



## John Robert Fox



<b>Born</b>	May 18, 1915 Cincinnati, Ohio
<b>Died</b>	December 26, 1944 (aged 29) KIA in Sommocolonia, Italy
<b>Place of burial</b>	Colebrook Cemetery, Whitman, Massachusetts
<b>Allegiance</b>	 United States of America
<b>Service/branch</b>	 United States Army
<b>Years of service</b>	1940–1944
<b>Rank</b>	 First Lieutenant
<b>Unit</b>	598th Field Artillery Battalion 366th Infantry Regiment  92nd Infantry Division
<b>Battles/wars</b>	World War II
<b>Awards</b>	 Medal of Honor  Distinguished Service Cross  Bronze Star  Purple Heart  Combat Infantry Badge

**John Robert Fox** (May 18, 1915 – December 26, 1944) was an American Artillery Officer who was killed in action when he deliberately called for artillery fire on his own position, after his position was overrun, in order to defeat a German attack in the vicinity of Sommocoloia, northern Italy, during World War II. He posthumously received the Medal of Honor in 1997, for willingly sacrificing his life.

Fox was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, on May 18, 1915, and attended Wilberforce University, participating in ROTC under Aaron R. Fisher and graduating with a commission as a second lieutenant in 1940. He was 29 years old when he called artillery fire on his own position the day after Christmas in 1944; in 1982 he was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions. More than fifty years after his death, Fox was awarded the Medal of Honor. He is buried in Colebrook Cemetery in Whitman, Massachusetts.

In the early 1990s it was determined that African-American soldiers had been denied consideration for the Medal of Honor because of their race. After a review, seven African-American soldiers, including 1st Lieutenant Fox, had their medals upgraded in January 1997 to the Medal of Honor.

The 92nd Infantry Division (colored), known as the Buffalo Soldiers, was a segregated African-American division that fought in World War II. First Lieutenant John R. Fox was a member of the 366th Infantry Regiment when he sacrificed his life to defeat an enemy attack and save the lives of others. In December 1944, Fox was part of a small forward observer party that volunteered to stay behind in the Italian village of Sommocolonia, in the Serchio River valley. American

forces had been forced to withdraw from the village after it had been overrun by the Germans. From his position on the second floor of a house, Fox directed defensive artillery fire.

Wehrmacht soldiers were attacking in strength, greatly outnumbering the handful of Americans. Fox radioed the artillery to bring its fire closer to his position. As the attack continued, he ordered the fire directed onto his own position. The soldier who received the message was stunned, as there was little chance that Fox would survive it. Fox simply replied, "Fire it."

Fox's sacrifice gained time for the U.S. forces to organize a counterattack and retake the village. When they did so, they found Fox's body as well as about one hundred dead German soldiers.





Memorial to Medal of Honor recipient John R. Fox in the woods and ruins above Sommocolonia, Italy

After the war, the citizens of Sommocolonia, Italy erected a monument to nine men who were killed during the artillery barrage – eight Italian soldiers, and Lieutenant Fox.

In 2005, the toy company Hasbro introduced a 12-inch action figure "commemorating Lt. John R. Fox as part of its G.I. Joe *Medal-of-Honor* series."<sup>[6]</sup>

For his "gallant and courageous actions, at the supreme sacrifice of his own life," Fox was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. His widow, the former Arlene Marrow, received his medal from President Bill Clinton in a White House ceremony on January 13, 1997. On that day, Clinton also awarded the medal to six other previously neglected African-American World War II veterans, including Vernon Baker, who was the only one living when awarded.



**Citation:**

For extraordinary heroism against an armed enemy in the vicinity of Sommocolonia, Italy, on December 26, 1944, while serving as a member of Cannon Company, 366th Infantry Regiment, 92nd Infantry Division. During the preceding few weeks, Lieutenant Fox served with the 598th Field Artillery Battalion as a forward observer. On Christmas night, enemy soldiers gradually infiltrated the town of Sommocolonia in civilian clothes, and by early morning the town was largely in hostile hands. Commencing with a heavy barrage of enemy artillery at 0400 hours on December 26, 1944, an organized attack by uniformed German units began. Being greatly outnumbered, most of the United States Infantry forces were forced to withdraw from the town, but Lieutenant Fox and some other members of his observer party voluntarily remained on the second floor of a house to direct defensive artillery fire. At 0800 hours, Lieutenant Fox reported that the Germans were in the streets and

attacking in strength. He then called for defensive artillery fire to slow the enemy advance. As the Germans continued to press the attack towards the area that Lieutenant Fox occupied, he adjusted the artillery fire closer to his position. Finally he was warned that the next adjustment would bring the deadly artillery right on top of his position. After acknowledging the danger, Lieutenant Fox insisted that the last adjustment be fired as this was the only way to defeat the attacking soldiers. Later, when a counterattack retook the position from the Germans, Lieutenant Fox's body was found with the bodies of approximately 100 German soldiers. Lieutenant Fox's gallant and courageous actions, at the supreme sacrifice of his own life, contributed greatly to delaying the enemy advance until other infantry and artillery units could reorganize to repel the attack. His extraordinary valorous actions were in keeping with the most cherished traditions of military service, and reflect the utmost credit on him, his unit, and the United States Army.