

1. The Navy Department takes pleasure in announcing to the service the award of a medal of honor to Herman H. Hanneken, second lieutenant, United States Marine Corps, and to William R. Button, corporal, United States Marine Corps, for extraordinary heroism in the line of their profession and for their eminent and conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in actual conflict with the enemy near Grande Riviere, Republic of Haiti, on the night of October 31–November 1, 1919.

2. Information having been received at district headquarters that Charlemagne Peralte, the supreme bandit chief in the Republic of Haiti, accompanied by about 1,200 outlaw followers, had arrived in the vicinity of Capois, Haiti, with the avowed purpose of capturing and pillaging the town of Grand Riviere, Haiti, permission was granted Second Lieut. Hanneken, then a sergeant (captain, Gendarmerie d'Haiti), United States Marine Corps, and to Corporal William R. Button (first lieutenant, Gendarmerie d'Haiti), United States Marine Corps, to carry into execution previously arranged plans for the capture of the bandit chief. Selecting about 20 gendarmerie, all of whom were appropriately disguised, Hanneken and Button, on the night of October 31, 1919, took position where they might observe the movements of Charlemagne. About 700 bandits having been observed

making their way toward Grande Riviere, it was decided to endeavor to capture Charlemagne in his camp, where it was understood he purposed to remain and receive reports of the result of the pending attack upon the town of Grande Riviere. After about 3 hours' difficult mountain climbing, through a country overrun with bandits, the first of the six outposts guarding Charlemagne's camp was reached. Due to the effectiveness of their disguise, and aided by the darkness and the assuring replies made to the challenges and examinations of the enemy sentinels, this outpost was successfully passed, as were the four succeeding ones. The sixth outpost was the immediate guard over Charlemagne, being about 30 paces from the person of the bandit chief. Advancing rapidly toward Charlemagne, who apparently had been led to believe that the persons approaching him were members of his band with reports from the assault upon Grande Riviere, Hanneken, armed with two revolvers, and Button, armed with a light Browning machine gun, were suddenly halted by two bandits who handled their rifles in a threatening manner. Believing that no further time was to be lost, Hanneken promptly opened fire upon Charlemagne, and Button with equal promptness turned his machine gun upon the remaining bandits, who were seeking cover. The surprise attack was a complete success, and the dead body of Charlemagne and about nine of his bodyguard were found in the camp. The bandits, however, continued their fire throughout the night upon the position held by Hanneken and his force, and during the march to Grande Riviere, on November 1, 1919, several bands of outlaws, returning from their unsuccessful attack upon Grande Riviere, were encountered and dispersed.

3. Second Lieut. Hanneken and Corpl. Button not only distinguished themselves by their excellent judgment and leadership, but at all times placed themselves unhesitatingly in great personal danger. Their movements took place at night and in a thickly wooded country overrun with several hundred well-armed Haitian bandits. At any time during the night of October 31–November 1, 1919, the slightest hesitation or error of judgment would have forfeited not only their own lives but the lives of the detachment of gendarmerie under their command. The successful termination of their mission will undoubtedly prove of untold value to the Republic of Haiti.

JOSEPHUS DANIELS,
Secretary of the Navy.