



MEDAL OF HONOR: Maj. John J. Duffy



Biography



Hometown: New York City
Unit: 5th Special Forces Group
Military Occupation (MOS): Infantry Officer (11A)
Enlisted: March 1955
Commissioned Date: September 1963
Deployments: Vietnam War (1967, 1968, 1971, 1973)



John J. Duffy rose from sergeant to major while serving in special operations groups including the 5th Special Forces Group in the U.S. Army. He served four combat tours in Vietnam, where he often operated behind enemy lines. In 1972, Duffy served as a special advisor with the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) Team 162, known as the "Red Hats".

Duffy has been honored with 64 awards and decorations, 29 of which are for valor, including the Distinguished Service Cross (currently in final stages to an upgrade), the Soldier's Medal, four Bronze Stars with "Valor" device, eight Purple Hearts, seven Air Medals (six with "Valor" device), three Army Commendation Medals with "Valor" device, the Cross of Gallantry with Palm (Viet Nam's highest award for valor), two Crosses of Gallantry with Silver Stars, one Presidential Unit Citation (Naval), three Presidential Unit Citations (Army), the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry w/Palm (Unit), the Vietnam Valorous Service Medal (Unit), the Combat Infantry Badge, Master Parachutist Wings, plus numerous other awards for service and merit.

Following his military service, he was president of a publishing company and the founder and president of an investment firm which was bought by TD Ameritrade Inc.

Duffy has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize and has published six books of poetry. Two of his poems were selected to be inscribed on monuments, and others appear in countless publications and anthologies. His latest book is "The Battle for Charlie."

As a founding member of the Special Operations Association and a life member of the Special Forces Decade Association, the Legion of Valor, the Forward Air Controllers Association, the Jolly Green Giants Association, the Vietnam Helicopter Pilots Association, the Air Commando Association, and the Team 162 "Vietnamese Airborne Advisor" Association, he is an active and honored veteran.

In 2013, Maj. Duffy was inducted into the Infantry Hall of Fame at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Duffy played a significant role in a major battle that was written about by Cpt. Nam Nhat Phan in his award-winning book "Mua He Lua Do" or "The Red Flames of Summer."

Duffy's poem "The Forward Air Controller" is inscribed in a monument in Colorado Springs, Colorado, honoring the FACs who sacrificed all so others could live. Duffy wrote and delivered the "Forward Air Controller's Requiem" during the dedication ceremony, which concluded with a "Missing Man Formation" fly-over. The requiem was later added in bronze to the monument's center piece.

John Duffy currently resides in Santa Cruz, California.





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Battle Narrative

Maj. John J. Duffy distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty, while assigned to the 5th Special Forces Group and serving as a senior advisor to the 11th Airborne Battalion, 2nd Brigade, Airborne Division, Army of the Republic of Vietnam in the Republic of Vietnam, on April 14-15, 1972.

Two days earlier, the commander of the 11th Airborne Battalion was killed, the battalion command post was destroyed, and Duffy was twice wounded but refused to be evacuated. Then on April 14, Duffy directed the defense of Fire Support Base Charlie, which was surrounded by a battalion-sized enemy element.

In the morning hours, after a failed effort to establish a landing zone for resupply aircraft, he moved close to enemy anti-aircraft positions to call in airstrikes. At this time, Duffy was again wounded by fragments from a recoilless rifle round and again refused evacuation.

Shortly after, the enemy began an artillery bombardment on the base and he remained in an exposed position to direct gunships onto the enemy positions, which eventually silenced the enemy fire.

Following the bombardment, Duffy assessed the conditions on the base and personally ensured that wounded friendly foreign forces were moved to positions of relative safety and the remaining ammunition was appropriately distributed to the remaining defenders.

The enemy resumed indirect fire on the base, expending an estimated 300 rounds. Nevertheless, Duffy remained in an exposed position to direct gunship fire on the enemy positions.

In the late afternoon hours, the enemy began a ground assault from all sides of the firebase, and Duffy moved from position to position to adjust fire, spot targets for artillery observers and, ultimately, to direct gunship fire on a friendly position which had been compromised.

During the early morning hours of April 15, the enemy ambushed the battalion, inflicting additional casualties and scattering some of the able-bodied service members. After withstanding the ambush, Duffy led the evacuees – many of whom were significantly wounded – to an established evacuation area, despite being continually pursued by the enemy.

Upon reaching the exfiltration site, Duffy directed gunship fire on enemy positions and marked a landing zone for the helicopters. Only after ensuring all of the evacuees were aboard, did Duffy board while also assisting a wounded friendly foreign service member. Once on board, he administered aid to a helicopter door gunner who had been wounded during the evacuation.

Duffy's extraordinary heroism and selflessness beyond the call of duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.

