

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

May 16, 2025

**SECRETARY MEGINLEY PRESENTS CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL  
TO CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER 2 GARY HUNSICKER**

**BATON ROUGE, La.**—Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Charlton J. Meginley, Col (Ret), USAF had the honor of presenting Chief Warrant Officer 2 Gary Hunsicker with the Dustoff Crews of the Vietnam War Congressional Gold Medal for his decorated service to our nation. Secretary Meginley made the presentation on behalf of U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran of Kansas, who authored an act during the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress to honor the crews in recognition of their extraordinary heroism and life-saving actions in Vietnam.

Gary Bruce Hunsicker was a medical evacuation helicopter pilot during the Vietnam War from 1970-71. He served in the Army from June 20, 1969-June 29, 1973 as a commissioned warrant officer, including time at Fort Bragg with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division after returning from Vietnam. He recounts his experiences with great emotion including first-hand accounts flying in bad weather, in the dark and feeling the vibration of ammunition hitting his bullet proof seat as he flew into enemy fire, unprotected, to rescue injured soldiers. As a member of the medical team, he had no weapons, and the red cross on the helicopter only provided a target for the enemy.

Army Dustoff crewman, including pilots, crew chiefs and medics, are helicopter crew members who served honorably during the Vietnam War aboard helicopter air ambulances. Dustoff crews performed aeromedical evacuation for United States, Vietnamese and allied forces in Southeast Asia from May 1962 through March 1973. During the Vietnam War, Dustoff crews pioneered the concept of dedicated and rapid medical evacuation and transported nearly 900,000 United States, South Vietnamese and other allied sick and wounded, as well as wounded enemy forces. The highly skilled Dustoff crews were able to operate the helicopters and land them on almost any terrain in nearly any weather to pick up wounded, after which the Dustoff crews could provide care to these patients while transporting them to ready medical facilities. The vital work of the Dustoff crews required consistent combat exposure and often proved to be the difference between life and death for wounded personnel.

The Congressional Gold Medal is an award bestowed by the United States Congress as its highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions by individuals, institutions or groups. It can be awarded to anyone Congress deems worthy, including groups of veterans, such as the Tuskegee Airmen or the Dustoff Crews during the Vietnam War.

For the full text of the Dustoff Crews of the Vietnam War Congressional Gold Medal Act, visit <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/senate-bill/2825/text>.

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