



JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE/JACL

Headquarters: 1765 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94115
1850 M Street NW, Suite 1100 • Washington, DC • 20036
Phone: (202) 223-1240 • Fax: (202) 296-8082

JACL PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Floyd Mori, JACL National Executive Director

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natdir@jacl.org

CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARDED TO NISEI SOLDIERS

Washington, D.C.— Japanese American Army veterans of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the 100th Infantry Battalion, and the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) of the United States Army, who served valiantly during World War II, were honored on November 2 in Washington, D.C. as they were collectively presented with the Congressional Gold Medal. Over 300 veterans were in attendance to accept their replicas of the medal. The veterans, widows, next of kin of deceased veterans, family members, and friends attending the festivities numbered more than 2,500.

The 100th Infantry Battalion was comprised of servicemen from Hawaii. The 442nd Regimental Combat Team was largely made up of Japanese American young men (Nisei or second generation citizens of the United States) who were incarcerated with their families in the camps to which over 110,000 people of Japanese descent were held after the beginning of World War II. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942, which paved the way for the camps to be established. There were others in these units who were not interned because their homes were in various inland states. The MIS served primarily in the Pacific theater and were credited with shortening the war with their language expertise and service.

These brave and patriotic young men who faced severe racial discrimination and prejudice served willingly to defend their country, the United States of America. In spite of the challenges, the 442nd were exemplary and became the most highly decorated unit for its size and length of service in the history of the United States military. At the end of World War II, President Harry S. Truman stated of the Nisei soldiers, “You fought not only the enemy, but you fought prejudice and you won.”

The National Veterans Network (NVN) is a coalition of Japanese American veteran and civic organizations which came together in 2008. Their chairperson is Christine Sato-Yamazaki. The NVN was responsible for putting together the events in Washington, D.C. with the assistance of PSA, an event planning and project management company. All the organizations which comprise the NVN were heavily involved in the planning and execution of the three days of festivities to honor the veterans and their families.

Floyd Mori, National Executive Director of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) and a member of the NVN steering committee, issued the following statement: “The JACL was honored to be a participating organization in this historic occasion. We revere the Japanese American veterans of the 442, 100th, and MIS who served courageously during World War II and to whom we owe a great deal. They made the world a better place for all Japanese Americans in subsequent years. We will be forever grateful for their sacrifice and dedication to life and liberty. They suffered untold ridicule, discrimination, bigotry, and hardship, but they triumphed. The veterans are most deserving of this

long overdue honor. We are also grateful to the Japanese Americans who served in various others branches of the service. Thanks to the members of Congress, the United States Military, the NVN, the sponsors, and all others who made the Congressional Gold Medal events possible as well as to all the volunteers who assisted and all who attended to make this a memorable occasion.”

Visit: www.nationalveteransnetwork.com for more information.

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