

Congressional Medal of Honor upgrade

May 25, 2021

General Charles Q. Brown, Jr.
Chief of Staff U.S. Air Force

Re: Colonel Phillip Conran, Colonel, USAF, Ret.

General Brown:

I'm writing in regards to the upgrading of Colonel Phillip Conran's Air Force Cross to the Congressional Medal of Honor. This process has been ongoing for too many years even though members of Congress have been supportive since 2014 when Congresswoman Lois Capps introduced the first Bill. Since then Congressman Salud Carbajal, a fellow Marine, introduced two bills, the last one being HR 1190 in this Session of congress. Unfortunately the Air Force has not supported the upgrade and continues to deny his heroic action.

My name is Dennis Peterson. I am a US Marine infantry officer who served with the 4th Marine Regiment In Vietnam in 1965 & 1966. I saw a lot of combat and received the Purple Heart (almost two). I have been active in veteran's affairs for over 10 years. Over the course of my adult life it has been my honor to know 10 CMH holders covering WW II forward. The most important action for which this award has been given is the saving of human life under very extreme conditions.

Colonel Conran stepped out of his role as a helicopter pilot and took on the role as an infantry commander during heavy combat to save 54 lives. How many men can attest to saving one life, let alone 54? The gift of life is precious, isn't it?

In a careful review of the facts that did take place, it can be affirmed that this action happened! Yet there is constant reference to "insufficient" and "no additional light" etc. Please don't tell me bureaucratic paper road blocks are in the way of resolution. It is clear to me that in the beginning someone up line, likely not military, squashed it. As you surely know the fact that Presidents from Eisenhower to Nixon would not admit we were in Laos. Politics? Ken S. Hessel, a CIA officer who was directing air in and out of the area, witnessed this courageous event. (See attached letter.) Why 50 years later, is the rightful honor to this outstanding Air Force Officer being blocked? The facts and the truth are real. It just takes a pen stroke. You can fix it!

I would appreciate an opportunity to come to your office to discuss this matter with you General. Anytime, anywhere. My cell phone is 805-452-9905. Email is peterson@dapentinc.com .

Sincerely,

Dennis A. Peterson
Captain, USMCR (fmr.)