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United States Senate

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January 10, 2022

The Honorable Christine Wormuth
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Army
1600 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-1600

Dear Secretary Wormuth:

I am writing on behalf of my constituent, Mr. Ronald Dolecki, U.S. Army (Ret.), regarding his eligibility for award of a retroactive prisoner-of-war medal. Current law makes it clear that Mr. Dolecki is eligible for this long-overdue recognition.

On December 27, 2021, President Biden signed into law the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022. S.Rept. 117-39, which accompanies this legislation, includes language specifically directing the Army to rectify its previously incorrect application of the law to ensure that Mr. Dolecki, who served his country with honor and distinction, and others similarly situated are appropriately recognized.

Under the law as it stood until 2013, issuance of the prisoner-of-war medal was authorized for individuals who had been "taken prisoner and held captive by foreign armed forces that are hostile to the United States, under circumstances which the Secretary concerned finds to have been comparable to those under which persons have generally been held captive by enemy armed forces during periods of armed conflict." PL 99-145 (1983) as amended by PL 101-189 (1989). For many years, Mr. Dolecki was told that he did not meet the criteria for the prisoner-of-war medal because his captors, members of the Eritrean Liberation Front, were not hostile to the United States. However, in the NDAA for FY 13, Congress removed the words "hostile to the United States." H.Rept. 112-479, which accompanied the bill, stated that the purpose of the change was to remove the requirement that "the foreign armed forces must have been found to be hostile to the United States."

At the time of his captivity in 1965, Mr. Dolecki was "serving in [a] capacity with the armed forces." The circumstances of his captivity were clearly and unambiguously "comparable to those circumstances under which persons have generally been held captive by enemy armed forces during periods of armed conflict." Since 2013, no additional requirement has been imposed for the award of the prisoner-of-war medal.

Given the 2013 change in the law and the recent directive to the Army to rectify the incorrect application of the law, I respectfully request expedited review of Mr. Dolecki's file to confirm his eligibility for the prisoner-of-war medal.

If you need additional information, please contact Ms. Austin Morris or Mr. Spencer Knoll of my staff at austin_morris@vanhollen.senate.gov or spencer_knoll@vanhollen.senate.gov. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator

CVH/am

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1101 MERCANTILE LANE
SUITE 210
LARGO, MD 20774
PHONE (301) 322-6560

SENATOR CHRIS VAN HOLLEN'S PRIVACY RELEASE

The Privacy Act of 1974, Title 5, U.S. Code Section 552a, provides that as of September 27, 1975, disclosure of information of a personal or confidential nature of an individual will no longer be released to third parties without written consent of the individual concerned. Therefore, I hereby grant Senator Chris Van Hollen and his staff my written permission to intercede on my behalf. I also duly authorize that any information that is contained in my records and necessary to provide a substantive response may be disclosed to the Office of Senator Van Hollen.

Name: Mr./ Ms./ Mrs./ Mx./ Miss/ Dr. RONALD J. DOLECKI

Address: 1430 ~~B~~ ABBY LANE

HUNTINGTOWN, MD. 20639

Email Address: rjdolecki@hotmail.com

Telephone Numbers: Home: 410-535-9178

Work: _____

Mobile: _____

Fax: _____

RECEIVED

SEP 18 2020

SENATOR
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

PLEASE STATE THE NATURE OF YOUR REQUEST, PROBLEM OR COMPLAINT AND HOW YOU WOULD LIKE THE SENATOR TO ASSIST YOU. PLEASE BE SPECIFIC AND, IF NECESSARY, ATTACH A SHORT LETTER AND/OR COPIES OF ANY RELEVANT DOCUMENTS OR NOTICES. (If this is an immigration or visa-related matter, please use the Senator's Immigration Privacy Release instead.)

SEE COVER LETTER.

Have you contacted any other elected official(s) about your issue? If so, please list their name(s):
SENATOR PAUL SARBANES, SEN. BARBARA MIKULSKI, PRES. DONALD TRUMP;
HOWEVER, I LACKED NEARLY ALL THE INCLUDED DOCUMENTS UNTIL

NOW, SOME WERE ONLY RECENTLY OBTAINED THRU FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUEST SUBMITTED OVER A PERIOD OF 5 YRS.

Case/Account Number/ (if applicable): _____

Date of Birth: 6-11-45

Passport Ref. No./Destination/Travel Date (if applicable) _____

I authorize the Office of Senator Chris Van Hollen to make inquiries on my behalf.

Ronald J. Dolecki

Signature

SEPT 12, 2020

Date

PLEASE RETURN THIS SIGNED FORM AND ALL SUPPORTING MATERIAL TO:

Senator Chris Van Hollen
111 Rockville Pike, Suite 960
Rockville, MD 20850
FAX: 301-545-1512
assistance@vanhollen.senate.gov