

Ghost Army Honored

For more than forty years after World War II, the Ghost Army's activities remained highly classified and garnered little public recognition. That changed on 21 March 2024 when these veterans were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. The Congressional Gold Medal is the highest civilian honor that Congress can bestow. Three of the known seven surviving members—Bernard Bluestein, 100; John Christman, 99; and Seymour Nussenbaum, 100—made the journey to Washington to accept the award.

The “Ghost Army,” comprised of the 23rd

Headquarters Special Troops and its sister unit, the 3133rd Signal Service Company, was cited for its “unique and highly distinguished service in conducting deceptive operation in Europe during World War II.”¹ Many of these soldiers were initially recruited from art schools, advertising agencies, communications companies, and a variety of other creative and technical professions.² This 1,100-member unit, active between June 1944 and March 1945, could simulate two units totaling some thirty thousand soldiers by



A U.S. Mint reproduction of the Ghost Army's Congressional Gold Medal. (Photo courtesy of the U.S. Mint)



U.S. Speaker of the House Rep. Mike Johnson presents the Congressional Gold Medal to Seymour Nussenbaum (seated left) and Bernie Bluestein, veterans of the 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133rd Signal Services Company, known as the Ghost Army, on 21 March 2024 at a ceremony at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Sgt. David Resnick, U.S. Army)

employing visual, sonic, and radio deceptions. The Ghost Army carried out more than twenty missions, using inflatable tanks and vehicles, sound trucks, fake radio transmissions, and the like to give units the time needed to maneuver.³ Ultimately, it deceived Hitler's forces and misled them of the size and location of the Allied forces preparing for the D-Day invasion.

“The actions of the Ghost Army helped change the course of the war for thousands of American and Allied troops and contributed to the liberation of a continent from a terrible evil,” Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth said during the ceremony. “Even though technology has changed quite a bit since 1944, our modern techniques build on a lot of what the Ghost Army did, and we are still learning from your legacy.”⁴

To learn more about the Ghost Army and its Congressional Gold Medal, visit <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ85/PLAW-117publ85.pdf>. ■

Notes

1. “Congressional Gold Medal Recipients,” History, Art, and Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, accessed 29 March 2024, <https://history.house.gov/Institution/Gold-Medal/Gold-Medal-Recipients/>.

2. Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act, Pub. L. No. 117-85, 136 Stat. 11 (1 February 2022), <https://www.congress.gov/117/plaws/publ85/PLAW-117publ85.pdf>.

3. Ibid.

4. Jamie Stengle, “Ghost Army Members Who Deceived Nazis with Battlefield Ruses in WWII Given Congressional Gold Medal,” Associated Press, 21 March 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/ghost-army-congressional-gold-medal-ceremony-world-war-ii-7a2deaf1686bca3194d46c77fa0bccb9>.