

Medal of Honor

Col. Paris D. Davis

Col. Paris D. Davis was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Joseph Biden in a 3 March 2023 White House ceremony for his actions in 1965 as a Special Forces captain in Binh Dinh Province, South Vietnam.

In his remarks, Biden said of Davis, “You are everything our nation is at our best: brave and big hearted, determined and devoted, selfless and steadfast. American. American.”

On 18 June 1965, Davis and three other Special Forces soldiers led an inexperienced South Vietnamese company on a nighttime raid against a larger force, killing an estimated one hundred Viet Cong. Davis was wounded in the initial assault but continued to fight. The enemy then counterattacked, and he found himself engaged in what was to be a nineteen-hour battle. Davis was wounded several more times by small arms fire and grenade fragments during the fight but continued to engage the enemy directly with small arms and mortar fire, indirectly by calling in air and artillery fire, and at times, even in hand-to-hand combat. He personally rescued two seriously wounded soldiers and directed their medical evacuation. Davis refused medical care for his own wounds until the enemy force was destroyed and all his soldiers were evacuated.

The award was long overdue, presented nearly fifty-eight years later. Davis was originally awarded a Silver Star for his actions, but his commanding officer immediately submitted Davis for the Medal of Honor.

However, that paperwork and a subsequent submission were both lost.

Davis was inducted into the Pentagon’s Hall of Heroes on 6 March 2023. During that ceremony,



President Joe Biden participates in the Medal of Honor ceremony for retired U.S. Army Col. Paris D. Davis, 3 March 2023, in the East Room of the White House. (Photo by Adam Schultz, White House)

Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks pointed out the overly long wait for the award. “Appropriate recognition should have come much sooner following the bravery you demonstrated and the sacrifices you made more than half century ago to save your fellow soldiers from certain death during the Vietnam War. Everyone in this auditorium can agree that this award, which you so richly deserve, has, in fact, been a long time coming.”

Davis was one of the first African American officers to serve in the U.S. Army Special Forces.

For more on Davis’s award, see the U.S. Army’s Medal of Honor website at <https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/davis/>. ■