is fine tuned.

In addition to AEF missions, AMC also must be ready for rapid response requirements for contingencies and emergencies that may come up, such as bomber support, humanitarian relief missions and special operations, Will-

iams said.

AMC planners are also seeing the benefits of EAF, according to Williams.

"Already, we're planning ahead on what kind of commercial augmentation we're going to provide for the AEF rotations because we know exactly what's required now," he said. "Before, it was a pick-up game. We know exactly when it needs to move and we're able to consolidate packages and do a better job

**"We can already see a change occurring, even though we've only just begun."**

-Maj. Gen. Nick Williams  
AMC director of operations

commercially, organically and with the people as well. So, as the rest of the Air Force becomes more stable, it rolls down to us, making us more stable and predictable as well. We can already see a change occurring, even though we've only just begun."

The Air Force will remain flexible and make "course corrections" as they are needed with EAF, but the concept is a one-way road, said Williams.

"There's no turning back," he said. "EAF is the way the Air Force will be organized in the future."