

I am honored to be before you all today as we pay tribute to the amazing men and women that make up our Armed Forces.

Today's Warrior Award is being presented to a just one of America's bravest.

The Purple Heart is awarded to members of the Armed Forces of the U.S. who are wounded by an instrument of war in the hands of the enemy. It is specifically a combat decoration.

Today's Warrior Award Recipient received three purple hearts. The first on September 26th 1968, the second on October 12th, 1968 and his third on November 7th, 1968.

The Bronze Star with combat 'V' for valor is the fourth-highest award for bravery, heroism or meritorious service. It is awarded to a member of the military who, distinguished himself by heroic achievement or service, while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States.

During September of 1968, today's warrior award recipient was running point for a squad.

They were going to set up an ambush. They came out of the jungle through an opening into a little valley that was waist deep with water and a lot of elephant grass.

They decided to set up the ambush on the other side of the valley.

As they made their way through the water they were ambushed.

After taking a bullet in his right calf as he climbed up to dry land, he got his fellow Marines to set up ground fire.

There were 3 wounded and 2 dead in the water. He kept returning to rescue them so they could be medivaced out.

He then retrieved the bodies so they could be shipped out. He also directed the fire towards the ambush and called for air support.

He refused to be medivaced out so he could stay with his unit.

Once they destroyed the ambush they made their way back to base.

Today's Warrior Award Recipient, is, and always will be, a United States Marine, 0311, Infantry Rifleman,

He served from 1968-1970, and was additionally awarded the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnamese Campaign Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with 6*'s, He fought in multiple combat operations including Operation Persuit, Tampa, Worth, Ballard Valley, Mameluke Thrust and Allan Brook.

He was also awarded a Presidential Unit Citation, Combat Action ribbon, a Meritorious Unit Citation, a Navy Unit Citation, and the Navy Achievement Medal with combat 'V'.

He recently underwent a complicated brain surgery, has recovered, and I am very proud to announce is here with us today to receive this deserved award.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in recognizing this years Warrior Award recipient, US Marine, Vietnam Veteran, 3 time Purple Heart and Bronze Star with Combat Valor recipient, US Marine, Dan Welch.

Daniel R. Gaita
Co-Founder and Volunteer
Operation Vet-Fit