

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

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On September 21, President Barack Obama will award Chief Master Sergeant Richard L. Etchberger, U.S. Air Force, the Medal of Honor for conspicuous gallantry. Chief Etchberger will receive the Medal of Honor posthumously for his heroic actions in combat on March 11, 1968 in the country of Laos. He displayed immeasurable courage and uncommon valor - deliberately exposing himself to enemy fire in order to place his three surviving wounded comrades in the rescue slings permitting them to be airlifted to safety. As he was finally being rescued, he was fatally wounded by enemy ground fire. Chief Etchberger's sons, Cory Etchberger, Richard Etchberger and Steve Wilson will join the President at the White House to commemorate their father's example of selfless service and sacrifice.

PERSONAL BACKGROUND:

Richard (Dick) L. Etchberger served in the United States Air Force from 1951-1968. Born in Hamburg, Pennsylvania on March 5, 1933, he was inspired to join the military due to his brother Bob enlisting in the Navy in early 1946. Upon joining the USAF on August 31, 1951, he proved to have a high aptitude in electronics and began long list of training and assignments that he would undergo to become a master in his career field. On April 1, 1967, he was promoted to Chief Master Sergeant. He held assignments in Mississippi, Utah, Morocco, North Dakota, Philippines, Illinois and the Republic of Vietnam.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

THE MEDAL OF HONOR:

The Medal of Honor is awarded to a member of the Armed Forces who distinguishes themselves conspicuously by gallantry above and beyond the call of duty while:

- * engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States;
- * engaged in military operations involving conflict with an opposing foreign force; or
- * serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

The meritorious conduct must involve great personal bravery or self-sacrifice so conspicuous as to clearly distinguish the individual above his or her comrades and must have involved risk of life. There must be incontestable proof of the performance of the meritorious conduct, and each recommendation for the award must be considered on the standard of extraordinary merit.