

STARS AND STRIPES®

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Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Littrell (retired), president of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, tours the Medal of Honor Museum's combat simulator on the USS Yorktown on Monday in Charleston, S.C. Littrell is one of 110 living Medal of Honor recipients. About half of those recipients are expected to be on hand as the renovated \$1.5 million museum opens this weekend.

ALICE KEENEY/AP



Medal of Honor Society salutes those in uniform

BY GARY LITRELL

You are writing history on menacing, sand-swept roads, along perilous mountain ridges and in towns and villages fraught with danger at every door.

You wear the uniform of the United States. You live its values. You are its honor.

On behalf of my fellow Medal of Honor recipients, we salute you — we are proud of you and we are standing at your side.

As Americans quietly mark Military Appreciation Month this May by carrying out our daily routines, going to our jobs, shopping, making dinner reservations and keeping up with “American Idol,” it’s you we can thank for the privilege of freely leading our lives.

We admire your determination to stop cold one of the most dangerous, brutal and immoral enemies that our country, and all nations, has ever faced. This new enemy is determined to murder indiscriminately and intimidate viciously to halt progress and erase freedom.

We understand your will to battle on, even in the face of criticism, weakness and lack of vision of countrymen who will benefit from your sense of duty and sacrifices.

We know what you are trying to accomplish and how difficult it will be. And we are with you all the way.

By the path you have chosen, you are giving great meaning to your lives, which now are the only instruments standing between civilization and barbarity.

The dangerous, demanding work you do is your precious gift to our nation, bought and paid for by the tremendous personal, physical and emotional hardships you endure daily and by the lives of your fallen brethren.

Your gift is delivered by the many sacrifices of the families standing steadfastly behind you a half a world away and suffering, as they do, the anxiety of separation. That is their hard-earned contribution to the future of mankind.

You are standing in the shadows cast by the legacies of great Americans who fought before you for what was right, no matter the odds. Those who follow will have your legacy of skill, determination and boundless courage to guide them.

Take heart: You are the hope of the world.

Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Littrell (retired) is president of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.