

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 9, 2024

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III
100 Defense Pentagon
Washington D.C. 10000

Dear Secretary Austin,

We urge you to upgrade United States Air Force Colonel Philip Conran's (ret.) Air Force Cross to the Congressional Medal of Honor. He richly deserves this recognition for his heroic and lifesaving actions as a helicopter pilot in the 21st Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing during the Vietnam War.

On October 6, 1969, as Aircraft Commander of a CH-3E helicopter (Knife-62) of the 21st Special Operations Squadron operating in Laos, then-Major Conran demonstrated an unmatched level of gallantry under fire. After another CH-3E (Knife-61) was downed by small arms fire from North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers, he conducted a daring rescue mission to reinforce and recover his comrades. Upon landing near Knife-61, he realized that his unit would quickly be overwhelmed by the attacking NVA forces. Accompanied by a member of the Special Guerilla Unit (SGU), Conran ran across 50 yards of open terrain, through heavy enemy fire to retrieve weapons, ammunition, and supplies needed to repel the Communist forces.

After his commanding officer was severely wounded in the firefight, Major Conran took command of the defense and repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire. After several hours of fighting, the NVA employed mortars and rockets against the defenders in an attempt to dislodge them from their fighting positions. Displaying unparalleled resolve and tactical prowess, Conran executed several fire missions with supporting aerial assets using nothing but a compass and radio. While observing enemy movement, Conran was wounded but refused to move to the rear. Despite the Air Force and Navy launching several air sorties from a nearby air base to aid Conran and his men, the NVA continued to press the defenders. Under Conran's leadership, the SGU fighters and American pilots weathered the relentless assault. After 6 hours of constant fighting, two HH-53 "Super Jolly Green Giants" were able to recover the members of Knife-61 and 62.

Colonel Conran's decision to help rescue downed troops, and his heroic actions despite overwhelming odds, were critical in saving the lives of the American and allied soldiers with him that day. Colonel Conran's selfless and courageous actions are clearly deserving of the

Congressional Medal of Honor. For these reasons, we urge to you reconsider upgrading Colonel Conran's award to the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and we eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



ALEX PADILLA
United States Senate



LAPHONZA BUTLER
United States Senate



SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress