



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2022

House of Representatives

TRIBUTE IN HONOR OF SSG RYAN HUNTER

HON. HAROLD ROGERS

OF KENTUCKY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

Mr. ROGERS of Kentucky. Madam Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to SSG Ryan P. Hunter, CCFP, FP-C, a Flight Paramedic and Swift Water Rescue Technician assigned to Kentucky Army Guard Detachment 1, Charlie Company, 2-238th Aviation Regiment, MEDEVAC, who was activated in response to catastrophic flooding in Eastern Kentucky in the early morning hours of July 28, 2022. With the assistance of 097 crew CW3 Wallace Kand, CW3 Jeremy Cossell, and SGT Robert Lemmon, SSG Hunter conducted 25 hoist missions under treacherous conditions on day one of the flood, a heroic response that saved the lives of at least 50 Kentuckians.

Thousands of residents across Kentucky's Appalachian region were awakened overnight by heavy rain and rapidly rising water that swelled into a 1,000-year flood event that took the lives of at least 43 Kentuckians. Before the sun came up, the calls for help rushed in and rescue crews collected gear and equipment for some of the most heroic efforts to date in the history of the Commonwealth. Kentucky Emergency Management reported 1,432 Kentuckians were rescued by first responders, including more than 400 by Kentucky National Guard air and water rescues, 260 air rescues by Tennessee and West Virginia National Guard, more than 700 by Kentucky State Police, and countless more by heroic neighbors, families and friends who jumped into action in the middle of the night. Had it not been for the unsung heroes across the mountains who risked their lives to save another, the loss of life would have been far greater.

While each hero deserves an incredible honor, I rise to recognize the exemplary action of two Kentucky National Guardsmen, SSG Ryan Hunter and SFC Jeremy Lowe, who have been heralded by their peers for their extraordinary life-saving action. In total, they conducted more than 40 air hoist missions and saved more than 80 Kentuckians. One of their most difficult rescues occurred in Hazard, Kentucky where a family of five was trapped in their attic. Surrounded by downed power lines in the water and an assortment of dangerous debris, including telephone poles, vehicles and houses torn from the foundation, the risk to life was abundantly clear. Working alongside Kentucky State Police and a Wolfe County Search and Rescue boat team, three members of the family were pulled to safety before encountering a mechanical problem. SFC Lowe reported watching the flood water rise one foot in the attic within 30 minutes, stressing the critical need to save the remaining two family members who were now in chest-deep water. Together, SSG Hunter and SFC Lowe willfully initiated a brave plan to save the individuals, despite the raw force of the water, tenuous footing, and risk of being swept away. Using webbing and locking carabiners, SGT Hunter fashioned a rope, acted as an anchor, and lowered SFC Lowe with his flotation device into the rushing flood waters and guided him to the attic window. From there, SGT Hunter proceeded to the roof's peak and coordinated hoist operations with skilled pilots at the helm who successfully lowered a rescue basket twice to save the remaining two flood survivors. The flight paramedics were then lifted off the roof one at a time by a bare hook, rising victoriously above the flooded home to safety. The skill and courageous acts of the two MEDEVAC crews are worthy of the highest honor.

We cannot fathom the depth of heartache and difficulty that our emergency responders endured in the overnight and early morning hours of July 28, 2022. This nation owes a great debt of gratitude for every life saved in the wake of the historic flood that ravaged the Appalachian region of Kentucky. I salute SSG Hunter and SFC Lowe and their flight crews for their valor in our darkest hour.