

Héctor Santiago-Colón

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### Hector Santiago-Colon

December 20, 1942(1942-12-20) – June 28, 1968 (aged 25)



**Sp4 Hector Santiago-Colon**  
Medal of Honor recipient

<b>Place of birth</b>	<a href="#">Salinas, Puerto Rico</a>
<b>Place of death</b>	<a href="#">Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam</a>
<b>Allegiance</b>	<a href="#">United States of America</a>
<b>Service/branch</b>	 <a href="#">United States Army</a>
<b>Rank</b>	 <a href="#">Specialist Four</a>
<b>Unit</b>	Co.B, 5th Battalion, <a href="#">7th Cavalry</a> , 1st Cavalry Division
<b>Battles/wars</b>	<a href="#">Vietnam War</a>
<b>Awards</b>	<a href="#">Medal of Honor</a> <a href="#">Purple Heart</a>

**Specialist Four Hector Santiago-Colon** (December 20, 1942 – June 28, 1968) is one of five Puerto Ricans who have been posthumously presented with the [Medal of Honor](#), the highest military decoration awarded by the United States. His actions on June 28, 1968 during the [Vietnam War](#) saved the lives of his fellow comrades.

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## [\[edit\]](#) Early years

Santiago-Colon was one of twelve siblings born to Pablo Santiago and Petronila Colon in [Salinas, Puerto Rico](#). There he received his primary and secondary education. In 1960 his family moved to the [United States](#) and lived in [New York City](#). After living in the city for a short time, Santiago-Colon decided that he wanted to be part of the NYPD ([New York City Police Department](#)), however, at the time, in order to become a member of the NYPD you had to be a veteran. Santiago-Colon then volunteered to join the [United States Army](#). He was engaged to be married to his elementary school sweetheart at the time. After completing his basic training, he was assigned to a unit stationed in in the [Republic of Vietnam](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Action in Vietnam



On June 28, 1968, members of Santiago-Colon's Company B of the 5th Battalion, [7th Cavalry](#), 1st Cavalry Division were engaged in combat at [Quang Tri Province](#). An enemy (North Vietnamese) soldier lobbed a [hand grenade](#) into Santiago-Colon's [foxhole](#). Realizing that there was no time to throw out the grenade, he tucked it in to his stomach and turning away from his comrades, absorbed the full impact of the blast, sacrificing his life to save his fellow soldiers from certain death.

Santiago-Colon was posthumously awarded the [Medal of Honor](#) for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his own life above and beyond the call of duty. The award was present to his family in a ceremony at the [White House](#) by [President Richard M. Nixon](#) on April 7, 1970. His remains are buried in the city of [Salinas, Puerto Rico](#).

## [\[edit\]](#) Medal of Honor citation

The President of the United States in the name of The Congress takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to

### **SANTIAGO-COLON, HECTOR**

*Rank and organization:* Specialist Four, U.S. Army, Company B, 5th Battalion, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile).

*Place and date:* Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam, June 28, 1968.

*Entered service at:* New York, N.Y.

*Born:* December 20, 1942, Salinas, Puerto Rico.

*Citation:*

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Realizing that there was no time to throw the grenade out of his position, he retrieved the grenade, tucked it in to his stomach and, turning away from his comrades, absorbed the full impact of the blast. Sp4 Santiago-Colón distinguished himself at the cost of his life while serving as a gunner in the [mortar](#) platoon of Company B. While serving as a perimeter [sentry](#), Sp4 Santiago-Colón heard distinct movement in the heavily wooded area to his front and flanks. He alerted his fellow sentries in the area to move to their foxholes and remain alert for any enemy probing forces. From the wooded area around his position heavy enemy [automatic weapons](#) and [small arms](#) fire suddenly broke out, but extreme darkness rendered difficult the precise location and identification of the hostile force. Only the [muzzle flashes](#) from enemy weapons indicated their position. Sp4 Santiago-Colón and the other members of his position immediately began to repel the attackers, utilizing hand grenades, [antipersonnel mines](#) and small-arms fire. Due to the heavy volume of enemy fire and exploding grenades around them, a [North Vietnamese soldier](#) was able to crawl, undetected, to their position. Suddenly, the enemy soldier lobbed a hand grenade into Sp4 Santiago-Colón's foxhole. Realizing that there was no time to throw the grenade out of his position, Sp4 Santiago-Colón retrieved the grenade, tucked it in to his stomach and, turning away from his comrades, absorbed the full impact of the blast. Heroic self-sacrifice saved the lives of those who occupied the foxhole with him, and provided them with the inspiration to continue fighting until they had forced the enemy to retreat from the perimeter. By his gallantry at the cost of his life and in the highest traditions of the military service, Sp4 Santiago-Colón has reflected great credit upon himself, his unit, and the U.S. Army. <sup>[2]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) In memory



El Monumento de la Recordacion

On July 1975, The Puerto Rican National Guard renamed their base "Camp Salinas", which is located close to Santiago-Colon's birth town, with the name "Camp Santiago" in his honor. He was the second Puerto Rican to be so honored. The first Puerto Rican who has a base named after him is [Marine PFC Fernando Luis Garcia](#), who was the first Puerto Rican [Medal of Honor](#) recipient. The base is "Camp Garcia" located in the

island municipality of [Vieques](#). Santiago-Colon's name on the [Vietnam Veterans Memorial](#) is located at Panel 54W Line 013.<sup>[3]</sup> Santiago-Colon's name is also inscribed in "El Monumento de la Recordacion" (Monument of Remembrance), dedicated to Puerto Rico's fallen soldiers and situated in front of the Capitol Building in San Juan, Puerto Rico. On November 11, 2008, the Government of Puerto Rico unveiled in the Capitol Rotunda the oil portrait of Santiago-Colon.

## **[[edit](#)] Military decorations awarded**

-  [Medal of Honor](#)
-  [Purple Heart Medal](#)
-  [National Defense Service Medal](#)
-  [Vietnam Campaign Medal](#)
-  [Vietnam Service Medal](#) with bronze star

### **Badges:**

-  [Combat Infantryman Badge](#)

## **[[edit](#)] Notes**

1. <sup>^</sup> [Puerto Rico Herald](#)
2. <sup>^</sup> [Medal of Honor citation](#)
3. <sup>^</sup> ["Hector Santiago-Colon"](#). *The Virtual Wall*. Retrieved on 2006-10-21.

## **[[edit](#)] See also**



*[United States Army portal](#)*



*[Puerto Rico portal](#)*

- [List of Medal of Honor recipients](#)
- [List of Medal of Honor recipients for the Vietnam War](#)
  - [List of famous Puerto Ricans - Military](#)
- [Puerto Rican recipients of the Medal of Honor](#)
- [List of Hispanic Medal of Honor recipients](#)

## **[[edit](#)] External links**

- [Sp4c. Hector Santiago-Colón](#)
- [Hispanic Medal of Honor recipients](#)

**[Persondata](#)**

NAME

Santiago-Colon, Hector

ALTERNATIVE  
NAMES

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Army Medal of Honor recipient

DATE OF BIRTH

December 20, 1942

PLACE OF BIRTH

[Salinas, Puerto Rico](#)

DATE OF DEATH

June 28, 1968

PLACE OF DEATH

[Quang Tri Province, Republic of Vietnam](#)