



Air Force Sergeants Association

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Dear Pitsenbarger Medal of Honor Supporter,

Some of you are probably aware of the status of the drive to upgrade William Hart Pitsenbarger's Air Force Cross to the Medal of Honor; however, many of you may not know the latest happening. It was a success! What I have recently discovered is that many supporters of the effort didn't know a lot of the details and that may be my fault. These supporters, many from the pararescue community, contributed greatly by keeping the heat applied via telephone, e-mail and letters.

For years there had been questions, etc., why Pitsenbarger hadn't received the Medal (as opposed to the Air Force Cross) and why wouldn't someone start a drive to upgrade the award. In April 1998, a group decided to do something and approached me and the Air Force Sergeants Association to help with a project to upgrade William H. Pitsenbarger's Air Force Cross to a Medal of Honor. In early, 1999, following almost a year of research and gathering testimonies by AFSA and Airmen Memorial Museum (AMM) researchers, the package was submitted to the Secretary of the Air Force by U.S. Representative Boehner of Ohio (one of the three requirements is submission by a member of Congress). The recommendation traveled through the Air Force Review Boards Agency and from the Secretary of the Air Force to all service chiefs. Following approval by the Chiefs, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff delivered the package to DoD. Proper notification was provided to the appropriate House and Senate Committees, and the recently released joint House and Senate Conference report for the Defense Authorization Bill included Congress' approval. The best guess is that the Medal will be presented to Mr. William F. Pitsenbarger (Bill's Father) in early December.

(more)

Bill Pitsenbarger will be only the second Air Force enlisted recipient of the Medal of Honor since the Air Force became a separate service in 1947. Of the 21 recipients of the Air Force Cross, this will be the first upgrade to the Medal of Honor. Many, if not all of you, know something about our efforts as my chief researcher, Mr. Parker Hayes (I also serve as the AMM Chairman of the Board and CEO, and knew immediately the best person for the job) who at that time was employed by AFSA's AMM, discussed, wrote and obtained statements signed by you. These statements were very important in obtaining the Air Force support and final approval for upgrade to the Medal (another requirement for an upgrade is that there must be new information). As of today, the medal presentation is being planned for December 8, 2000, to be presented by the Secretary of the Air Force.

However, the President must still sign the act, which I'm sure he will, and the White House must approve the plan that allows Secretary Peters to present the Medal and that it will be at Wright-Patterson AFB (I'm not quite sure that the White House will agree to these two points but we will know soon, maybe as early as this week).

Regardless of where the presentation will be and who will present the Medal, I thank you for your valuable contribution to the cause. After our submission, many others supported the effort and they too deserve credit as their inquiries etc., also helped the project. If the presentation is at Wright-Patterson AFB, each of you will receive an invitation. If it is in the White House, I'm not sure who will be invited as space is a consideration.

Again, I thank each of you for your input resulting in this great and rewarding experience for the Pitsenbarger family. It was the right thing to do!

Sincerely,



JAMES D. STATON
Executive Director

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P.S. The third requirement for an upgrade is that someone in the chain of command, at the time of the act, must sign the recommendation. Hal Salem and Allison Brooks fulfilled this requirement.