Legacies of War Announces New Board Chair:
Vancouver Resident Mike Burton is First Veteran to Lead the Board in Organization History

PRESS RELEASE

Washington, D.C. January 5, 2022 — Legacies of War, an organization that advocates for the removal of bombs dropped in Southeast Asia during the Secret War bombing of Laos, has announced that Mike Burton of Vancouver, Washington has been elected Chairman of the Board for 2022-23. His Excellency Ambassador Khamphan Anlavan (Lao Ambassador to the U.S., Washington, D.C.) awarded Legacies of War with a Humanitarian Award in December of 2021. It honored Legacies’ persistent advocacy efforts to secure funds for bomb clearance and educational work to ensure the history of the Secret War is not forgotten.

“While we have made progress,” Burton said “there is still a great deal more to do. Every day children and farmers risk their lives because the unexploded bombs litter the fields, school grounds and pathways of over 25% of the land of Laos.”

Burton, a retired USAF officer, spent the early parts of his active duty with Special Operations units in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. One of those units was heavily involved in bombing the Ho Chi Minh trail that ran through Laos. The U.S. dropped over two million tons of bombs on the neutral country of Laos, making Laos the most heavily bombed country per capita in the world. Not all the bombs exploded and it is estimated that over 80 million remain in the fields today.

Founded in 2004, Legacies of War advocates for the removal of these bombs from Laos. In 2021, Legacies and its partner organizations pushed for and received Congressional support of $45 million for cluster bomb clearance in Laos. This is the largest annual amount the U.S. has ever provided.

After returning from the war, Burton began the process of healing. He joined forces with Laotian refugees in the Northwestern United States to establish The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization. This organization now serves over 25,000 people annually. Burton also serves as Co-Chairman of the Community Military Appreciation Committee of Clark County WA.

“Legacies of War is an incredible organization,” Burton said. “Despite being a small team, they manage their shoestring budget to advocate for record-breaking Congressional funding. This funding goes directly to provide victim assistance and bomb clearance. Legacies works to educate not just the American public, but second and third generation Lao about this terrible legacy.”
Burton hopes that his tenure will build on the work done in the past to bring hope to Laos and its people.

In addition to his role as board chair, Burton also serves on the Legacies Library committee. Legacies Library is a collection of books, films, articles, and oral histories vetted by Legacies of War that tells the story of the American bombing of Laos (1964-1973) and its neighbors in Vietnam and Cambodia. Legacies Library offers original programming including film screenings and author interviews that tell the living story of the “Secret War” in Laos--ensuring it’s no longer a footnote in American history.

He plans to host community events for Legacies of War that include bringing the veteran community and Lao diaspora together to promote history, healing, and hope.

If you would like to learn more about Legacies of War, please contact:

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