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Navajo Code Talker, Marine Veteran George B. Willie Sr. remembered for heroic service to the nation

WASHINGTON – Today Navajo Code Talker, Marine Veteran George B. Willie Sr passed away after a storied life of service to our nation. He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps as a 17-year old in 1943.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) honors the heroism, commitment and dedication of Willie and his comrades that made up the elite Navajo Code Talkers.

Willie's wartime service began as a private in the 10th Battalion of the Second Marine Division as part of a specially chosen Navajo-speaking contingent of Marines. The "Code Talkers" spoke in their Native American tribal language that was effectively a code that the enemy was unable to crack throughout the war despite many efforts to do so.

According to Marine Corps University history of the Navajo Code Talker Program, it was established in September 1942.

"Once the code talkers completed training in the States, they were sent to the Pacific for assignment to the Marine combat divisions," the MCU history says. "In May 1943...[in a] request for a report on the subject, the various division commanders reported to the Commandant that excellent results had been achieved [by] Navajo code talkers in training and combat situations, and that they had performed in a highly commendable fashion. This high degree of praise concerning the Navajos' performances prevailed throughout the war and came from commanders at all levels."

"Our nation will continue to honor and pay tribute to the Navajo Code Talkers, such as George Willie Sr., for countless generations to come," said VA Secretary David Shulkin. "Their unique contribution to the Marine Corps and the Army during World War II provides an enduring symbol of pride for the families of these great Veterans and of the nation."

President Trump celebrated the history of the Code Talkers on Nov. 27 in a special White House ceremony.

"I just want to thank you because you're very, very special people," President Trump said.