

April 16, 2012

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) today welcomed the announcement from President Barack Obama that Specialist Four Leslie H. Sabo, Jr. has officially been awarded the Medal of Honor (MOH), the nation's highest military honor. Sabo, who lived in Ellwood City, heroically fought to protect his fellow soldiers amidst a fierce firefight in Cambodia on May 10, 1970, during which he was fatally wounded. President Obama will award the MOH to SPC Sabo's wife, Rose Mary Sabo-Brown, in a White House ceremony on May 16, 2012.

Congressmen Altmire and Jim Gerlach (PA-06) played an integral role in urging the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to finalize Sabo's MOH nomination, which languished for decades after he was first nominated.

"After four decades, SPC Leslie Sabo has finally received the recognition that he deserves," Congressman Jason Altmire said. "This award is long overdue, but SPC Sabo's service to our country is not forgotten. This is a tremendous honor for him and for his family. This is the highest military honor a soldier can receive, and SPC Sabo clearly deserves it."

On May 10, 1970, SPC Sabo and his platoon were ambushed by North Vietnamese soldiers. Amidst heavy fire, he ran to distribute ammunition to his fellow soldiers and was wounded as he threw himself over a wounded comrade to shield him from a grenade blast. Despite his wounds, Sabo fired and provided cover to medical evacuation helicopters as they retrieved wounded soldiers. Sabo was then killed by enemy fire.

SPC Sabo's MOH recommendation languished for decades until it was discovered in 1999 by Alton Mabb, a Vietnam veteran from Florida in the National Archives. Mabb contacted his Congresswoman, Corrine Brown, who later inserted language in the Fiscal Year 2008 Department of Defense (DoD) Authorization bill granting the president the authority to award Sabo the Medal of Honor, even though the three-year statute of limitations for his award had long expired.

After being contacted by Sabo's widow, Rose Mary Sabo-Brown, Congressmen Altmire and Gerlach urged DoD officials to complete consideration of this case as soon as possible. After repeated letters and phone calls, U.S. Secretary of the Army John McHugh finally contacted Congressman Altmire on March 31, 2010 to say to that U.S. Department of Defense was officially recommending that the President award Sabo the MOH. Today, President Obama officially announced his decision to award SPC Sabo the MOH.