



STATE OF TENNESSEE

PROCLAMATION

BY THE GOVERNOR

WHEREAS, in 1943, almost 3,000 men from the jungles of Panama and Trinidad, Guadalcanal, New Guinea, New Georgia and the United States answered President Franklin D. Roosevelt's call for a secret, dangerous and hazardous mission, not knowing where they were going or what they would be doing; and

WHEREAS, this unnamed provisional unit of U.S. Army volunteers, which came from state-side units, Panama, Trinidad and battle veterans of Guadalcanal, New Guinea and New Georgia, landed October 31, 1943, in Bombay, India, and was officially designated January 1, 1944, as the 5307th Composite Unit Provisional, code-named "Galahad" and later nicknamed Merrill's Marauders by the press after their commander, Gen. Frank D. Merrill; and

WHEREAS, with only what they could carry on their backs or pack on mules, Merrill's Marauders walked farther, almost 1,000 miles, than any other WW II fighting force, trudging behind enemy lines up the foothills of the Himalayas and into the jungles of northern Burma to capture the only all-weather airstrip May 17, 1944, at Myitkyina, crushing Japan's control of the sky and enabling the Allies to begin flying supplies into Burma so the Ledo and Burma roads could be connected and a crucial pathway opened up into China; and

WHEREAS, it has been 70 years since the short-lived Merrill's Marauders unit was disbanded on August 10, 1944, after defeating the Japanese 18th Imperial Division, which vastly outnumbered them, in five major battles and 30 minor engagements. Not only were men killed and wounded, but illnesses and diseases ravaged their numbers so only about 200 of the original 3,000 Merrill's Marauders were still fit for combat when they reached their objective, and later went on to join replacements who continued to fight in Burma as the 475th Infantry, which became part of the Mars Task Force; and

WHEREAS, for their accomplishments in the China-Burma-India Theater of Operations, Merrill's Marauders were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation, and have the extremely rare distinction of every member of the unit receiving the Bronze Star Medal. There were six Distinguished Service Crosses, four Legions of Merit and forty-four Silver Star Medals awarded. Twenty-five Merrill's Marauders have been inducted into the Army Ranger Hall of Fame. The Merrill's Marauder legacy continues to be honored today by members of the 75th Ranger Regiment who wear the Marauder patch as their crest;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Bill Haslam, Governor of the State of Tennessee, do hereby proclaim August 10, 2014 as

WWII Merrill's Marauders Day

in Tennessee and encourage all citizens to join me in this worthy observance.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the official seal of the State of Tennessee to be affixed at Nashville on this tenth day of July, 2014.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Haslam".

Governor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Kergett".

Secretary of State

