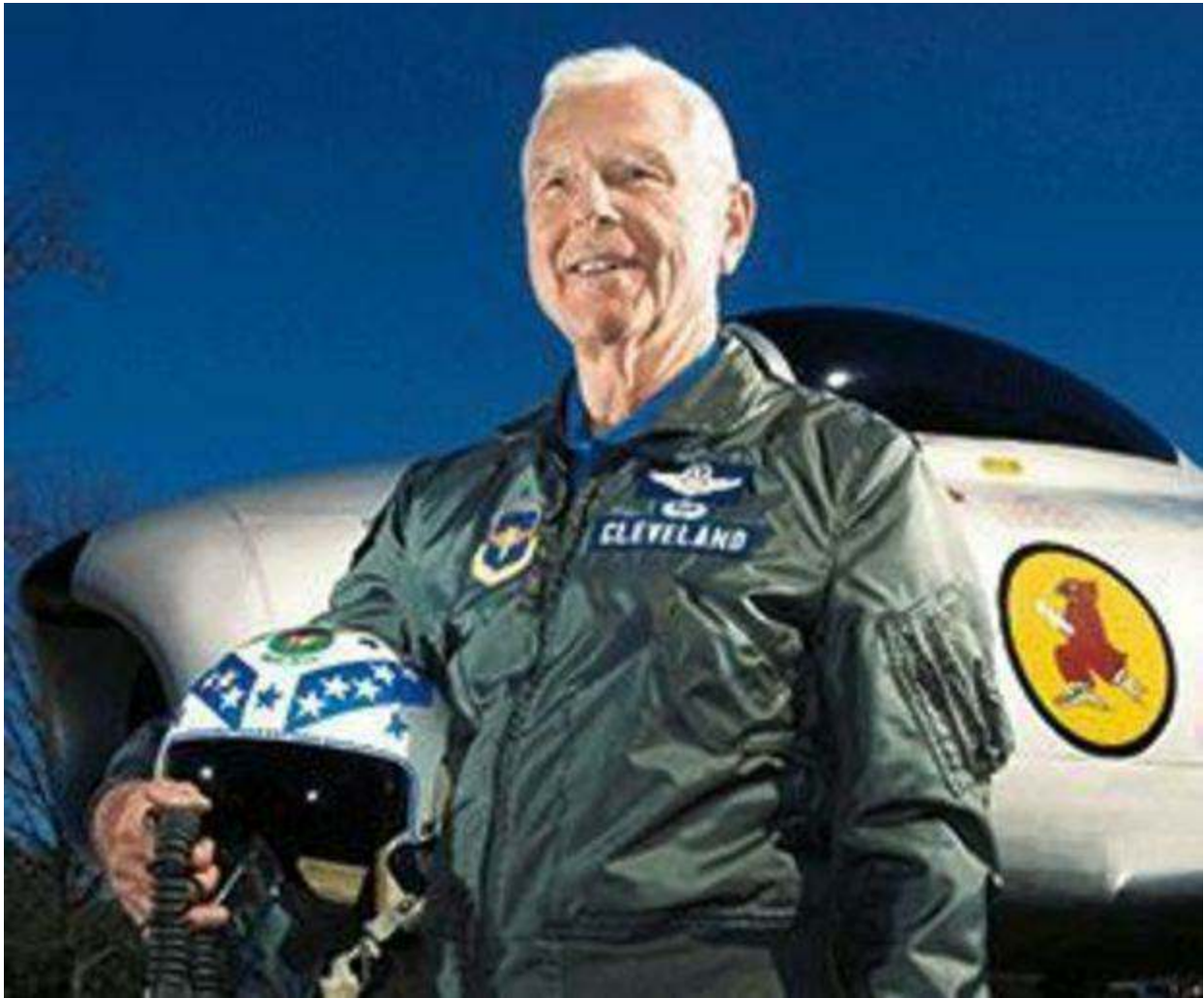


Alabama's 'Fighter Ace' Lt. Gen. Charles Cleveland receiving Congressional Gold Medal today

By Leada Gore | lgore@al.com on May 20, 2015 at 8:27 AM

http://www.al.com/news/index.ssf/2015/05/alabamas_fighter_ace_lt_gen_ch.html



Xavier University photo

Montgomery's "Fighter Ace," Lt. Gen. Charles "Chick" Cleveland will be honored with the Congressional Gold Medal today at a special ceremony in the U.S. Capitol.

The ceremony honoring all of America's "Fighter Aces" with the Congressional Gold Medal takes place at 2 p.m. inside Emancipation Hall.

America's "Fighter Aces," are the country's most distinguished fighter pilots, having earned the title, "Ace," by downing at least five enemy aircraft in combat. Lt. Gen. Cleveland earned his "Ace" status as a pilot in the Korean War, in which he shot down five enemy aircraft in the dangerous region known as "MIG Alley."

After his tenure in Korea, Cleveland went on to serve as an aviator and combat instructor and later as commander of Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base from 1980-1984. Cleveland, now 87, lives in Montgomery and remains active in Air Force affairs. He is president of the American Fighter Aces and has worked to gather the surviving members to Washington for the ceremony.

Of the 77 Aces still living, 35 are expected to attend the event.

The Congressional Gold Medal is Congress' highest honor, awarded to Americans who have made special contributions to the country. Legislation securing the Gold Medal for the "Fighter Aces," was passed in May 2014.

Rep. Martha Roby, who worked to advance the bill honoring the Aces with the Congressional Gold Medal, said it is a privilege to welcome Cleveland and the other heroes to Congress.

"Gen. Cleveland is an American hero, but he's also our Montgomery hero," Rep. Martha Roby said. "Gen. Cleveland has an incredibly distinguished service record, which is evidenced by his distinction as the 'best of the best' fighter pilots.

"But, his command of Air University and subsequent support of Maxwell even to this day is what makes him such an important part of the Montgomery community. I will be proud to be a part of the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony honoring Gen. Cleveland and his fellow 'Fighter Aces."

The event will be televised on C-SPAN and streamed live online by the Speaker's office at www.speaker.gov/live.