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Section 523, PL 104-106 briefing, introductory remarks

Senator Daniel K. Akaka Papers
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STATEMENT OF SENATOR DANIEL K. AKAKA
SECTION 523, PL 104-106 BRIEFING
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
WEINBERG HALL, DAV
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1996
1:00 P.M.

Thank you Mike.

Aloha! It's good to be back. I'm very pleased to be here to provide some of the legislative background regarding P.L. 104-106, Section 523, which Major Terry Mintz and Dr. James McNaughton will later discuss in detail.

I would like to thank General Richardson for his leadership, and Walter Ozawa and his predecessors in the Office of Veterans Services, Bob Viduya and Larry Lee, who have been

exceptional advocates for Hawaii's 120,000 veterans. Mahalo for your good work.

Let me also thank Henry Furuya and members of the MIS Veterans Club for attending this briefing. I also would like to welcome other veterans or veterans representatives who may be present. Without the support of the veterans community, particularly the MIS veterans organizations, the legislation that will be discussed today would never have been enacted.

Section 523, which was adopted as part of the 1996 Defense Authorization Act, allows

military intelligence personnel, including MIS veterans, who served between 1940 and 1990 to apply for military awards for which he or she may have been overlooked because of the covert nature of their work.

The origins of this measure can be traced to an MIS reunion some years ago, when the late Richard Sakakida first revealed his remarkable experiences as an Army undercover agent in the Philippines during World War II.

His fellow MIS veterans, such as Harry Fukuhara in California and Ted Tsukiyama here in Hawaii -- are you here today, Ted? -- spread

the word about Sakakida's deeds. Through their efforts, Colonel Sakakida was inducted into the Military Intelligence Hall of Fame, and later was accorded the Legion of Honor award by the Government of the Philippines.

However, when Harry and Ted asked the U.S. Army to consider Colonel Sakakida for the Congressional Medal of Honor, they were told that the statutory time limit for considering him for the medal had long since passed. It was at this point that Harry, Ted, and others turned to me for help. I listened to their story and decided to do everything I could for Colonel

Sakakida.

I immediately introduced a private relief bill to exempt Colonel Sakakida from the statutory time limits for the Medal of Honor. But it soon became clear that the bill was going nowhere: I was told that the Senate Armed Services Committee would never consider a bill that benefited a single individual. At that point, I was at a loss to proceed further. I asked my colleague, Conressman Neil Abercrombie, for help and after hearing about the story of Col. Sakakida, he enthusiastically embraced my efforts to help him and introduced a companion

bill to my own legislation in the House.

Then, coincidentally, I started to receive phone calls and letters about other deserving individuals -- also military intelligence types -- who were in the same catch-22 situation as Dick Sakakida. That is, because of their covert service, their heroic deeds were never acknowledged until well after the time limit for the Medal of Honor had expired. One of these individuals, Colonel Carl Eifler [EYE-flur], had been the original leader of the famous OSS Detachment 101, which created such problems for the Japanese in Burma. Some of you may

remember a movie starring Frank Sinatra that was based in part on Colonel Eifler's experiences.

After listening to these stories, I decided that instead of pursuing a bill that would help only one individual, I could develop legislation that would help an entire class of soldiers -- those who served in our military intelligence services. Working with my colleagues on the Armed Services Committee, I quickly drafted the appropriate language, which eventually became the legislation you are being briefed about today.

I should note that Congressman Abercrombie used his influence as a Member of the House National Security Committee to ensure that my language was retained in the conference report on the Defense Authorization bill. His help in this initiative and on other issues of concern to nisei veterans was appreciated.

That is the short version of how Section 523 became the law of the land. I am certain that Major Mintz will be able to answer any questions you may have about the process of applying for medals under this provision.

And though it is not the subject of today's briefing, I also hope that he will be able to answer questions regarding the status of the Medal of Honor application for Dick Sakakida.

On a related matter, I would like to note that I was pleased to initiate another undertaking of concern to MIS veterans. This, of course, is the official U.S. Army history of the Military Intelligence Service. We are privileged to have with us today Dr. Jim McNaughton, the command historian of the Defense Language Institute, who is undertaking the project.

I urge you to continue to assist Dr. McNaughton as he gathers research material for the history project. With your help, the book will become the definitive reference book on the MIS, an organization that had a significant impact on the course of the Second World War and on the future of military intelligence.

In closing, however, I would urge you to remember that there are ways other than through history books to transmit the MIS experience to future generations. The most obvious way is to tell your own story to your children. It is important that they know what

you did as a member of the MIS. I know that many of you are reluctant to dredge up old memories, some of them very painful. But that is the only sure way to guarantee that the lessons you learned, the obstacles you overcame, the achievements you accomplished, will be of use to your children and grandchildren as they make their way toward a brighter future.

Thank you again for coming. Please give a warm welcome to Major Mintz and Dr. McNaughton.

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