Monday, January 7, 2013

Gallup, NM – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico's Third District awarded a number of medals to Army veteran Ivan Peña this afternoon at a ceremony in Gallup.

Born and raised in Gallup, Ivan Peña enlisted in the Army in May of 1971 and served through March of 1973. During that time, he spent a year of service in Vietnam in the 1st Aviation Brigade and the 120th Assault Helicopter Company. During this tour of duty, Peña saw combat and was ambushed several times.

Peña never sought to get his medals after he completed his service in the Army, leaving with a final rank of Spec 4 Specialist. It wasn't until his nephews wanted to display them and honor his service that he attempted to get them by contacting Luján's office. Congressman Luján and his staff worked on behalf of Peña to get the following medals that were earned through his brave service:

- Meritorious Unity Commendation
- National Defense Service Medal
- Vietnam Service Medal with three Bronze Service Stars
- Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with device bar (1960-)
- Sharpshooter Badge with Rifle Bar

"I am grateful to the Congressman for making this possible," said Peña. "It is beyond my wildest dreams that this could happen. I appreciate all the work he has done."

"Ivan Peña served his country with distinction and bravery, adding to New Mexico's proud legacy of service," Luján said. "With these medals, Mr. Peña finally receives the recognition and thanks he deserves for his efforts on behalf of our nation."

Luján, who became Dr. Fabio Gallup's sixth Congressman, pinned Ray