

DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE SPECIAL FORCES REGIMENT



**COLONEL
RONALD E. RAY**

Inducted April 2011



Col. Ronald Eric Ray was born Dec. 7, 1941, and enlisted in the Army in 1959. Following his initial three-year term of service, Ray volunteered for Special Forces training and was assigned to the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne). In 1964, Ray attended Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga. Ray then completed Ranger School and was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, in Germany.

In June 1966, then-Lieutenant Ray deployed to Vietnam, where he was assigned to the 3rd Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, as a platoon leader in the Ia Drang Valley. On June 19, he was involved in an operation to cut off elements of the North Vietnamese army entering Vietnam from Cambodia. Ray's platoon was ordered to cover a large area suspected of being an enemy infiltration route. After locating a knoll to use as a base of operations, he established listening posts. Early on the afternoon of June 19, the men in one of these listening posts came under intense enemy fire. Convinced that they were being encircled by a large enemy unit, Ray ordered them to move back, but by this time they were cut off by enemy forces. When Ray's company commander informed him there were no units close enough to reinforce or rescue his men, Ray told the trapped men that he would come to get them.

Ray organized a quick-reaction force and moved through two kilometers of mountainous jungle terrain to the contact area. After breaking through the hostile forces to reach the beleaguered Soldiers, Ray began directing the reinforcement of the site. When the enemy pinned down three of his men with a heavy volume of automatic weapons fire, he silenced the emplacement with a grenade and killed four Viet Cong with his rifle. Casualties from the battle came under intense fire, which Ray silenced with a grenade. A few moments later, Ray saw an enemy grenade land near two of his men. He dove between the grenade and the men, receiving wounds in his feet and legs. He also sustained additional wounds in his legs from enemy machine-gun fire, which he silenced with another grenade. Ray continued to lead his men, until he was medevaced. He was then sent back to Fort Bragg, N.C., where he spent six months in the hospital, then returned to the 1st Special Forces Training Group as the Alpha Company commander. For his gallantry, 1st Lt. Ray earned the Medal of Honor, which was presented to him by President Richard Nixon on May 14, 1970, while he was attending the Infantry Officer Advanced Course.

Ray's additional assignments included serving as the U.S. European Command's adviser to the armed forces of Norway, Italy and Turkey while assigned to Special Operations Task Force Europe; and as commander of the 1st Battalion, 7th SF Group from 1978 to 1980. He received a medical retirement in 1980.

Ray holds a bachelor's in history from the University of Tampa and a master's in public administration from the University of Oklahoma. Selected as a White House Fellow in 1974, he served as special assistant to the Secretary of Commerce from 1974 to 1975. Ray was confirmed by the Senate on Nov. 19, 1989, following his nomination by President George H. Bush, as the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration in the Department of Veterans Affairs from the 1989 to 1993. He is a member of the Special Forces Association as well as the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, of which he has served as president.

He has established his own private business, Ray Group International. He also serves as an executive adviser to Parametric Technology Corporation, a top-10 software company.

Ray's awards and decorations include the Medal of Honor, Silver Star Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Purple Heart, Army Commendation Medal, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal (Vietnamese); Combat Infantryman Badge, Master Parachutist Badge and the Ranger Tab.