

Statement on the Death of David C. Haines *September 13, 2014*

The United States strongly condemns the barbaric murder of U.K. citizen David Haines by the terrorist group ISIL. Our hearts go out to the family of Mr. Haines and to the people of the United Kingdom. The United States stands shoulder to shoulder tonight with our close friend and ally in grief and resolve. We will work with the United Kingdom and a broad coalition of nations

from the region and around the world to bring the perpetrators of this outrageous act to justice and to degrade and destroy this threat to the people of our countries, the region, and the world.

NOTE: The statement referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

Remarks on Presenting the Medal of Honor to Command Sergeant Major Bennie G. Adkins and Posthumously to Specialist 4 Donald P. Sloat *September 15, 2014*

Please be seated. Good afternoon, and welcome to the White House. More than four decades ago, in early 1970, an American squad in Vietnam set out on patrol. They marched down a trail, past a rice paddy. Shots rang out and splintered the bamboo above their heads. The lead soldier tripped a wire: a booby trap. A grenade rolled toward the feet of a 20-year-old machine gunner. The pin was pulled, and that grenade would explode at any moment.

A few years earlier, on the other side of the country, deep in the jungle, a small group of Americans were crouched on top of a small hill. And it was dark, and they were exhausted; the enemy had been pursuing them for days. And now they were surrounded, and the enemy was closing in on all sides.

Two discrete moments, but today we honor two American soldiers for gallantry above and beyond the call of duty at each of those moments: Specialist Donald Sloat, who stood above that grenade, and Command Sergeant Major Bennie Adkins, who fought through a ferocious battle and found himself on that jungle hill.

Nearly half a century after their acts of valor, a grateful nation bestows upon these men the highest military decoration, the Medal of Honor.

Now, normally, this medal must be awarded within a few years of the action. But sometimes, even the most extraordinary stories can

get lost in the fog of war or the passage of time. Yet when new evidence comes to light, certain actions can be reconsidered for this honor, and it is entirely right and proper that we have done so. And that is why we are here today.

So, before I go any further, I want to thank everyone present here today whose research and testimonies and persistence over so many years finally resulted in these two men deserving the recognition they so richly deserve. I especially want to welcome members of the Medal of Honor Society, as well as two American families whose love and pride has never wavered.

Don Sloat grew up in the heart of Oklahoma in a town called Coweta. And he grew big, to over 6'4". He loved football and played for a year at a junior college. And then, he decided to join the Army. But when he went to enlist, he didn't pass his physical because of high blood pressure. So he tried again and again and again. In all, he took the physical maybe seven times until he passed, because Don Sloat was determined to serve his country.

In Vietnam, Don became known as one of the most liked and reliable guys in his company. Twice in his first months, his patrol was ambushed; both times, Don responded with punishing fire from his machine gun, leaving himself completely vulnerable to the enemy. And both times, he was recognized for his