Letters To Editor

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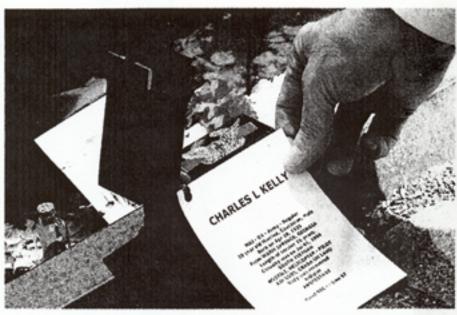
Aeromedics deserve own combat badge

Your recent editorial on legislation in Congress to compel the award of a Combat Aeromedic Badge by the Army to "dustoff" crew members from Korea and Vietnam to the present day in Iraq and Afghanistan is right on

I served as a grunt with the 4th Infantry division in Vietnam. I arrived there qualified to wear the Expert Infantryman Badge. When I returned, I proudly wore the Combat Infantryman Badge it denoted that I had served under hostile circumstances.

Many times we were inserted into a battle by helicopter. Most times we simply jumped when it got low enough and it was gone. Dustoff, on the other hand, had to land and load the wounded, making those unarmed helicopters a huge target.

Like the ground medics who served with my infantry unit, these volunteers who flew the most dangerous missions in Vietnam deserve a Combat Badge. It says they have been there and served in hostile con-



JOHN C. WHITEHEAD, The Patriot-News

A medic badge was presented posthumously in Washington last month to Maj. Charles L. Kelly of Warm Springs Ga., the first Dustoff pilot killed in Vietnam.

ditions. I recently read in The Patriot-News that there were 213 of these crewman on The Wall in Washington and that these units suffered dead and wounded at a 40 percent rate.

An Army spokesman made a jerk of himself when saying that this badge degrades teamwork. What about the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Green Beret of Special Forces, the Combat Medic Badge, the Wings awarded to pilots?

Stay on top of this story, which is about righting an injustice of more than 40 years.

DAVID GIBSON

New Cumberland

'Dustoff' badge

Many thanks from the veteran community for your continuing coverage of the fight to get the Army to recognize the helicopter ambulance crewmen known as "Dustoffs" - who willingly fly into hot landing zones under fire to rescue our wounded soldiers.

Two things need to be clarified from the excellent story by your Washington correspondent, Brett Lieberman (May 26).

Mr. Lieberman refers to the recognition we seek as a "medal." A medal is awarded for individual achievement.

What we seek is simply a badge, similar to the Combat Medic Badge.

This loads to the abound

A badge shows you have been there, in combat, and served

your country in a special way.

Arata, who is quoted as saying, "To attempt to identify soldiers in specific categories has an adverse effect on team concept and uniformity of purpose."

What hogwash!

What would he call the Combat Infantryman's Badge? Or the Combat Medic Badge, the Green Beret of the Special Forces or the Red Beret of Airborne troops?

I served as a grunt in Vietnam. I received the Silver Star and a Purple Heart.

I am in this fight because I saw the heroism of these unarmed helicopter crews who flew into vicious enemy fire to rescue my brothers.

Congratulations to Rep. Tim Holden and Rep. Joseph Pitts, who recognize justice and/work to see it upheld.

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