

# CAVWV Calls on Congress for Three Actions on Behalf of Secret Air War Veterans Before Memorial Day

*The CIA confirmed the mission. The Air Force destroyed the file. A 2015 board refused to act. Col. Conran is 89. Congress must act now.*

ST. PAUL, MN, UNITED STATES, May 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As America approaches Memorial Day 2026, the [Coalition of Allied Afghan & Vietnam War Veterans](#) (CAVWV) calls on members of Congress to take three specific, concrete actions on behalf of the [Forgotten Warriors](#) of America's Secret Air War in Laos, men whose valor was documented, whose recognition was suppressed for political reasons, and whose cases remain open because no one has yet forced them to close.



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The CIA confirmed the mission happened in Laos. The Air Force destroyed the file. A board refused to act anyway. We are asking Congress to force the accounting.”

*Thomas Leo Briggs, President,  
CAVWV*

CAVWV is grateful for the support of Rep. Salud Carbajal (CA-24) and Sen. Richard Blumenthal (CT), both of whom have engaged directly with the campaign for recognition of these warriors. The following three asks speak directly to their committee equities and to their established records of advocacy for veteran recognition and government accountability.

**ACTION 1 - THE CIA CONFIRMED THE MISSION. THE AIR FORCE DESTROYED THE FILE. CONGRESS MUST ACT.**

On May 11, 2026, the Central Intelligence Agency

responded to Freedom of Information Act case F-2020-00434, filed in November 2019, seeking operational records underlying the Medal of Honor recommendation for [Colonel Philip J. Conran](#), USAF (Ret.). The CIA directed the requester to pages 359-365 of CIA document C05303949,

"Undercover Armies," available on the CIA Electronic Reading Room. Those pages, approved for public release in February 2009, confirm Operation Junction City Junior, the Moung Phine location in Laos, the September-October 1969 timeframe, and the helicopter rescues under fire that are the core of the Conran action, in the CIA's own words.

The CIA then withheld two additional pages of its own operational records under classification exemptions, applied to documents whose underlying operational facts the agency had already acknowledged publicly in material approved for release seventeen years ago. The question of which agencies delayed concurrence on the FOIA response for six years, and why, has not been publicly answered.

Meanwhile, the USAF records that would document the full Conran action no longer exist. Major General Philip Conley, USAF (Ret.), was informed by the Air Force Military Personnel Center that the USAF file on Colonel Conran's Medal of Honor recommendation had been destroyed sometime before 2013. In 2015, a USAF Board of Corrections refused to correct Colonel Conran's record despite that destruction. Under DoD awards review standards, destruction of original award files triggers an obligation to seek corroborating documentation rather than close the case. The CIA's partially declassified operational history now provides exactly that corroboration, in a document publicly available since 2009. The 2015 board's refusal to act has never been explained.

Senator Blumenthal serves on the Senate Armed Services and Judiciary committees. A letter from his office to the CIA Information and Privacy Coordinator requesting a full accounting of the



Thomas Leo Briggs, President, CAVV - CIA  
Paramilitary Case Officer, Pakse, Laos, 1970-1972



Col. (Ret) Philip J. Conran

F-2020-00434 determination, and to the Secretary of the Air Force requesting an explanation of the 2015 board's refusal, would apply the most targeted congressional oversight available. The CIA appeal deadline is August 9, 2026.

## ACTION 2 - SUPPORT THE CONRAN MEDAL OF HONOR UPGRADE THROUGH CJCS REVIEW

The CIA's own partially declassified history confirms the Junction City Junior operation, the Moung Phine location, and the helicopter rescues under fire. The systematic review of valor citations from the covert air war in Laos, documented at [www.cavvw.org/forgotten-warriors.html](http://www.cavvw.org/forgotten-warriors.html), demonstrates that the removal of geographic identification from awards was inconsistent, politically contingent, and administratively driven rather than merit-based. The Etchberger upgrade in 2010 established the precedent: when political classification drives an original downgrade decision, declassification and review can and should correct it.

Rep. Carbajal serves on the House Armed Services and Veterans' Affairs committees. A letter from his office to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff requesting a formal review of the Conran case, citing the Etchberger precedent, the CIA's confirmation of the operational context, the destruction of the original USAF file, and the 2015 board's unexplained refusal to act, is the most direct congressional path available. Col. Conran is eighty-nine years old. The window for presenting this honor to a living recipient is not indefinite.

## ACTION 3 - CLOSE THE SGU VETERAN EQUITY GAP IN FEDERAL AND STATE LAW

Minnesota's HF3919 establishes Special Guerrilla Unit veteran eligibility under MN Statute 197.448. CAVWV has identified a companion equity gap affecting veteran service members in the Minnesota National Guard not covered under the current framework. A companion bill addressing this gap is documented at [www.cavvw.org](http://www.cavvw.org).

At the federal level, the exclusion of Vietnamese (Kinh), Montagnards, Lao Loum, Lao Theung, Lao Sung (Hmong), Nung, Khmer, and other allied communities from VA benefit eligibility programs represents the same structural failure that produced citation sanitization. Both exclusions were made in the same political moment. Both can be corrected in this one.

"Colonel Conran is eighty-nine years old. The CIA has confirmed in its own declassified history that the mission happened, that it happened in Laos, and that helicopter crews were rescued under fire. The Air Force destroyed the file. A board refused to act anyway. What remains is the will to correct an injustice that the documentary record, including the government's own documents, fully supports. We are asking Congress to supply that will." - Thomas Leo Briggs, CAVWV President

Full research documentation, the FOIA case history, the CIA Undercover Armies confirmation, the Etchberger precedent analysis, and allied community equity documentation are available at [www.cavvw.org/forgotten-warriors.html](http://www.cavvw.org/forgotten-warriors.html).

Congressional offices: contact Tom Briggs at [cavww.president@gmail.com](mailto:cavww.president@gmail.com) for a full briefing package.

## About CAVWW

CAVWW is a veteran advocacy nonprofit dedicated to recognition of American veterans and the Southeast Asian allies who served alongside them — Vietnamese (Kinh), Montagnards, Lao Loum, Lao Theung, Lao Sung (Hmong), Nung, Khmer, Cham, and others whose contributions have been overlooked in federal and state recognition programs. [cavww.org](http://cavww.org)

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