

Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds Congressional Gold Medal Act

Senator Marsha Blackburn

Master Sergeant Rodrick Edmonds was a veteran of both World War II and the Korean War, an East Tennessee native, and an American hero posthumously deserving of the Congressional Gold Medal.

In December 1944, MSG Edmonds was captured during “Battle of the Bulge.” He was subsequently detained and processed at Nazi prisoner of war camp “Stalag IX-A,” a site used to identify, segregate, and remove Jewish soldiers from the general population of other prisoners. As the non-commissioned officer in charge, MSG Edmonds found himself responsible for 1,275 fellow captives, over 200 of whom were Jewish. He kept faith with his fellow prisoners, never surrendered the members of his command, and repeatedly thwarted German efforts to isolate Jewish members of his outfit for likely extermination.

On one such occasion, the Germans directed Edmonds to order all Jewish-American soldiers of the camp to assemble outside of their barracks. Edmonds coordinated a mass formation, whereby all 1,275 of his men, representing multiple religions, stood outside their prison barracks in unity. Irritated by this defiance, the German Camp Commandant held MSG Edmonds at gunpoint in a coercive attempt to force him to either surrender his Jewish comrades’ identities or his own life. Per multiple eyewitness accounts, Edmonds made it clear that to shoot him or any of the other 1,275 “Jewish” POWs would constitute a war crime under the existing Geneva Convention, as prisoners were only required to give their name, rank, and serial number – not their religion.¹²³

During the 100 days MSG Edmonds spent in captivity, he never divulged his Jewish soldiers’ identities. Edmond’s resiliency, courage, and leadership saved over 200 Jewish lives.⁴ On February 10, 2015, Yad Vashem recognized MSG Roddie Edmonds as “Righteous Among the Nations”, a revered list and Israel’s highest honor for non-Jews who saved Jews during the Holocaust. He was the first American service member to receive such an award and one of only five Americans.⁵

The Master Sergeant Roddie Edmonds Congressional Gold Medal Act would posthumously award a Congressional Gold Medal to MSG Edmonds to recognize his heroic actions during World War II.

¹ [Treaties, States parties, and Commentaries - Geneva Convention \(III\) on Prisoners of War, 1949 \(icrc.org\)](https://www.icrc.org)

² [From the testimony of Paul Stern | www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

³ [From the testimony of Lester J. Tanner \(Tannenbaum\) | www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org)

⁴ [American WWII vet becomes first soldier honored for saving Jews - CBS News](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/american-wwii-vet-becomes-first-soldier-honored-for-saving-jews/)

⁵ [‘We are all Jews’: World War II soldier saved POWs - CNN](https://www.cnn.com/2015/02/10/us/yad-vashem-awards-american-soldier/index.html)