

January 11, 2023

United States Secretary of Defense  
The Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

General Lloyd Austin,

I am a Marine Corps Vietnam combat veteran with a Purple Heart and I am a strong supporter for upgrading Philip Conran's Air Force Cross to the Medal of Honor. He was initially recommended for the MOH for his heroic actions during a classified CIA mission on October 6, 1969. Unfortunately, I have not been able to obtain Air Force interest in supporting Congressman Salud Carbajal Bill, HR 1190. The Congressman plans to submit another one in this session which I believe will be approved if there is Air Force support. I am sorry to say I have not even received a reply from Secretary Kendall or General Brown's office acknowledging my past letters.

I understand why the MOH was initially downgraded to the AFC in 1970. Lt. General Lucius Clay, during the Award Ceremony, stated the reason was because the mission was in Laos which was in violation of our Southeast Asia Treaty and President Nixon was on record stating the United States did not have any military troops in Laos. However, now fifty four years later, I do not understand the reluctance of the Air Force to support the past four Congressional Resolutions. I and all his supporters state Conran's heroic actions exceed the criteria for the MOH and is above the heroic actions of many other MOH recipients. His actions that day are documented and supported by all living eye witnesses, plus all military, CIA, and civilians who had anything to do with the mission or who have read the transcripts. In brief:

1. Colonel Taylor, the Mission Commander who was already shot down by the NVA, stated "we were in the process of being overrun by enemy forces when Conran, realizing we had little hope of surviving without additional troops, made the decision to assist even though he knew his chance of survival was minimal. He could have exited the area because of the extreme high risk and let us fend for ourselves and nobody would have questioned his decision but he didn't. The willingness to sacrifice to save your comrades separates those who deserve the MOH and those who do not. I know I lived to see another day because Conran risked his life to save me and my crew."
2. Conran, after being shot down, assumed command even though he was not the ranking officer. He first set up a defensive perimeter using all the able American and Laotian troops. He next ran through heavy enemy fire to gather all the equipment from the two helicopters. Then, for over six hours, he identified bombing positions for the airborne fighters as the enemy kept reducing the net around their perimeter. Captain Hudson's, an A-1 pilot on the mission, Air Force Cross Citation stated "...he made several low level passes delivering ordnance within ten meters of the survivors... incapacitated an estimated 400 to 600 enemy forces..."
3. After the debilitating gas saturated the area allowing the H-53 helicopters to complete the rescue, Conran, even with a severe leg wound, saved a 50 year old severely wounded crewman by getting down on his hands and knees allowing his back to be used as a stepping stone so the man could reach the helicopter's side window which was over six feet off the ground.

I and all his military, CIA, and civilian supporters plan to continue to pursue this quest until justice is served and I stand ready to meet with you whenever you have a spare moment. I can be reached at 805 452-9905, captainpeterson1941@gmail.com, or 3718 Modena Way Santa Barbara, CA 93105. Your positive action would be a definite win for the Department of Defense and the United States Air Force.



Dennis A. Peterson  
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