



Colonel Ralph Puckett Jr.

MEDAL OF HONOR

KOREAN WAR

President Joseph R. Biden awarded the Medal of Honor to retired Col. Ralph Puckett Jr. in a 21 May 2021 White House ceremony for Puckett's actions during the November 1950 Battle of Hill 205 in Korea.

Then 1st Lt. Puckett, commander of the Eighth Army Ranger Company, led his unit in an attack to secure Hill 205 in the vicinity of Unsan, Korea, in advance of the 25th Infantry Division. During the attack, Puckett intentionally ran across an open area three times to draw enemy machine-gun fire, enabling his unit to locate and destroy the machine gun and seize the hill.

The fifty-seven-man company repelled five enemy counterattacks that night from a force nearly ten times its size and supported by intense mortar fire. Puckett was wounded by a grenade during the first attack, but refused evacuation. Instead, he directed "danger close" artillery fire to repel the enemy assaults and repeatedly left his position to check on his soldiers and redistribute ammunition. Puckett again intentionally exposed himself to enemy fire to identify the position of an enemy sniper.

Puckett was unable to get artillery support to fend off a sixth assault, and the enemy overran his unit. He was seriously injured by two mortar rounds and ordered his men to leave him behind. However, two of his Rangers refused the order and

evacuated him to a secure position at the bottom of the hill. There, despite his injuries, Puckett again directed artillery fire on the enemy at the top of the hill.

This was the first time Biden has awarded a Medal of Honor. In his remarks, the president said, "Korea is sometimes called the 'Forgotten War.' But those men who were there under Lieutenant Puckett's command—they'll never forget his bravery. They never forget that he was right by their side throughout every minute of it."

South Korean President Moon Jae-in also attended the ceremony. Moon added his thoughts: "Colonel Puckett is a true hero of the Korean War. With extraordinary valor and leadership, he completed missions until the very end, defending Hill 205 and fighting many more battles requiring equal valiance. Without the sacrifice of veterans, including Colonel Puckett and the Eighth Army Ranger Company, freedom and democracy we enjoy today couldn't have blossomed in Korea."

Puckett was an inaugural inductee into the Ranger Hall of Fame in 1992, and was the 75th Ranger Regiment's first honorary colonel from 1996 to 2006.

You can read more about this great American on the Army's Medal of Honor website at <https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/puckett/>.

