

117TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 3565

To grant a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and Merchant Marine, as well as citizen and non-citizen civilians who served honorably with the U.S. military, who were surrendered, captured, or abandoned to become prisoners of war (POWs) of Imperial Japan throughout the Japanese Empire in the Pacific Theater of World War II from December 7, 1941, to September 2, 1945.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 28, 2021

Mr. BOST (for himself, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mrs. BUSTOS, Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Mrs. RADEWAGEN, Mr. BILIRAKIS, and Mr. STAUBER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Financial Services, and in addition to the Committee on House Administration, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To grant a Congressional Gold Medal, collectively, to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces and Merchant Marine, as well as citizen and non-citizen civilians who served honorably with the U.S. military, who were surrendered, captured, or abandoned to become prisoners of war (POWs) of Imperial Japan throughout the Japanese Empire in the Pacific Theater of World War II from December 7, 1941, to September 2, 1945.

1        *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4        This Act may be cited as the “World War II Pacific  
5 War Heroes Congressional Gold Medal Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7        Congress finds the following:

8            (1) The United States POWs held by Imperial  
9        Japan in the Pacific Theater during World War II,  
10       with most held in captivity for more than three  
11       years, are Pacific War heroes who represent the  
12       American spirit of courage, tenacity, and faith.

13           (2) Imperial Japan did not abide by the Geneva  
14       and Hague Conventions for the humane treatment  
15       of POWs.

16           (3) The United States POWs held by Imperial  
17       Japan during World War II numbered more than  
18       27,000 with more than 11,000 or 40 percent per-  
19       ishing before the end of War.

20           (4) On December 7, 1941, Imperial Japan at-  
21       tacked not only Pearl Harbor in the United States  
22       Territory of Hawaii, but also the other United  
23       States possessions and military installations in the  
24       Pacific of the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island,  
25       Howland Island, and Midway as preludes to full-

1 scale invasions and military occupation throughout  
2 the Asia-Pacific region.

3 (5) By the end of day, December 8, 1941, more  
4 than 300 United States Marines, sailors, diplomats,  
5 and Mariners in China became the first United  
6 States prisoners of war of Imperial Japan with most  
7 held for the full duration of the war.

8 (6) Ninety-eight percent of the United States  
9 POWs of Imperial Japan fought in the heroic battles  
10 of Guam, Wake Island, Sunda Strait, Halsey-Doo-  
11 little Raid, Bataan, and Corregidor, all within the  
12 first six months of World War II.

13 (7) Most of the United States airmen, infantry-  
14 men, sailors, and Marines surrendered in defense of  
15 the Netherlands East Indies in March 1942 were  
16 sent to be slave laborers on the Thai-Burma Death  
17 Railway or at construction projects in Changi,  
18 Singapore.

19 (8) On April 9, 1942, approximately 12,000  
20 United States military personnel and 66,000 Fili-  
21 pino soldiers became POWs with the surrender of  
22 the American-Filipino forces on the Bataan Penin-  
23 sula in the Philippines.

24 (9) April 9, 1942, marked the beginning of the  
25 infamous Bataan Death March where the Imperial

1 Japanese Army forced all American and Filipino  
2 forces from Mariveles or Bagac up the Bataan Pe-  
3 ninsula on a three-part, three-province, nearly 100-  
4 mile trek north to the makeshift POW facility Camp  
5 O'Donnell at Capas, Tarlac. An estimated 650  
6 American and 5,000–10,000 Filipino soldiers died  
7 on the Bataan Death March, while hundreds of men  
8 remain unaccounted for.

9 (10) On May 6, 1942, Corregidor Island, then  
10 operating as the military command center for all the  
11 Philippines, United States Forces in the Philippines  
12 (USFIP), was surrendered. Nearly 10,000 American  
13 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines as well as  
14 more than 3,000 Filipino soldiers and nurses became  
15 POWs of Imperial Japan.

16 (11) The May 6, 1942, fall of Corregidor Island  
17 and subsequent surrender of all the Philippines Is-  
18 lands marked the end of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet; the  
19 U.S. Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE), and  
20 the U.S. Far East Air Force (USFEAF).

21 (12) Included in the surrenders the Philippines  
22 were female nurses of United States Army, Navy,  
23 Philippine Army, and civilian volunteers who became  
24 the first large group of American women in combat  
25 and, counted with the Army and Navy nurses sur-

1 rendered on Guam in December 1941, comprised the  
2 first group of American military women taken cap-  
3 tive and imprisoned by an enemy.

4 (13) More than 14,000 Americans POWs were  
5 transported aboard “hellships”—in the holds of un-  
6 marked merchant ships—from Pacific battle sites to  
7 be used as slave laborers; one-third of all POW  
8 deaths resulted from attacks on the “hellships” by  
9 “friendly fire” from American submarines or air-  
10 craft.

11 (14) More than 600 members of the United  
12 States Merchant Marine including one female Mar-  
13 iner, became prisoners of Imperial Japan, many of  
14 whom were turned over to Japanese control after  
15 being first captured by Nazi Germany’s naval forces.  
16 Fifteen percent were killed by either Imperial Japan  
17 Navy officers during capture or died in Japanese  
18 POW camps.

19 (15) Throughout World War II, the Imperial  
20 Japanese military maintained approximately 775  
21 POW camps throughout the Empire: 185 POW  
22 camps on the Home Islands of Japan and 590 in  
23 other areas of the Pacific Theater, which includes an  
24 unknown number of temporary camps.

1           (16) A priority of International Military Tri-  
2           bunal for the Far East (IMTFE), also known as the  
3           Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal and the ad hoc Amer-  
4           ican and Allied military tribunals throughout the  
5           Asia Pacific from 1945 to 1951 was to obtain justice  
6           for the maltreatment of POWs. Approximately sev-  
7           enty-five percent of the more than 5,600 defendants  
8           were charged with offenses against POWs. This re-  
9           flects the July 26, 1945, Potsdam Declaration’s  
10          warning that, “stern justice shall be meted out to all  
11          war criminals, including those who have visited cru-  
12          elties upon our prisoners”.

13          (17) President Ronald Reagan first proclaimed  
14          National Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day  
15          in 1988, which was established to coincide with April  
16          9, the anniversary of the start of the Bataan Death  
17          March.

18          (18) In 2009, the Government of Japan issued  
19          an official, Cabinet of Japan approved apology say-  
20          ing “We extend a heartfelt apology for our country  
21          having caused tremendous damage and suffering to  
22          many people, including prisoners of wars, those who  
23          have undergone tragic experiences in the Bataan Pe-  
24          ninsula, Corregidor Island, in the Philippines, and  
25          other places”.

1           (19) In 2010, the Government of Japan initi-  
2           ated an annual visitation program for former United  
3           States POWs of Japan and family members to visit  
4           Japan for remembrance, reconciliation, and healing.

5           (20) It is time to recognize the ordinary men  
6           and women who found uncommon courage in ex-  
7           traordinary circumstances to fight the impossible  
8           and endure the unimaginable for freedom from tyr-  
9           anny and oppression.

10          (21) The Congressional Gold Medal is an ap-  
11          propriate way to honor the service of the United  
12          States POWs held by Imperial Japan in World War  
13          II and to highlight the unique imprisonment of these  
14          Pacific War heroes and their poignant history of  
15          sacrifice, perseverance, patriotism, and faith.

16 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

17          In this Act—

18          (a) the term “prisoners of war of Imperial Japan”  
19          includes any individual who—

20                  (1) was taken prisoner—

21                          (A) by Japan while serving honorably in  
22                          the service of the United States at any time  
23                          during the period beginning on December 8,  
24                          1941, and ending on September 2, 1945;

1 (B) was taken prisoner by the Japanese  
2 while serving in an active-duty status under the  
3 command of the United States Army Forces in  
4 the Far East (USAFFE), United States Forces  
5 in the Philippines (USFIP), American-British-  
6 Dutch-Australian (ABDA) Command, South-  
7 west Pacific Area (SWPA), Pacific Ocean Area  
8 (POA), China-Burma-India (CBI), Southeast  
9 Asia Command (SEAC), 1st Defense Battalion,  
10 Wake Island (Marines), Guam Battalion (Ma-  
11 rines), 4th Marines, Marine Raiders, U.S. Asi-  
12 atic Fleet, Twentieth Air Force, Far East Air  
13 Force, United States Army Air Forces, and the  
14 War Shipping Administration; or

15 (C) was taken prisoner on Attu Island in  
16 the Aleutians part of Alaska on June 7, 1942;

17 (2) was not granted “parole” (release) by Impe-  
18 rial Japanese forces during World War II; and

19 (3) holds “veterans’ status” or a “certificate of  
20 honorable service” for their service in the Pacific  
21 Theater of World War II when taken prisoner by  
22 Japan;

23 (b) the term “Pacific Theater” means China, the  
24 Central Pacific, Southeast Asia, and the Southwest Pacific  
25 of World War II; and



1 (c) the term “Secretary” means the Secretary of the  
2 Treasury.

3 **SEC. 4. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

4 (a) PRESENTATION AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of  
5 the House of Representatives and the President pro tem-  
6 pore of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements  
7 for the award, on behalf of Congress, of a single gold  
8 medal of appropriate design to the United States to the  
9 men and women of the United States military and mer-  
10 chant marine as well as citizen and non-citizen civilians  
11 who fought with the U.S. military and were surrendered,  
12 captured, or abandoned to become prisoners of war of Im-  
13 perial Japan during World War II, in recognition of their  
14 dedicated and vital service during World War II.

15 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the  
16 award described in subsection (a), the Secretary of the  
17 Treasury (in this Act referred to as the “Secretary”) shall  
18 strike the gold medal with suitable emblems, devices, and  
19 inscriptions, to be determined by the Secretary.

20 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the  
22 gold medal under subsection (a), the gold medal  
23 shall be given to the Smithsonian Institution’s Na-  
24 tional Museum of American History, where it shall

1 be displayed as appropriate and made available for  
2 research.

3 (2) SENSE OF CONGRESS.—It is the sense of  
4 Congress that the Smithsonian Institution’s Na-  
5 tional Museum of American History should make  
6 the gold medal received under paragraph (1) avail-  
7 able for display at other locations, particularly at lo-  
8 cations that are associated with the prisoners of war  
9 of Imperial Japan during World War II, such as  
10 The Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, The  
11 MacArthur Memorial, National Prisoner of War Mu-  
12 seum; National Museum of the Pacific War, and  
13 New Mexico Military Museum.

14 **SEC. 5. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

15 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-  
16 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in  
17 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 4, at a price  
18 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,  
19 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

20 **SEC. 6. STATUS OF MEDALS.**

21 (a) NATIONAL MEDALS.—Medals struck under this  
22 Act are national medals for purposes of chapter 51 of title  
23 31, United States Code.

24 (b) NUMISMATIC ITEMS.—For purposes of section  
25 5134 and 5136 of title 31, United States Code, all medals

1 struck under this Act shall be considered to be numismatic  
2 items.

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