

Date of Hearing: April 25, 2022

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Laura Friedman, Chair

ACR 157 (Salas) – As Introduced March 9, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Army Specialist Juan Miguel Mendez Covarrubias Memorial Highway

**SUMMARY:** Designates the portion of State Highway Route 198, between 10th Avenue and 12th Avenue in the City of Hanford in the County of Kings as the Army Specialist Juan Miguel Mendez Covarrubias Memorial Highway.

**EXISTING LAW:** Assigns the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) the responsibility of operating and maintaining state highways. This includes the installation and maintenance of highway signs.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown, but the measure requests that Caltrans determine the cost of appropriate signage consistent with requirements for the state highway system, and only erect the appropriate signage upon receiving donations from non-state sources covering the cost.

**COMMENTS:** United States Army Specialist Juan Miguel Mendez Covarrubias of Hanford, California, was killed in action on March 11, 2020, in a rocket attack on Camp Taji, Iraq. Mendez Covarrubias was assigned to 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, Fort Hood, Texas.

Mendez Covarrubias entered the United States Army in June 2018 as a signal support systems specialist. In March 2019, Mendez Covarrubias had been assigned to 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood. Mendez Covarrubias deployed in support of the Inherent Resolve mission in October, 2019. Mendez Covarrubias' battalion commander recognized him as a "cherished" member of the unit. Specialist Mendez Covarrubias was a true warrior who will forever be remembered by all who knew him.

"Specialist Juan Miguel Mendez Covarrubias earns our greatest honor for his combat service and sacrifice on the mission to, permanently, defeat ISIS in Iraq," said Lt. Gen. Pat White, Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve and III Corps commanding general, said. "On behalf of the Phantom Corps and Fort Hood, Texas, community, Emma and I send our deepest condolences to Juan's family, friends, and 1st Cavalry Division troopers during this difficult time of mourning. Specialist Mendez was a warrior who will forever be remembered."

Mendez Covarrubias' awards and decorations include the Global War on Terrorism Medal, National Defense Service Ribbon and Army Service Ribbon. Alfredo describes his son as loving and selfless. "He teach us how to love him," said Covarrubias. "He teach us how to treat the people, how to help other people."

Mendez is survived by his family and wife.

*According to the author, “ACR 257 seeks to recognize the legacy and the dedication of the late Juan Covarrubias in his service to his community and country. This ACR speaks not only to his character and sacrifice, but to that of the United States armed forces.”*

*Committee Comments:* It is the intent of the Assembly Transportation Committee to use the Memorial Highway Naming process to honor deceased Californians who have made significant public service contributions and also to reflect the diversity of our state. Currently, most named highways in California are for fallen male public safety officers, who made the ultimate sacrifice, and for whom we are indebted. However, these names do not fully represent the wide range of types of public service contributions, as well as the gender and racial diversity of California’s communities. The Assembly Transportation Committee is committed to working with the Department of Transportation in the upcoming year to improve the naming process to ensure greater equity and to better represent the diversity of California.

**REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

**Support**

None on file.

**Opposition**

None on file.

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