

BILL ANALYSIS

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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

The Texas Legislative Medal of Honor was established to honor gallant and intrepid service by a member of the state military forces of Texas, and through his courageous actions in Vietnam, Sergeant Alfredo "Freddy" Gonzalez distinguished himself as a worthy recipient of this prestigious honor.

Born May 23, 1946, in Edinburg and a graduate of Edinburg High School, Sergeant Gonzalez enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in May 1965. After his first tour of duty in Vietnam, he was chosen to train new marines for guerilla warfare. A few months later, Sergeant Gonzalez learned of an ambush in which men who had served under him had been killed. Impelled by a strong sense of duty to his fellow marines and to his country, he volunteered for a second tour in Vietnam. When, at the end of January 1968, North Vietnamese and Viet Cong troops launched the massive Tet Offensive, Sergeant Gonzalez and his platoon were ordered to Hue to relieve the pressure on that city. En route to Hue, the platoon's convoy was hit by heavy fire on several occasions. During one such encounter, Sergeant Gonzalez saw an injured marine lying in the road ahead and ran through enemy fire to carry the man to cover, receiving fragmentation wounds in the rescue.

With the column halted by withering fire from a fortified machine-gun bunker, Sergeant Gonzalez proceeded to guide his men to a protective dike; he then moved out onto a road being raked by the gun and destroyed the bunker with hand grenades. Later, on February 3, Sergeant Gonzalez was seriously wounded but continued to refuse medical treatment and to lead his men in their attack. During fighting in Hue on February 4, his platoon of some 35 troops was again pinned down by a ferocious barrage. Telling his unit to stay behind shelter, Sergeant Gonzalez moved forward aggressively with hand grenades and small antitank rockets, firing numerous rounds against enemy emplacements. Entering a church, where the North Vietnamese were heavily fortified, he succeeded in suppressing virtually all of their fire; before the last of it could be silenced, however, he was mortally wounded.

Because he succeeded in destroying so many North Vietnamese positions, Sergeant Gonzalez was credited with saving the lives of the men in his platoon. The following year, in consequence of his extraordinary and selfless action, he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, becoming the only marine in combat during the Tet Offensive to receive that award. For those with whom he served, the heroism displayed by Sergeant Gonzalez was completely in character; "it seemed like he was everywhere all the time," one remembered, "he was always there in the front, never in the back . . . he was always there for us."

Among the awards subsequently conferred on Sergeant Gonzalez were three Purple Hearts, four Presidential Unit Citations, and a Combat Action Ribbon, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Medal, and Cold War Certificate; in addition, he was the posthumous recipient of two South Vietnamese decorations--the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with gold palm and star and the Vietnam Service Medal with four bronze stars. In 1996, the U.S. Navy commissioned a new guided missile-destroyer in his honor. Through his unhesitating selflessness and his unfaltering devotion to duty, honor, and his country, Sergeant Alfredo Gonzalez embodied the highest ideals of the armed service, and he most assuredly merits the award of this state's supreme military medal.

RESOLVED

That the 80th Legislature of the State of Texas hereby posthumously confer the Texas Legislative Medal of Honor on Sergeant Alfredo "Freddy" Gonzalez in recognition of his heroic service and express to his family its deepest appreciation on behalf of all his fellow Texans, and that an official copy of this resolution be prepared for the family of Sergeant Gonzalez as an expression of highest regard by the Texas House of Representatives and Senate.