

113TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 1726

AN ACT

To award a Congressional Gold Medal to the 65th Infantry
Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers.

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

1 **SECTION 1. FINDINGS.**

2 The Congress finds the following:

3 (1) In 1898, the United States acquired Puerto
4 Rico in the Treaty of Paris that ended the Spanish-
5 American War and, by the following year, Congress
6 had authorized raising a unit of volunteer soldiers in
7 the newly acquired territory.

8 (2) In May 1917, two months after legislation
9 granting United States citizenship to individuals
10 born in Puerto Rico was signed into law, and one
11 month after the United States entered World War I,
12 the unit was transferred to the Panama Canal Zone
13 in part because United States Army policy at the
14 time restricted most segregated units to noncombat
15 roles, even though the regiment could have contrib-
16 uted to the fighting effort.

17 (3) In June 1920, the unit was re-designated as
18 the “65th Infantry Regiment, United States Army”,
19 and served as the United States military’s last seg-
20 regated unit composed primarily of Hispanic sol-
21 diers.

22 (4) In January 1943, 13 months after the at-
23 tack on Pearl Harbor that marked the entry of the
24 United States into World War II, the Regiment
25 again deployed to the Panama Canal Zone before de-
26 ploying overseas in the spring of 1944.

1 (5) Despite relatively limited combat service in
2 World War II, the Regiment suffered casualties in
3 the course of defending against enemy attacks, with
4 individual soldiers earning one Distinguished Service
5 Cross, two Silver Stars, two Bronze Stars and 90
6 Purple Hearts. The Regiment received campaign
7 participation credit for Rome-Arno, Rhineland,
8 Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe.

9 (6) Although an executive order issued by
10 President Harry S. Truman in July 1948 declared
11 it to be United States policy to ensure equality of
12 treatment and opportunity for all persons in the
13 armed services without respect to race or color, im-
14 plementation of this policy had yet to be fully real-
15 ized when armed conflict broke out on the Korean
16 Peninsula in June 1950, and both African-American
17 soldiers and Puerto Rican soldiers served in seg-
18 regated units.

19 (7) Brigadier General William W. Harris, who
20 served as the Regiment's commander during the
21 early stages of the Korean War, later recalled that
22 he had initially been reluctant to take the position
23 because of "prejudice" within the military and "the
24 feeling of the officers and even the brass of the Pen-
25 tagon * * * that the Puerto Rican wouldn't make

1 a good combat soldier * * * I know my contem-
2 poraries felt that way and, in all honesty, I must
3 admit that at the time I had the same feeling * *
4 * that the Puerto Rican was a rum and Coca-Cola
5 soldier.”.

6 (8) One of the first opportunities the Regiment
7 had to prove its combat worthiness arose on the eve
8 of the Korean War during Operation PORTREX,
9 one of the largest military exercises that had been
10 conducted up until that point, where the Regiment
11 distinguished itself by repelling an offensive con-
12 sisting of over 32,000 troops from the 82nd Air-
13 borne Division and the United States Marine Corps,
14 supported by the Navy and Air Force, thereby dem-
15 onstrating that the Regiment could hold its own
16 against some of the best-trained forces in the United
17 States military.

18 (9) In August 1950, with the United States
19 Army’s situation in Korea deteriorating, the Depart-
20 ment of the Army’s headquarters decided to bolster
21 the 3rd Infantry Division and, owing in part to the
22 65th Infantry Regiment’s outstanding performance
23 during Operation PORTREX, it was among the
24 units selected for the combat assignment. The deci-
25 sion to send the Regiment to Korea and attach it to

1 the 3rd Infantry Division was a landmark change in
2 the United States military's racial and ethnic policy.

3 (10) As the Regiment sailed to Asia in Sep-
4 tember 1950, members of the unit informally de-
5 cided to call themselves the "Borinqueneers", a term
6 derived from the Taíno word for Puerto Rico mean-
7 ing "land of the brave lord".

8 (11) The story of the 65th Infantry Regiment
9 during the Korean War has been aptly described as
10 "one of pride, courage, heartbreak, and redemp-
11 tion".

12 (12) Fighting as a segregated unit from 1950
13 to 1952, the Regiment participated in some of the
14 fiercest battles of the war, and its toughness, cour-
15 age and loyalty earned the admiration of many who
16 had previously harbored reservations about Puerto
17 Rican soldiers based on lack of previous fighting ex-
18 perience and negative stereotypes, including Briga-
19 dier General Harris, whose experience eventually led
20 him to regard the Regiment as "the best damn sol-
21 diers that I had ever seen".

22 (13) After disembarking at Pusan, South Korea
23 in September 1950, the Regiment blocked the escape
24 routes of retreating North Korean units and over-
25 came pockets of resistance. The most significant bat-

1 tle took place near Yongam-ni in October when the
2 Regiment routed a force of 400 enemy troops. By
3 the end of the month, the Regiment had taken 921
4 prisoners while killing or wounding more than 600
5 enemy soldiers. Its success led General Douglas
6 MacArthur, Commander-in-Chief of the United Na-
7 tions Command in Korea, to observe that the Regi-
8 ment was “showing magnificent ability and courage
9 in field operations”.

10 (14) The Regiment landed on the eastern coast
11 of North Korea in early November 1950. In Decem-
12 ber 1950, following China’s intervention in the war,
13 the Regiment engaged in a series of fierce battles to
14 cover the rear guard of the 1st Marine Division dur-
15 ing the fighting retreat from the Chosin Reservoir to
16 the enclave at Hungnam, North Korea, one of the
17 greatest withdrawals in modern military history.

18 (15) When General MacArthur ordered the
19 evacuation of Hungnam in mid-December, the Regi-
20 ment was instrumental in securing the port, and was
21 among the last units—if not the last unit—to depart
22 the beachhead on Christmas Eve, suffering signifi-
23 cant casualties in the process. Under the Regiment’s
24 protection, 105,000 troops and 100,000 refugees

1 were evacuated, along with 350,000 tons of supplies
2 and 17,500 military vehicles.

3 (16) The brutal winter conditions during the
4 campaign presented significant hardships for sol-
5 diers in the Regiment, who lacked appropriate gear
6 to fight in sub-zero temperatures.

7 (17) Between January and March 1951, the
8 Regiment participated in numerous operations to re-
9 cover and retain South Korean territory lost to the
10 enemy, assaulting heavily fortified enemy positions
11 and conducting the last recorded battalion-sized bay-
12 onet assault in United States Army history.

13 (18) On January 31, 1951, the commander of
14 Eighth Army, Lieutenant General Matthew B.
15 Ridgway, wrote to the Regiment's commander:
16 "What I saw and heard of your regiment reflects
17 great credit on you, your regiment, and the people
18 of Puerto Rico, who can be proud of their valiant
19 sons. I am confident that their battle records and
20 training levels will win them high honors * * *.
21 Their conduct in battle has served only to increase
22 the high regard in which I hold these fine troops."

23 (19) On February 3, 1951, General MacArthur
24 wrote: "The Puerto Ricans forming the ranks of the
25 gallant 65th Infantry on the battlefields of Korea by

1 valor, determination, and a resolute will to victory
2 give daily testament to their invincible loyalty to the
3 United States and the fervor of their devotion to
4 those immutable standards of human relations to
5 which the Americans and Puerto Ricans are in com-
6 mon dedicated. They are writing a brilliant record of
7 achievement in battle and I am proud indeed to have
8 them in this command. I wish that we might have
9 many more like them.”.

10 (20) The Regiment played a central role in the
11 United States military’s counteroffensive responding
12 to a major push by the Chinese Communist Forces
13 (CCF) in 1951, winning praise for its superb per-
14 formance in multiple battles, including Operations
15 KILLER and RIPPER, as well as for its actions on
16 February 14th, when the Regiment inflicted nearly
17 1,000 enemy casualties at a cost of only one killed
18 and six wounded, almost singlehandedly annihilating
19 a North Korean infantry regiment that had infil-
20 trated the defenses of the 3rd Infantry Division’s
21 headquarters.

22 (21) By 1952, senior United States com-
23 manders ordered that replacement soldiers from
24 Puerto Rico would no longer be limited to service in
25 the Regiment, but could be made available to fill

1 personnel shortages in non-segregated units both in-
2 side and outside the 3rd Infantry Division. This was
3 a major milestone in United States Army policy
4 that, paradoxically, harmed the Regiment by depriv-
5 ing it of some of Puerto Rico's most able soldiers.

6 (22) Beyond the many hardships endured by
7 most American soldiers in Korea, the Regiment
8 faced unique challenges arising from discrimination
9 and prejudice.

10 (23) In 1953, the now fully integrated Regi-
11 ment earned admiration for its relentless defense of
12 Outpost Harry, during which it confronted multiple
13 company-size probes, full-scale regimental attacks,
14 and heavy artillery and mortar fire from Chinese
15 forces, earning one Distinguished Service Cross, 14
16 Silver Stars, 23 Bronze Stars, and 67 Purple
17 Hearts, in operations that Major General Eugene W.
18 Ridings described as "highly successful in that the
19 enemy was denied the use of one of his best routes
20 of approach into the friendly position". The recipient
21 of the Distinguished Service Cross was then-First
22 Lieutenant Richard E. Cavazos, a Mexican-Amer-
23 ican, who went on to become the first Latino to rise
24 to the rank of four-star general in the United States
25 Army.

1 (24) For its extraordinary service during the
2 Korean War, the Regiment received two Presidential
3 Unit Citations (Army and Navy), two Republic of
4 Korea Presidential Unit Citations, a Meritorious
5 Unit Commendation (Army), a Navy Unit Com-
6 mendation, the Bravery Gold Medal of Greece, and
7 campaign participation credits for United Nations
8 Offensive, CCF Intervention, First United Nations
9 Counteroffensive, CCF Spring Offensive, United Na-
10 tions Summer-Fall Offensive, Second Korean Win-
11 ter, Korea Summer-Fall 1952, Third Korean Win-
12 ter, and Korea Summer 1953.

13 (25) In Korea, soldiers in the Regiment earned
14 a total of nine Distinguished Service Crosses, ap-
15 proximately 250 Silver Stars, over 600 Bronze
16 Stars, more than 2,700 Purple Hearts. On March
17 18, 2014, Master Sergeant Juan E. Negrón
18 Martínez received the Medal of Honor, the Nation's
19 highest award for military valor, for actions taken
20 on April 28, 1951 near Kalma-Eri, Korea.

21 (26) In all, some 61,000 Puerto Ricans served
22 in the United States Army during the Korean War,
23 the bulk of them with the 65th Infantry Regiment—
24 and over the course of the war, Puerto Rican sol-

1 diers suffered a disproportionately high casualty
2 rate, with over 740 killed and over 2,300 wounded.

3 (27) In April 1956, as part of the reduction in
4 forces following the Korean War, the 65th Infantry
5 Regiment was deactivated from the regular Army
6 and, in February 1959, became the only regular
7 Army unit to have ever been transferred to the Na-
8 tional Guard, when its 1st battalion and its regi-
9 mental number were assigned to the Puerto Rico
10 National Guard, where it has remained ever since.

11 (28) In 1982, the United States Army Center
12 of Military History officially authorized granting the
13 65th Infantry Regiment the special designation of
14 “Borinqueneers”.

15 (29) In the years since the Korean War, the
16 achievements of the Regiment have been recognized
17 in various ways, including—

18 (A) the naming of streets in honor of the
19 Regiment in San Juan, Puerto Rico and The
20 Bronx, New York;

21 (B) the erecting of monuments and
22 plaques to honor the Regiment at Arlington Na-
23 tional Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia; the San
24 Juan National Historic Site in San Juan, Puer-
25 to Rico; Fort Logan National Cemetery in Den-

1 ver, Colorado; and at sites in Boston, Massa-
2 chusetts; Worcester, Massachusetts; Buffalo,
3 New York; and Ocala, Florida;

4 (C) the renaming of a park in
5 Buenaventura Lake, Florida as the “65th In-
6 fantry Veterans Park”;

7 (D) the dedication of land for a park and
8 monument to honor the Regiment in New Brit-
9 ain, Connecticut;

10 (E) the adoption or introduction of resolu-
11 tions or proclamations honoring the Regiment
12 by many state and municipal governments, in-
13 cluding in the states and territories of Cali-
14 fornia, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois,
15 Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jer-
16 sey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsyl-
17 vania, Puerto Rico, and Texas; and

18 (F) the issuance by the United States
19 Postal Service of a Korean War commemorative
20 stamp depicting soldiers from the Regiment.

21 (30) In a speech delivered on September 20,
22 2000, at a ceremony in Arlington National Cemetery
23 in honor of the Regiment, Secretary of the Army
24 Louis Caldera said: “Even as the 65th struggled
25 against all deadly enemies in the field, they were

1 fighting a rearguard action against a more insidious
2 adversary—the cumulative effects of ill-conceived
3 military policies, leadership shortcomings, and espe-
4 cially racial and organizational prejudices, all exacer-
5 bated by America’s unpreparedness for war and the
6 growing pains of an Army forced by law and cir-
7 cumstance to carry out racial integration. Together
8 these factors would take their inevitable toll on the
9 65th, leaving scars that have yet to heal for so many
10 of the Regiment’s proud and courageous soldiers.”.

11 (31) Secretary Caldera further stated: “To the
12 veterans of the 65th Infantry Regiment who, in that
13 far off land fifty years ago, fought with rare courage
14 even as you endured misfortune and injustice, thank
15 you for doing your duty. There can be no greater
16 praise than that for any soldier of the United States
17 Army.”.

18 (32) Secretary Caldera also noted that “[t]he
19 men of the 65th who served in Korea are a signifi-
20 cant part of a proud tradition of service” that in-
21 cludes the Japanese American 442nd Regimental
22 Combat Team, the African American Tuskegee Air-
23 men, and “many other unsung minority units
24 throughout the history of our armed forces whose
25 stories have never been fully told”.

1 (33) The service of the men of the 65th Infan-
2 try Regiment is emblematic of the contributions to
3 the armed forces that have been made by hundreds
4 of thousands of brave and patriotic United States
5 citizens from Puerto Rico over generations, from
6 World War I to the most recent conflicts in Afghani-
7 stan and Iraq, and in other overseas contingency op-
8 erations.

9 **SEC. 2. CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL.**

10 (a) AWARD AUTHORIZED.—The Speaker of the
11 House of Representatives and the President pro tempore
12 of the Senate shall make appropriate arrangements for the
13 award, on behalf of the Congress, of a single gold medal
14 of appropriate design in honor of the 65th Infantry Regi-
15 ment, known as the Borinqueneers, in recognition of its
16 pioneering military service, devotion to duty, and many
17 acts of valor in the face of adversity.

18 (b) DESIGN AND STRIKING.—For the purposes of the
19 award referred to in subsection (a), the Secretary of the
20 Treasury (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the “Sec-
21 retary”) shall strike the gold medal with suitable emblems,
22 devices, and inscriptions, to be determined by the Sec-
23 retary.

24 (c) SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION.—

1 (1) IN GENERAL.—Following the award of the
2 gold medal in honor of the 65th Infantry Regiment,
3 known as the Borinqueneers, the gold medal shall be
4 given to the Smithsonian Institution, where it shall
5 be available for display as appropriate and made
6 available for research.

7 (2) SENSE OF THE CONGRESS.—It is the sense
8 of the Congress that the Smithsonian Institution
9 shall make the gold medal received under this Act
10 available for display elsewhere, particularly at other
11 appropriate locations associated with the 65th Infan-
12 try Regiment, including locations in Puerto Rico.

13 **SEC. 3. DUPLICATE MEDALS.**

14 Under such regulations as the Secretary may pre-
15 scribe, the Secretary may strike and sell duplicates in
16 bronze of the gold medal struck under section 2, at a price
17 sufficient to cover the costs of the medals, including labor,
18 materials, dies, use of machinery, and overhead expenses.

1 **SEC. 4. NATIONAL MEDALS.**

2 Medals struck pursuant to this Act are national med-
3 als for purposes of chapter 51 of title 31, United States
4 Code.

Passed the House of Representatives May 19, 2014.

Attest:

Clerk.

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Infantry Regiment, known as the Borinqueneers.