



Office of the Speaker **THERESE M. TERLAJE**

I Mina'trentai Sais na Liheslaturan Guåhan | 36th Guam Legislature
Committee on Health, Land, Justice and Culture

Speaker Terlaje recognizes Cundiff and Santos, Jr. for their contributions to Guam Veteran advocacy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE (August 19, 2021 – Hagåtña, Guam) Speaker Therese M. Terlaje on Wednesday, August 18 presented Certificates 34-36 (LS) and 35-36 (LS) to two outstanding veterans for their dedication and advocacy on behalf of Guam Veterans.

Certificate 34-36 (LS) was presented to retired U.S. Air Force Chief Master Sergeant William “Bill” Cundiff recognizing and commending him on his appointment by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and for his service to the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans from 2019 to 2021 and extending thanks on behalf of the people of Guam for his advocacy on behalf of veterans from Guam, the CNMI, the FSM, and other underrepresented places.

“I was so proud when I first heard of Mr. Cundiff’s committee appointment,” said Speaker Terlaje. “Earlier we had a hearing to support a congressional bill that will create another Advisory Committee for places like Guam who need better medical care and help from the VA Department. Before Mr. Cundiff, no one from Guam had ever served on an Advisory Committee to the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs, which means he is paving the way for this type of representation. I want to thank him on behalf of the people of Guam for representing us.”

The Speaker also presented Certificate 35-36 (LS) to retired U.S. Marine Colonel Joaquin “Danny” Santos, Jr. recognizing and commending him on his research and dedication to the inclusion of Pacific Islanders and Service Cross recipients from Guam in the congressional review for potential upgrade to the Medal of Honor and extending thanks on behalf of the people of Guam for his service and contribution for our community.

In compliance with the National Defense Authorization Act of 2017, the Department of Army began reviewing the case files of Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander veterans to determine if they were bypassed the Medal of Honor because of racial, ethnic, religious, or political biases. At that time, Colonel Santos, Jr. was able to identify six Guam veterans who had received the distinguished Service Cross Award, and who were therefore eligible for review by DoD and Congress for the Medal of Honor: retired Command Sergeant Major Martin A. Manglona who attended the presentation, retired Sergeant Major Juan O. Blaz, Sergeant First Class Vicente T. Dymasco, Staff Sergeant Enrique Cruz, Staff Sergeant Tomas G. Reyes, and Specialist Fourth Class Joseph M. Perez. CSM Mangloña and SGM Blaz are the only recipients alive today.

“The men that I did the research for certainly deserve to be reviewed by the Department of the Army. My research on these men had everything to do with the lack of dignity given to them and their service in Vietnam. We should know that racism exists in the military, but there are initiatives now to correct it. These six men deserve this award more than me,” stated Colonel Santos, Jr.

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