

List of Asian American Medal of Honor recipients

The Medal of Honor was created during the American Civil War and is the highest military decoration presented by the United States government to a member of its armed forces. The recipient must have distinguished themselves at the risk of their own life above and beyond the call of duty in action against an enemy of the United States. Due to the nature of this medal, it is commonly presented posthumously.^[1]

Of the 3,464 Medals of Honor awarded as of September 17, 2009,^[2] 30 have been awarded to Asian American recipients. The first Asian American to receive the Medal was José B. Nisperos, who received it for his actions in the Philippine–American War.^[3]

In 1996, a study determined that Asian Americans were discriminated against in the awarding of medals during World War II; consequently, 22 had their medals upgraded to the Medal of Honor.^[4] Except for those awarded during the 1996 discrimination study the most recent Asian American recipient of the Medal of Honor was Rodney Yano, who received it for his actions during the Vietnam War.^[5]

Philippine–American War and peacetime

The Philippine–American War^[6] was an armed military conflict between the United States and the First Philippine Republic, fought between 1899 and least 1902, which arose from a Filipino political struggle against U.S. occupation of the Philippines. Although the conflict was officially declared over on July 4, 1902,^[7] ^[8] ^[9] American troops continued hostilities against remnants of the Philippine Army and other resistance groups until 1913, and some historians consider these unofficial extensions part of the war.^[9]

During this conflict one Asian American, José Nisperos, received the Medal of Honor for continuing to fight after being seriously wounded and was the first person of Asian descent to receive it.^[3]

Telesforo Trinidad received a Medal of Honor after rescuing two men from a boiler explosion and is the only Asian American sailor to receive the Medal during peacetime.^[10]

Image	Name	Service	Rank	Date of action	Place of action	Unit	Notes
—	José B. Nisperos	Army	Private	September 24, 1911	Lapurap, Basilan	Philippine Scouts	Although seriously wounded, continued to fight until the enemy was repulsed ^[3]
—	Telesforo Trinidad	Navy	Fireman Second Class	January 21, 1915	aboard USS <i>California</i>	USS <i>California</i>	Rescued two men after a boiler explosion despite being injured ^[10]

World War II















World War II, or the Second World War, was a global military conflict, the joining of what had initially been two separate conflicts. The first began in Asia in 1937 as the Second Sino-Japanese War; the other began in Europe in 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. This global conflict split the majority of the world's nations into two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis powers. It involved the mobilization of over 100 million military personnel, making it the most widespread war in history, and placed the participants in a state of total war, erasing the distinction between civil and military resources. This resulted in the complete activation of a nation's economic, industrial, and scientific capabilities for the purposes of the war effort. Over 60 million people, the majority of them civilians, were killed, making it the deadliest conflict in human history.^[11] The Allies were victorious, and, as a result, the United States and Soviet Union emerged as the world's two leading superpowers.





During this conflict 464 United States military personnel received the Medal of Honor, 266 of them posthumously. By the end of the war, only two Asian Americans had been awarded the Medal of Honor, Sergeant Jose Calugas of the Philippine Scouts and Private Sadao S. Munemori of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.^[12] A 1996 study commissioned by the United States Army by order of Congress investigated racial discrimination in the awarding of medals during World War II.^[4] The Command History Office at the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center at the Presidio of Monterey, California was tasked with identifying affected service-members and reviewing the records.^[4] After performing a review of the files, the study recommended that several Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who received the Distinguished Service Cross during World War II should be upgraded to the Medal of Honor.^[4] On June 21, 2000, President Bill Clinton awarded the Medal to 22 Asian Americans, 21 from the aforementioned study,^[13] in a ceremony at the White House.^[4]

Of the 24 Asian American awardees, 21 earned the Medal while serving with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team or its component unit, the 100th Infantry Battalion, making the 442nd the most decorated regiment-sized unit of the war.^[14] Only two Asian American officers received the Medal of Honor during World War II:^[15] Captain Francis B. Wai who received it for drawing enemy fire to himself to reveal their positions and Second Lieutenant Daniel Inouye who received his medal for destroying two machine gun nests and continuing to fight after being wounded. Inouye became the first U.S. Representative for Hawaii and the first Japanese American congressman; he currently serves as one of Hawaii's U.S. Senators.^[16]

This with the * indicates that the Medal of Honor was awarded posthumously

Image	Name	Service	Rank	Date of action	Place of action	Unit	Notes
	Jose Calugas	Army	Sergeant	January 16, 1942	Culis, Bataan Province, Philippines	88th Field Artillery Regiment, Philippine Scouts	Under heavy fire, organized and led a gun crew after the original crew had been killed or wounded ^[17]
	Rudolph B. Davila	Army	Staff Sergeant	May 28, 1944	Artena, Italy	7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division	Led his unit by example and, although wounded, single-handedly attacked an enemy-held house ^[18]
	Barney F. Hajiro	Army	Private	October 19, 1944, October 22, 1944, and October 29, 1944	near Bruyères and Biffontaine, eastern France	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Assisted an attack on a house, captured a numerically superior force, and single-handedly silenced two machine gun nests ^[18]
	Mikio Hasemoto*	Army	Private	November 29, 1943	Cerasuolo, Italy	100th Infantry Battalion	With his squad leader, destroyed an enemy force despite having to run through heavy fire twice to retrieve new weapons ^[18]
	Joe Hayashi*	Army	Private	April 20, 1945 and April 22, 1945	Cerasuolo, Italy	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Led an attack on strongly defended positions and single-handedly silenced three machine guns ^[18]
	Shizuya Hayashi	Army	Private	November 29, 1943	Cerasuolo, Italy	100th Infantry Battalion	Single-handedly silenced a machine gun nest and an anti-aircraft gun ^[18]

	Daniel Inouye	Army	Second Lieutenant	April 21, 1945	near San Terenzo, Italy	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Single-handedly destroyed two machine gun nests, continued to fight and lead his platoon after being wounded ^[18]
	Yeiki Kobashigawa	Army	Technical Sergeant	June 2, 1944	near Lanuvio, Italy	100th Infantry Battalion	Led successful attacks on four machine gun positions ^[18]
	Robert T. Kuroda*	Army	Staff Sergeant	October 20, 1944	near Bruyeres, France	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Single-handedly destroyed two machine gun emplacements ^[18]
	Kaoru Moto*	Army	Private First Class	July 7, 1944	near Castellina, Italy	100th Infantry Battalion	Single-handedly attacked two machine guns and, although wounded, captured a third ^[18]
	Sadao Munemori*	Army	Private First Class	April 5, 1945	near Seravezza, Italy	100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team	Single-handedly attacked two machine guns before smothering a grenade blast with his body ^[19]
	Kiyoshi Muranaga*	Army	Private First Class	June 26, 1944	near Suvereto, Italy	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Engaged an artillery gun alone, using a mortar ^[18]
	Masato Nakae*	Army	Private	August 19, 1944	near Pisa, Italy	100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team	Held off an enemy attack and continued to fight after being wounded ^[18]
	Shinyei Nakamine*	Army	Private	June 2, 1944	near La Torreto, Italy	100th Infantry Battalion	Single-handedly destroyed a machine gun nest and led attacks on two others ^[18]
	William Nakamura*	Army	Private First Class	July 4, 1944	near Castellina, Italy	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Silenced a machine gun nest and stayed behind to provide covering fire as his unit withdrew ^[18]
	Joe M. Nishimoto*	Army	Private First Class	November 7, 1944	near La Houssiere, France	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Single-handedly neutralized three machine gun positions ^[18]
	Allan M. Ohata*	Army	Sergeant	November 29, 1943 – November 30, 1943	near Cerasuolo, Italy	100th Infantry Battalion	Together with a rifleman, held back an attack by a numerically superior force ^[18]
	James K. Okubo*	Army	Technician Fifth Grade	October 28, 1944 – October 29, 1944 and November 4, 1944	Foret Domaniale de Champ, near Biffontaine, France	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Repeatedly exposed himself to intense fire to treat and evacuate wounded men ^[18]
	Yukio Okutsu	Army	Technical Sergeant	April 7, 1945	Mount Belvedere, Italy	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Single-handedly silenced three machine gun positions ^[18]
	Frank H. Ono*	Army	Private First Class	July 4, 1944	near Castellina, Italy	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Held an advance position alone, treated wounded men, and remained behind to provide covering fire as his unit withdrew ^[18]


	Kazuo Otani*	Army	Staff Sergeant	July 15, 1944	near Pieve Di St. Luce, Italy	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Drew fire onto himself so his platoon could reach cover, killed while rescuing a wounded man ^[18]
	George T. Sakato	Army	Private	October 29, 1944	Hill 617, near Biffontaine, France	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Charged an enemy strongpoint, took command of his platoon and led it in defense of their position ^[18]
	Ted T. Tanouye*	Army	Technical Sergeant	July 7, 1944	near Molino A Ventoabbto, Italy	442nd Regimental Combat Team	Although wounded, single-handedly attacked a series of enemy positions ^[18]
	Francis B. Wai*	Army	Captain	October 20, 1944	Leyte, Philippine Islands	34th Infantry Regiment	Took command of four assault waves and led by example, drew fire onto himself to reveal enemy positions ^[18]

Korean War

The Korean War was an escalation of border clashes between two rival Korean regimes, each of which was supported by external powers; each tried to topple the other through political and guerilla tactics. In a narrow sense, some may refer to it as a civil war, though many other factors were at play.^[20] After failing to strengthen their cause in the free elections held in South Korea during May 1950^[21] and the refusal of South Korea to hold new elections per North Korean demands, the communist North Korean Army moved south on June 25, 1950 to attempt to reunite the Korean peninsula, which had been formally divided since 1948. The conflict was then expanded by the United States and the Soviet Union's involvement as part of the larger Cold War. The main hostilities were during the period from June 25, 1950 until the armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. In the early stages of the war, President Harry Truman sometimes described the conflict under the aegis of the United Nations as a "police action" rather than use the term war.^{[20] [22]}

One Asian American received the Medal of Honor for his actions during the Korean War. Hiroshi H. Miyamura was captured by Chinese forces and held as a prisoner of war for 28 months. For his protection, news of his Medal of Honor award was classified until his release from captivity.^[23]

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Image	Name	Service	Rank	Date of action	Place of action	Unit	Notes
	Hiroshi H. Miyamura	Army	Corporal	April 24, 1951 – April 25, 1951	Taejon-ni, Korea	7th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Division	Fought in close quarters combat, stayed behind to provide covering fire while his unit withdrew ^[24]




Vietnam War

The Vietnam War, also known as the Second Indochina War, and in Vietnam as the American War, occurred from 1959 to April 30, 1975. The term Vietnam Conflict is often used to refer to events which took place between 1959 and April 30, 1975. The war was fought between the Communist-supported Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United States supported Republic of Vietnam. It concluded with the defeat and failure of the United States foreign policy in Vietnam.^{[25] [26]} On April 30, 1975, the capital of South Vietnam, Saigon fell to the communist forces of North Vietnam, effectively ending the Vietnam War.^[27] Over 8.7 million U.S. forces participated in the

Vietnam War; of whom slightly over 47,000 were killed in battle and almost 11,000 more died of non-battle causes.^[28]

During the Vietnam War three Asian Americans received the Medal of Honor, all of them posthumously. Elmelindo Smith, although wounded multiple times was killed while fighting with his unit.^[5] Terry Kawamura sacrificed his life by jumping on an explosive charge, saving the lives of two other soldiers, and Rodney Yano sacrificed his life by throwing burning ammunition off of a helicopter after a grenade exploded prematurely.^{[5] [29]}

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Image	Name	Service	Rank	Date of action	Place of action	Unit	Notes
	Terry Teruo Kawamura*	Army	Corporal	March 20, 1969	Camp Radcliff, Republic of Vietnam	173rd Engineer Company, 173rd Airborne Brigade	Smothered the blast of an explosive charge with his body ^[29]
	Elmelindo Smith*	Army	Staff Sergeant	February 16, 1967	Republic of Vietnam	2nd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division	Continued to organize his unit's defense after being repeatedly and mortally wounded ^[5]
	Rodney Yano*	Army	Sergeant First Class	January 1, 1969	near Bien Hao, Republic of Vietnam	Air Cavalry Troop, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment	Grabbed burning ammunition and threw it from the aircraft after being seriously wounded in a premature grenade explosion aboard a helicopter ^[5]

Footnotes

- [1] "A Brief History — The Medal of Honor" (http://www.defenselink.mil/faq/pis/med_of_honor.html). *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)*. Department of Defense. August 8, 2006. . Retrieved February 9, 2010.
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- [6] This conflict is also known as the Philippine Insurrection. This name was historically the most commonly used in the U.S., but Filipinos and some American historians refer to these hostilities as the *Philippine–American War*, and, in 1999, the U.S. Library of Congress reclassified its references to use this term.
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- [15] In the United States military an enlisted rank is below a commissioned officer and warrant officer and in most cases perform specific jobs. The warrant officer ranks are between enlisted and commissioned officers and are usually highly skilled, single-track specialty officers. Although warrant officers can serve at varying levels and in many jobs the warrant officer's primary task as a leader is to serve as a technical expert, providing skills, guidance, and expertise to commanders and organizations in their particular field. Commissioned officers are typically the only persons, in a military environment, able to act as the commanding officer of a military unit. They generally receive training in leadership, managerial skills and general skills training in career field. Commissioned officers are typically assigned as leaders in a given field with a general title such as infantry officer.
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