GENERAL ORDERS No. 38

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
WASHINGTON 25, D. C., 4 June 1951

# AWARD OF THE MEDAL OF HONOR

By direction of the President, under the act of Congress approved 9 July 1918 (WD Bul. 43, 1918), the Medal of Honor for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty is awarded by the Department of the Army in the name of Congress to the following-named enlisted man:

Master Sergeant *Ernest R. Kouma* (Service No. ) (then sergeant first class), United States Army, a tank commander in Company A, 72d Tank Battalion, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy in the vicinity of Agok, Korea, on 31 August and 1 September 1950. His unit was engaged in supporting infantry elements on the Naktong River front. Near midnight on 31 August, a hostile force estimated at 500 crossed the river and launched a fierce attack against the infantry positions, inflicting heavy casualties. A withdrawal was ordered and his armored unit was given the mission of covering the movement until a secondary position could be established. The enemy assault overran two tanks, destroyed one, and forced another to withdraw. Suddenly Sergeant *Kouma* discovered that his tank was the only obstacle in the path of the hostile onslaught. Holding his ground, he gave fire orders to his crew and remained in position throughout the night, fighting off repeated enemy attacks. During one fierce assault, the enemy surrounded his tank and he leaped from the armored turret, exposing himself to a hail of hostile fire, manned the .50 caliber machine gun mounted on the rear deck, and delivered point-blank fire into the fanatical foe. His machine gun emptied, he fired his pistol and threw grenades to keep the enemy from his tank. After more than 9 hours of constant combat and close-in fighting, he withdrew his vehicle to friendly lines. During the withdrawal through 8 miles of hostile territory, Sergeant *Kouma* continued to inflict casualties upon the enemy and exhausted his ammunition in destroying three hostile machine-gun positions. During this action, Sergeant *Kouma* killed an estimated 250 enemy soldiers. His magnificent stand allowed the infantry sufficient time to reestablish defensive positions. Rejoining his company, although suffering intensely from his wounds, he attempted to resupply his tank and return to the battle area. While being evacuated for medical treatment, his courage was again displayed when he requested to return to the front. Sergeant *Kouma's* superb leadership, heroism, and intense devotion to duty reflect the highest credit on himself and uphold the esteemed traditions of the Army of the United States.

AGO 4342B—June 900698°—51

This general order will be brought to the attention of all personnel by posting conspicuously on bulletin boards in unit areas.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

J. LAWTON COLLINS
*Chief of Staff, United States Army*

OFFICIAL:
Wm. E. BERGIN
*Major General, USA*
*Acting The Adjutant General*

AGO 4342

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1951