

GENERAL ORDERS

No. 16

HEADQUARTERS  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
WASHINGTON, DC, 24 March 1971

## AWARD OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR



By direction of the President, under the Joint Resolution of Congress approved 12 July 1862 (amended by act of 3 March 1963, act of 9 July 1918, and act of 25 July 1963), the Medal of Honor for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty is awarded by the Department of the Army in the name of Congress to:

First Lieutenant (then Sergeant First Class) *Robert L. Howard*,

5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, who distinguished himself on 30 December 1968 while serving as platoon sergeant of an American-Vietnamese platoon which was on a mission to rescue a missing American soldier in enemy-controlled territory in the Republic of Vietnam. The platoon had left its helicopter landing zone and was moving out on its mission when it was attacked by an estimated two-company force. During the initial engagement, Lieutenant *Howard* was wounded and his weapon destroyed by a grenade explosion. Lieutenant *Howard* saw that his platoon leader had been wounded seriously and was exposed to enemy fire. Although unable to walk and weaponless, Lieutenant *Howard* unhesitatingly crawled through a hail of fire to retrieve his wounded leader. As Lieutenant *Howard* was administering first aid and removing the officer's equipment, an enemy bullet struck one of the ammunition pouches on the lieutenant's belt, detonating several magazines of ammunition. Lieutenant *Howard* momentarily sought cover and then realizing that he must rejoin the platoon which had been disorganized by the enemy attack, he again began dragging the seriously wounded officer toward the platoon area. Through his outstanding example of indomitable courage and bravery, Lieutenant *Howard* was able to rally the platoon into an organized defense force. With complete disregard for his own safety, Lieutenant *Howard* crawled from position to position, administering first aid to the wounded, giving encouragement to the defenders and directing their fires on the encircling enemy. For three and one-half hours Lieutenant *Howard's* small force and supporting aircraft successfully repulsed enemy attacks and finally were in sufficient control to permit the landing of rescue helicopters. Lieutenant *Howard* personally supervised the loading of his men and did not leave the bullet-swept landing zone until all were aboard safely. Lieutenant *Howard's* conspicuous gallantry in action, his complete devotion to the welfare of his men and his intrepidity at the risk of his own life were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit on him, his unit, and the United States Army.



GO 16

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

Official:

KENNETH G. WICKHAM,  
*Major General, United States Army,*  
*The Adjutant General.*

W. C. WESTMORELAND,  
*General, United States Army,*  
*Chief of Staff.*

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