

Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

April 13, 2022

Dear Mr. Kendall,

I pray the Air Force Board is still reviewing Colonel Philip J. Conran's Medal of Honor recommendation (BC-2018-01673-2) since we have not received any reply to my letters or his last correspondence to SAF/MRBC on May 4, 2021.

In 1969, he was nominated for the Medal of Honor for his actions on October 6, 1969, but the award was downgraded to the Air Force Cross because, we strongly believe, the mission took place in Laos which was in violation of the existing Southeast Asia Treaty. President Nixon and past Administrations always denied the United States had any combat troops in Laos.

As I stated in my letter dated October 19, 2021, as Marine Vietnam combat commander, I am completely baffled by the reluctance of the Air Force to approve the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions which led to the saving of eight Americans and forty-six Lao soldiers. If the following actions do not justify the award, I can't for the life of me understand what criteria would be used to award a Medal of Honor. I believe the USMC would have corrected this injustice many years ago.

- Successfully escaped the North Vietnamese trap when the lead helicopter, immediately in front of him, was shot down.
- Flying back into the active combat area in his unarmed helicopter to try to rescue the four downed Americans even after the designated rescue pilot refused because it "was still too dangerous..."
- Not breaking off his approach after enemy fire destroyed the helicopter servos making flying the bird extremely difficult.
- Assuming command of the fifty-four ground forces even though he was not the senior ranking officer.
- Running many yards twice through heavy enemy fire to retrieve critical weapons and supplies.
- Locating enemy positions and calling in airstrikes for over six hours of heavy active combat.
- Being seriously wounded by enemy fire but not letting others panic or give up hope.
- Saving the life of a seriously wounded American by getting down on his hands and knees so the man could use Conran's back as a stepping-stone to enter the helicopter which was over six feet off the ground.

I agree with General Brown's quote "people only aspire to be what they can see" in thinking that all the Services, and the Air Force in particular, need more heroes to facilitate a higher sprite de corps. Conran's action in the air as a pilot and on the ground as an infantry commander qualifies him as a true Air Force hero. I ask for your support and am ready to personally discuss this matter with you whenever you have a spare moment. I can be reached at 805 452-9905 or captainpeterson1941@gmail.com.

Sincerely

Dennis A. Peterson
Captain, USMCR (fmr)