

Newburgh, NY - In recognition of the heroic efforts taken by Marine Sgt. Kenneth Burdine to save the life of his comrade Sgt. Eddie Ryan of Ellenville, New York while serving in Iraq, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today presented a medal of recognition to Burdine during a ceremony at Stewart Air National Guard Base. Hinchey presented Sgt. Burdine with the Navy Commendation Medal with a V device (for valor). The congressman also discussed the awarding of the same award to Sgt. Karl Schaeffer who also helped save Ryan's life, but wasn't able to attend today's ceremony in New York. The Marine Corps Commendation Medal is given to members of the Marines who distinguish themselves through heroic acts, outstanding achievement, or meritorious service.

"Plain and simple, Sgt. Eddie Ryan would not still be with us today were it not for the heroic efforts of Sgt. Kenneth Burdine and Sgt. Karl Schaeffer," Hinchey said. "I join the Ryan family in expressing my extraordinary gratitude to these two fine members of our armed forces who, without hesitation, jumped into oncoming fire in order to save the life of their comrade. I strongly believe that the word hero should rarely be used, but it is safe to say that Sgt Burdine and Sgt. Schaeffer are heroes. I hope these medals serve as a reminder of their efforts and as a symbol of our appreciation for their heroism and for their love of the United States."

Sgt. Ryan was shot in the head twice on April 13, 2005 in Husaybah, Iraq while on a rooftop with his sniper team. It took five months for the Marines Corps to reverse its claim that the incident was the result of enemy fire and instead admit that it was caused by friendly fire. However, at the time of the incident, Sgt. Ryan's comrades believed they were under attack by enemy fire. Without any regard for their own personal safety, Sgt. Ryan's comrades, including Sgt. Burdine and Sgt. Schaeffer, immediately tended to him and gave life-saving first aid. Additionally, the troops exposed themselves to what they believed at the time was enemy fire in order to draw attention away from an already wounded Sgt. Ryan. Once they realized they were under friendly fire, the Marines acted swiftly to prevent further injuries and to help evacuate Sgt. Ryan to a medical treatment facility. Without their help, Sgt. Ryan would have died.

Hinchey became actively involved in Sgt. Ryan's case soon after the Marine was critically wounded by friendly-fire while serving in Iraq. The congressman's office helped secure improved care for the Marine during his stay at a VA hospital in Virginia, the release of VA funding for home modifications upon his return to New York, and has also assisted the Ryan family with their ongoing challenge in receiving appropriate outpatient care for Sgt. Ryan. In addition, the congressman's inquiries led to Sgt. Ryan obtaining the Purple Heart and to the military admitting he had been injured by "friendly-fire," changing their original account that he had been wounded by hostile fire.

"Sgt. Ryan put his life at risk by serving in Iraq and it is incumbent upon the Marines and the VA

Hinchey Presents Medal of Recognition To Marine Who Saved Sgt. Eddie Ryan's Life

Tuesday, 05 August 2008 19:00

to be fully cooperative and helpful by recognizing what Eddie Ryan went through and by providing the kind of full care he needs moving forward," Hinchey said.

Hinchey also strongly encouraged the Marines to award the Bronze Star to Burdine and Schaeffer as well as Sgt. Carl J. Quinlan and Lance Corporal Andrew Senior who were the other members of the team on the roof in Iraq when Sgt. Ryan got shot.