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Office of the Chief

Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Principal Chief

Bryan Warner
Deputy Principal Chief

May 5, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Austin:

As Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, the largest federally recognized Indian tribe in the United States, it is my honor to urge your support for awarding Mr. Dwight Birdwell with the Medal of Honor. Dwight Birdwell is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation and a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Cherokee Nation. He served on Cherokee Nation's highest court from 1987 to 1999, and practiced law in the Oklahoma City area for more than 40 years. He is a longtime servant to the Cherokee people and a well-respected community member.

Mr. Birdwell is someone who I respect not only for his service to our tribal nation, but also for his service to our country. He was a member of Troop C, 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry of the 25th Infantry Division in Vietnam. Specialist 5th Class Birdwell's was awarded the Silver Star for heroism in battle on January 31, 1968 for his extraordinary actions during an attack by North Vietnamese regulars and Vietcong on a holiday, Tet. He was also awarded a second Silver Star for heroism in battle on July 4, 1968, and a Purple Heart.

General Otis, who was the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry Commander and an eye-witness to the events of January 31, 1968, submitted this language for Mr. Birdwell's Medal of Honor upgrade:

"For his actions on January 31, 1968, Dwight Birdwell was awarded the Silver Star. However, many of the people who participated in the battle, including the Commander of the 3rd Squadron, 4th Cavalry on that day believe that the Silver Star citation does not adequately reflect the supreme gallantry, far above and beyond the call of duty displayed by Dwight Birdwell on that day. With complete disregard for his own life, Dwight was seen to single-handedly drive off multiple attacks from multiple directions, using multiple weapons. While doing this, Dwight Birdwell was one of only two people providing radio reports to the cavalry squadron's commanding officer, allowing him to direct deployment of reinforcements. When wounded, Dwight Birdwell refused to quit the battle. More than one person present on that day has stated that if not for the extraordinary bravery of

Dwight Birdwell, Troop C and perhaps Tan Son Nhut Air Base might very well have been overrun before additional forces could arrive to assist.”

The words of General Otis attest to the valiant actions of Mr. Birdwell, a true Cherokee patriot who put his own life at risk without hesitation and expected no commendation. I was thrilled to read Mr. Birdwell’s authorization for the Medal of Honor in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act, Section 562. I offer my full support, and I urge you to support this highest honor for Mr. Birdwell.

Should you have any further questions, please reach out to Kimberly Teehee, Executive Director of Government Relations, at kim-teehee@cherokee.org. Wado.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Hoskin Jr." in a cursive style.

Chuck Hoskin Jr.
Cherokee Nation Principal Chief

cc: The Honorable Jim Inhofe
The Honorable James Lankford
The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
The Honorable Tom Cole