

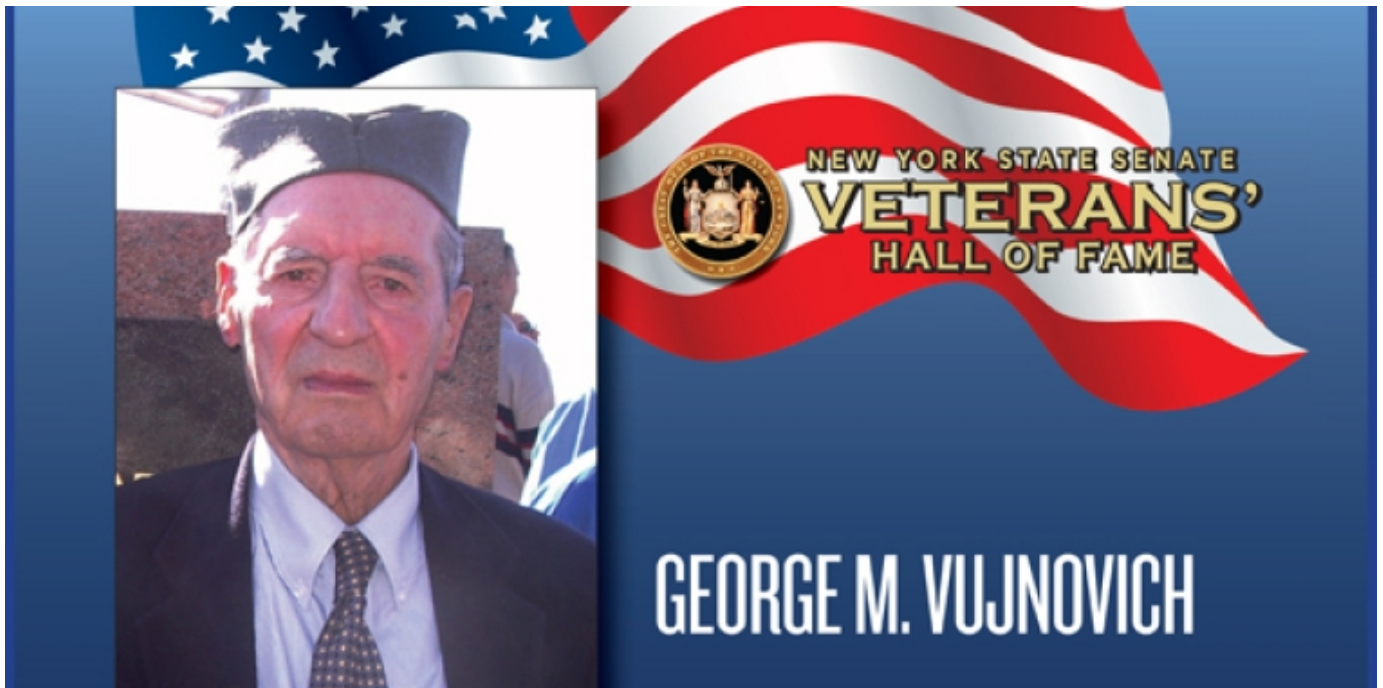


NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose Peralta

## George M. Vujnovich

JOSE PERALTA May 18, 2012



George M. Vujnovich

**Award:** Honoring Our Veterans

**Year:** 2012

In 1944, Captain George M. Vujnovich served with the United States Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the CIA. While attempting to destroy Nazi Germany's most important oil pipeline in occupied Eastern Europe, 512 airmen were downed, trapped, and

in dire straits. As a result, Captain Vujnovich was called upon to plan and execute the largest air rescue in history for American soldiers behind enemy lines. Under his leadership, a secret airstrip was created inside a corn field to allow cargo planes to land and rescue the Americans. The entire rescue operation—known as Operation Halyard—took place without a single casualty.

After World War II, Captain Vujnovich became a salesman in Queens while his courageous mission was kept hidden and out of our history books due to geopolitical reasons. Operation Halyard remained secret until the records were declassified in 1997. On October 17, 2010—sixty-six years after his triumphant rescue operation—Captain Vujnovich was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the prestigious military honor of decoration awarded for bravery, acts of merit, or meritorious service. Captain Vujnovich's recognition as a true American hero is long overdue.

The Bronze Star Medal bestowed upon him reflects not only the credit he is due, but the support that he and all of our veterans have been promised and have earned. He has earned our deepest respect and our eternal gratitude.