





Captain Gary M. Rose

MEDAL OF HONOR

VIETNAM WAR

Retired Army Capt. Gary Michael “Mike” Rose was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Donald J. Trump in a 23 October 2017 White House ceremony for his actions during a covert operation from 11 to 14 September 1970 in Laos during the Vietnam War.

Trump said of Rose, “For many years the story of Mike’s heroism has gone untold. But today we gather to tell the world of his valor and proudly present him with our nation’s highest military honor.”

Rose, then a sergeant and a member of 5th Special Forces Group, was the only medic in a 136-man element participating in Operation Tailwind, a mission to interdict enemy supplies being funneled into Vietnam along what was known as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Sixteen of those were American soldiers; the rest were Montagnard fighters from the highlands of Vietnam, an ethnically separate people from the Vietnamese.

After inserting seventy kilometers inside enemy-controlled territory, the unit almost immediately made contact with the enemy. When a wounded soldier became trapped outside the defensive perimeter, Rose rushed to his aid, braving heavy fire while performing first aid and carrying the soldier back to the safety of the unit. Over the next few days, the unit continued to move deeper into enemy territory, encountering more enemy forces and taking more casualties. With each engagement, Rose frequently had to move through intense enemy fire and personally engage the enemy to reach the wounded and render lifesaving medical treatment. While rescuing a wounded Montagnard soldier, Rose received shrapnel wounds in his back, leg, and foot from a rocket-propelled grenade. He ignored his wounds and continued to treat the wounded, although his own foot was severely damaged. He would complete the rest of the mission while using a stick as a makeshift crutch.

At one point, Rose’s company called for a medevac helicopter to evacuate the many wounded, but the aircraft could not land. Disregarding his own wounds and the threat to his personal safety, Rose stood to pass the wounded up to the helicopter crew, fully exposed

once more to extremely heavy enemy fire. The medevac aircraft had to abort after being severely damaged, and it later crashed. Over half the company was now wounded, and Rose improvised litters for them and supervised their evacuation on foot.

After completing its mission, the unit was finally extracted by helicopter while under enemy assault from all sides. During the extraction, Rose, in great pain, continued to move under heavy fire to treat and evacuate casualties until his own extraction on the last aircraft. However, his ordeal was still not over.

Shortly after takeoff, Rose’s aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire. A Marine Corps door gunner was seriously injured, and Rose began to render medical treatment, even as the helicopter was crashing. Rose was thrown from the aircraft when it hit the ground, but he crawled back to the wreckage to pull out the wounded and unconscious men that remained inside. He continued to provide them with medical treatment until a second helicopter arrived to complete the extraction.

Rose treated sixty to seventy wounded personnel during Operation Tailwind; only three men died under his care over the course of four days under nearly continuous enemy fire.

Following the White House ceremony, he was recognized again for his extraordinary efforts during a second ceremony the next day at the Pentagon, where he was inducted into the Hall of Heroes. Acting Secretary of the Army Ryan D. McCarthy said during the ceremony, “Mike personally saved many lives over the course of those four days. It is a fact that there are veterans whose names are not inscribed on a black stone wall just across the Potomac [the Vietnam Veterans Memorial] because of Captain Rose.”

Rose’s award was one of only two presented in 2017, and it was only the second Medal of Honor presented by President Trump. The first was awarded to another combat medic, Specialist Five James C. McCloughan, on 31 July 2017.

Read more about Capt. Gary Rose on the Army’s Medal of Honor site at <https://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/rose/>.

Left: Retired Capt. Gary M. Rose gives his remarks 24 October 2017 during his Hall of Heroes induction ceremony at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. (Photo by Eboni Everson-Myart, U.S. Army) **Above:** Graphic courtesy of the U.S. Army