

LAST FLIGHT

OF

STINGER 41

Lost Awards

by

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Colonel (Ret), USAF

Version 5.0

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STINGER 41

LOST AWARDS

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY STINGER 41**

On 2 May 1972 Stinger 41 took off from Bien Hoa Air Base Vietnam on what was probably the most dangerous AC-119 gunship mission of the war. It was a very rare daylight mission over the most heavily defended city in South Vietnam. The Stinger gunship was designed to fly at night. It is painted black, flies low and slow in circles, which makes it a perfect target. The crew of ten accepted this daylight mission knowing they were out to destroy a high value target, a mis-dropped pallet of ammunition. Once in the target area, they attempted to set up a firing circle but were driven off by enemy 37 mm anti-aircraft fire (AAA). They tried several more times to acquire the target and on their final try, the AAA was intense, accurate and hit their right wing. Both engines on the right side were destroyed, the landing gear dropped down and the wing trailed fire beyond the tail of the aircraft. It took both pilots at the controls to keep the aircraft in the air. It took a jumpmaster at the rear door to ensure chutes were on properly. These three crew members knew they were most likely going down with the aircraft. The pilot announced "ABANDON THE AIRCRAFT" and seven crew members bailed out into the hostile enemy jungle below. Thirty seconds before impact, and 300 feet above the ground, the pilot directed the copilot to abandon the aircraft. The copilot ran to the rear of the aircraft and out the troop door. He pulled his "D" ring, the chute opened, he hit the 200 foot high jungle canopy, his chute collapsed and he miraculously fell through the foliage and survived. His injuries required 50 stitches. Without only one pilot at the controls, the aircraft rolled over to the right and crashed. Three were killed in action (KIA) but seven survived.

The seven survivors were now in the dense enemy controlled jungle. They had four hours to be rescued before nightfall. They knew if they were not rescued soon, they would not survive the night. Their heroism and skill were demonstrated by their professionalism in the air and now they had to match that to survive on the ground. All of the jungle survival skills they thought they had forgotten came back. With the help of two forward air controllers and a combat search and rescue team, they made it out of the jungle at dusk. This was possibly the largest search and group rescue of the war.

Shortly after the survivors returned to base, their combat wartime squadron and wing commanders recommended the pilot for the Medal of Honor. On 22 May 1972 he received the second highest decoration, posthumously, the Air Force Cross. Both commanders then submitted awards for the remaining crew members. These awards were lost in the fog and friction of a deactivating squadron and an ending US air war.

The squadron and wing commanders were in the combat zone. They knew of the gallantry, heroism and professionalism of the aircrew. They submitted the awards with the expectation that they would be approved. If the awards had not been lost, we also would expect that a wartime combat awards board would have recognized their gallantry and heroism, and their awards would have been approved as submitted.

Early in 2022 the Air Force Special Operations Command Commander agreed to make the award presentations to the nine crew members whose awards were lost. The presentation was planned for 2 May 2022, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the shoot down. The facility was reserved and the protocol offices scripted the event. On 29 Apr 2022, four days prior to the presentation date, we received a call saying that the DAF Decorations Board for Stinger 41 did not go well. We were told that of the nine award decorations to be

presented, six were “disapproved”, two were “downgraded” and one was “deferred”. The presentation ceremony on 2 May 2022 was cancelled.

In May 2023 a former Secretary of the Air Force sent a new package to the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, endorsed by 24 General Officers (to include four Air Force Chiefs of Staff), requesting a review and reconsideration of the original 2022 Awards Board. We just received a letter stating the rationale for standing by their original decision which was downgrading two awards and disapproving the remaining seven. We are now planning a path forward after receiving this devastating news. These heroes deserve to be recognized for their heroism in the air and on the ground.

ORIGINAL AWARDS PACKAGE

COL RICHARD S. MACISAAC

JUNE 2021

TO: Senator Mark E. Kelly

DATE: 06 June 2021

FROM: Col. Richard S. Mac Isaac, USAF Ret.

SUBJECT: Reconstruction of a Vietnam Awards Package

1. By way of introduction, I am Col. Steve Mac Isaac, USAF Ret. I am the Awards & Decorations Recovery Officer for the AC-119 Gunship Association. I have held this position for the past 18 years. My duties include assisting other Association members and all combat veterans, to correct DD-214s, assist with missing or lost decorations, and to seek correction for awards & decorations that were submitted but never awarded.
2. The attached documents submitted intend to recover the Distinguished Flying Cross W/Valor awards package that was lost/never received for the nine crew members of AC-119K STINGER Gunship, call sign "Stinger 41" for their mission flown on 02 May 1972.
3. The combat crew of the AC-119K is 10 airmen; 5 Officer, 5 Enlisted. The Aircraft Commander was recognized for his heroic actions, put in for a higher decoration, which was posthumously awarded to his Next-of-Kin: the Air Force Cross, second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor – Captain Terrence Francis Courtney, USAF, KIA.
4. Seven crew members survived that day by parachuting out of the fatally damaged Stinger, into very hostile enemy area. Three members were KIA when the aircraft impacted the jungle. All seven were recovered by USAF & Army rescue assets. Four survive today. Three have submitted their affidavits. The fourth survivor is too ill to do so. There are two additional affidavits in this package. One is the eyewitness statement of the Forward Air Controller (FAC) "SUNDOG-29" who was directing Stinger-41 at the time of the fatal attack. The other is from the Captain who was the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron (SOS)'s Awards & Decorations Officer at the time of the shoot-down, and put together the original award package, and witnessed the Squadron Commander approve/sign the package.
5. The Stinger-41 call-sign was always assigned to the first mission flown each day from Bien Hoa Air Base, RSVN, with four more missions following as ST-42 to ST-45. When first arriving at Bien Hoa in mid-April 1972, the ST-41 mission was to start at dusk and flown into night. The safe and effective darkness of night allowed the slow moving, low altitude flying black-painted Gunship, to safely be a decisive weapon. During the first few weeks of the critical Battle of An Loc, enemy anti- aircraft artillery (AAA) was manageable. Then the Hq. 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Saigon started to move all Stinger missions earlier each day, making the ST-41 mission more dangerous in daylight. Our protests of misapplying our weapon system fell on deaf ears. The North Vietnamese started bringing more and heavier AAA to the battlefield. By May, the ST-41's 3.5 hr. mission was flown with 2 hours in daylight. I flew the ST-41 mission on 01 May 1972. My crew was shot off of three different targets before we were able to successfully engage a fourth target. ST-41, on 02 May 1972, had a small chance to succeed. Nevertheless, the airman of ST-41 knew

that the effort to save An Loc was critical to protect Saigon, and that U.S. Army Advisor's to the ARVN were in grave danger of being overrun, and killed or captured. ST-41 was going to do everything it could to defend and protect them, no matter what the risk for the crew.

I would not place my signature on this package if I did not strongly believe in the heroic exploits of the entire crew on 02 May 1972.

6. The AC-119 Gunship Association is an active and well-managed organization. It has a very strong, active Next-of-Kin program. We are all truly brothers; we continue to take care of and support each other. When this Award is officially approved, our Association will be honored to assure that the Awards are properly delivered by a surviving crewmember, or fellow former Stinger who actually flew the Battle of An Loc with the loved ones of the Next-of-Kin.

V/R

Col. Richard S. Mac Isaac, USAF Ret.  
AC-119 Gunship Association  
Awards & Decorations Recovery Officer

6449 Coventry Hills Dr., NE  
Rio Rancho, NM 87144  
(Cell 302-249-1499)  
(E-mail: [colmacmac@mac.com](mailto:colmacmac@mac.com))

NOTE: Affidavits attached.



## **Charles D. Pollock Affidavit**

April 6, 2021

From: Charles D. Pollock  
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired

Subject: Missing Vietnam Distinguished Flying  
Cross for crew of Stinger 41, AC-119K  
Gunship

To: To Whom It May Concern

On March 30, 1972 the North Vietnamese invaded South Vietnam. They quickly drove south towards Saigon. The allies decided to make a stand at An Loc, a provincial capital not far north of Saigon. This was a bloody campaign with our Air Force having to do the heavy lifting due to the drawdown of American troops as we tried to extricate ourselves from South Vietnam.

On May 2, 1972 Stinger 41 was assigned to a daylight mission at Loc. Stinger gunships (AC-119K) were old and slow. A very effective aircraft at night for truck hunting down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and for close air support for friendly troops under attack. Flying low altitude in the daylight was not a mission it should have been used for. The crew demonstrated bravery and valor that day. Every man climbed on the doomed airplane to do their duty. Not a single crew member asked to be relieved.

Despite the conditions, including flying at a dangerous 3500 feet due to low clouds, the crew rolled in on the assigned target. They came under 37mm AAA attack almost immediately. They could not try to take evasive action because they could not see the tracers very well due it being daylight. After several orbits they were badly hit. They lost several feet of wing and an engine. The pilot and copilot heroically maintained enough control and with the efforts of the 10 (jump master) 7 crew members were able to bailout.

The entire crew distinguished themselves by extraordinary achievement in combat on May 2, 1972 at An Loc, South Vietnam. As Awards and Decorations Officer for the 18th Special Operations Squadron at the time of the Stinger 41 shoot down, it was my honor to submit the aircraft commander, Captain Courtney, for the Congressional Medal of Honor and the rest of the crew for The Distinguished Flying Cross. Captain Courtney was ultimately awarded the Air Force Cross. I coordinated the submissions with our squadron commander and our wing commander. I submitted the packages up the chain of command in August 1972 at Nakhon Phanom Royal Air Force Base. Thailand Crew members on Stinger 41 were:

Capt. Terence Courtney, KIA, Pilot (Awarded Air Force Cross.)  
Lt. Jim Barkalow Co-pilot

Capt David Slagle, KIA. Navigator  
SSgt. "Yogi" Bare Flight Engineer  
Lt Col, "Tash" Taschioglou Forward looking infrared (FLIR) Operator  
Lt. Larry Barbee Night observation scope (NOS) Operator  
SSgt. "Ski" Sledzinski Lead Gunner  
SSgt. Dale Iman Gunner  
AIC Craig Corbett Gunner .  
SSgt. Ken Brown, KIA, Illuminator (IO) Operator

It appears that these important awards got lost in the fog of war as we were closing out combat operations leading to our cease fire on January 27, 1975.

Please approve this award for the survivors and the families of our departed heroes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Pollock', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles D. Pollock  
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired  
[camppollock@icloud.com](mailto:camppollock@icloud.com)  
704.575.4607

## **Francis J. Sledzinski Affidavit**

Date: 05/02/2021

To: Whom It May Concern

From: Francis J. Sledzinski, SSgt, USAF (Ret)

RE: Purpose of this document is to describe the 2 May 1972 mission of an AC-119K gunship, Tail #826, call sign Stinger 41, of the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing, RTAFB.

Our mission was to fly from Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and provide daylight close air support to RVN forces and their US Advisors who were surrounded in the Provincial Capital of An Loc, some 60 miles north of Saigon, and under direct attack by an estimated 35,000 North Vietnamese troops supported by armor, artillery, infantry, and anti-aircraft defenses. The belief was that if An Loc fell, Saigon would be next.

A daylight mission minimizes the advantages of the AC-119K as it is optimized to fly in hours of darkness when onboard sensors could better find targets, scanners could provide better Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) evasive break calls, and the black painted underside of the aircraft would afford better concealment.

Our crew of ten consisted of:

- Capt Terrence Courtney, Killed In Action (KIA), Pilot (Awarded Air Force Cross)
- ILT Jimmy Barkalow, Co-Pilot
- Capt David Slagle, KIA, Navigator
- SSgt Allen Bare, Flight Engineer
- LtCol Bryan Taschioglou, Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR) Operator ● ILT. Larry Barbee, Night Observation Scope (NOS) Operator
- SSgt Francis Sledzinski, Lead Gunner
- SSgt Delanor Iman, Gunner
- AIC Richard Corbett, Gunner
- SSgt Kenneth Brown, KIA, Illuminator Operator (10)

After takeoff, Stinger 41 proceeded to the target area, but was told to hold short due to the multiple aircraft on scene over An Loc. We used this time to bore sight guns and sensors on some destroyed trucks. Having all systems bore-sighted together would increase our accuracy and lessen our exposure to AAA threats.

Once cleared into the target area, we joined up with an O-2 forward air control (FAC), call sign Sundog 29. He would assist us in spotting targets. We entered the target area at 4700 feet Above Ground Level (AGL), but the weather forced us down to 3500 feet AGL. The FAC brought us up on the radio with a US Army ground controller on scene. His task would be to prioritize and direct our firepower to each target. He stated the first target, a recoilless rifle, was attacking his position was marked with panels to assist in target identification. The recoilless rifle was shooting at a school where the ground controller was held up. The NOS identified the school but there were no panels were in place to identify the target. While that was being rectified, we established an orbit to the east side of An Loc. Just then the 10 stated we were being fired upon by 37mm AAA. We could not see tracers until it was too late to react, but we could hear the rounds passing, and could see the air bursts above. The scanners tried to determine where the guns were and continued to scan for tracers and muzzle fire. At one point two 1 Lt Barbee and AIC Corbett were aiding the 10 in identifying what was becoming very accurate. The cloud layer above

was dissipating, allowing us to climb to 4500 feet AGL. However, the AAA was still accurate, and AIC Corbett spotted a second 37mm AAA firing at us. We could hear the shrapnel from the exploding rounds raining down on the aircraft skin.

The US Army Controller stated that the panels were now in position. The NOS operator found the panels, but they were not the designated color. By this time, we had made four orbits and the pilot told us we would make one more orbit. If we had not found the AAA guns or our target, we would exit the area and try another approach. It was on this final orbit that the 37mm AAA hit our right wing, wheel well, and both the right reciprocating engine and jet pod. We could hear and feel it, and as the 10 stated, we were hit and on fire. I put on a chest pack and pushed the flare launcher out of the aircraft. Flames were trailing to the rear crew entrance door. With only the two left engines running, and the aircraft still on fire, the plane was fast becoming uncontrollable and was losing altitude. The pilot had full left rudder and aileron input in and trying to keep the aircraft flying. Our Flight Engineer, SSgt Bare, was busy assisting the pilots flying the aircraft, adjusting power setting and trying to extinguish the engine fires on the right wing but the fire was too big. Capt Slagle, our navigator, called MAYDAY and provided a safe bailout heading. It was then the pilot ordered us to abandon aircraft. The 10 was acting as jump master, checking everyone over as they parachuted from the aircraft.

I was the first to bail out, and as the tail boom passed, pulled my "D" ring. My chute opened up and I saw the aircraft below me burning and going down. Other chutes started appearing from the stricken aircraft. The aircraft started to roll and exploded as it hit the ground. It was now very quiet and I could hear this popping sound. Looking up, small holes were appearing in my parachute canopy. NVA soldiers were shooting at me and I steered my chute away from them. Landing in a tree right above the ground, I unhooked from the chute and crawled to a fallen log. I got on my radio and listened for others in my crew to come up on radio.

Sundog 29 kept flying over the area. About 15 minutes later as the FAC was over me once more, I radioed telling him he was over my position. He came back over me and we made eye contact and waved. I told him there was heavy ground fire around my position. He said that Sandy search and rescue team were on their way. At the same time, some Huey helicopters came in with rockets and machine gun fire. The FAC said they would be my cover for the next few hours. I was told to pop smoke because a Huey was coming in to rescue me, but it was then hit by ground fire and it aborted the rescue. After about 40 minutes a second helicopter came in with a dangling rope which I hooked up to. We went approximately 200 feet up while taking heavy ground fire.

We flew to a fire support base where we landed and I was cut loose from the helicopter. A few minutes later another Army helicopter came to take me to the 1<sup>st</sup> Air CAV base. The 1<sup>st</sup> Air CAV Commanding Officer wanted to talk to me. After arriving at the base, I saw the first helicopter that responded to my rescue sitting and still smoking and leaking fluids. One of the pilots told me it was the Commander's helicopter and he was flying it during my first rescue attempt. I met the General who showed me maps of where we were shot down. He asked where we thought the 37mm AAA was located. I told him we thought it was two guns, but could not locate them. He said his pilots would fly me back to Bien Hoa Air Base.



Francis J. Sledzinski

**Richard C. Corbett Affidavit**

Date: 2 May 2021

From: Richard C. Corbett, CMSgt, USAF (Ret)

Subject: Purpose of this document is to describe the 2 May 1972 mission of an AC-119K gunship, tail # 826, call sign, Stinger 41, of the 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB

To: Whom It May Concern

Our mission was an urgent need requirement to fly from Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and provide daylight close air support to RVN forces and their US Advisors who were surrounded in the Provincial Capital of An Loc, some 60 miles north of Saigon and under direct attack by an estimated 30,000 North Vietnam troops supported by armor, artillery, infantry and anti-aircraft defenses. The belief was if An Loc fell Saigon would be next.

A daylight mission minimizes the advantages of the AC-119K as the gunship is optimized to fly in hours of darkness in a steady orbit no higher than 6500 feet above ground level (AGL) and no lower than 2500 feet AGL where our six gatling guns were effective and on board sensors could better find targets, scanners could provide better Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) evasive break calls and the black underside of the aircraft would afford better concealment. This knowledge along with reports from other Stinger crews who previously flew the early, daylight missions over An Loc of accurate AAA threat and at least one aircraft returning to base with possible battle damage concerned our crew.

We briefed that the more experienced gunners would scan since the AAA threat was high. Being the newest crew member, I would man the guns. We all discussed different mission aspects to ensure we had all possible concerns covered.

After takeoff, we proceeded to the target area but were told to hold short due the multiple aircraft on scene over An Loc. We used this time to bore sight guns and sensors which would ensure our systems were the most effective and thus less time exposed to AAA threats.

Once cleared into the target area, we joined up with an O-2 forward air control (FAC) aircraft, Sundog 29, who would assist us locating targets. We entered the target area at 4700 feet AGL but the weather forced us down to 3500 feet AGL. The FAC brought us up on the radio with a US Army ground controller on scene, who directed us to target an enemy

recoilless rifle. He stated marker panels were deployed to assist in target identification. The Night Observation Scope (NOS) Operator identified the area but there were no panels. While that was being rectified, we established an orbit to the east side of An Loc. Just then the Illuminator Operator (10) stated we were being shot at by 37mm AAA and he could not see tracers until it was too late to react but we could hear the rounds passing and could see the air bursts above. All scanners tried to determine where the guns were and continued to scan for tracers and muzzle fire. Each time the altitude changed, I would readjust the weapons for azimuth and elevation. When I wasn't changing the gun settings and 1st Lt Barbee was waiting on proper target identification, we were aiding the 10 in scanning for what was very accurate AAA.

The cloud layer above was dissipating so the pilots were able climb to 4500 feet AGL and still be able to acquire the targets but the AAA was still accurate and a second 37mm started firing at us. We could hear the shrapnel from the exploding rounds raining on the aircraft skin. We had made four orbits and the pilot told us we would make one more and if we could not find the gun or our target, we would exit the area and try another approach.

It was on this final orbit at when at least three rounds of 37mm AAA hit our right wing, wheel well and reciprocating engine. We could hear and feel it as the 10 stated we are hit and on fire. Our right jet engine also quit. Flames were trailing to the rear crew entrance door. With only the two left engines running, and the aircraft still on fire, the plane was fast becoming uncontrollable and losing altitude.

The pilot and co-pilot where both using full left rudder and aileron control trying to keep the aircraft flying. The Flight Engineer was working with the pilots going through the emergency procedures to try and get the fire out and keep the aircraft airborne. The Navigator was calling MAYDAY and providing a safe bailout heading to the pilots. It was then the pilot ordered us to "Abandon aircraft!" The Lead Gunner had pushed the flare launcher out of the aircraft to allow the crew to bail out. The 10 was acting as jump master checking everyone over to ensure everyone was properly in parachutes as they abandoned the aircraft. Once eight crew members were out, the 10 would inform the pilot and exit the aircraft. Throughout this mission, the whole crew maintained exceptional crew coordination, ensured backup was available when and where needed and each crew member remained calm and professional. Each demonstrated gallantry under severe conditions and very accurate and deadly AAA. Everyone performed well during the emergency procedures and egress.

When we bailed out, Sundog 29 immediately became on scene commander and started search and rescue (SAR) of survivors. Suddenly, US Army helicopters made a pass overhead firing rockets and machine guns. Unnerving, but they were attempting to rescue our lead gunner who was being shot at by a machine gun very close to his landing position.

We started checking in and vectoring the Sundog 29 over our positions. I saw two enemy running past me. Shortly afterwards two A-1H Sandy aircraft arrived. Sundog showed Sandy our positions and Sandy made some low, slow passes to draw fire. They laid down smoke and asked Stinger 41 Delta and India to flash them with mirrors. Delta radioed the sun was too low and the light too poor for mirrors to be effective.

Sandy then asked Stinger 41 Alpha to come up on radio. When Alpha did not come up Sandy asked for the Stinger closest to the wreckage to come up. Sandy stated no one was coming up on the radio and asked any Stinger come up on radio. That led to several Stingers coming up simultaneously. Sandy reverted to the alphabet and called for Bravo to 'pop smoke' which the Co-Pilot did. All calls after that were for the next closest to 'pop smoke' until all survivors were on the two HH-3 Jolly Green aircraft. It took four and a half hours from the time we were hit till all were picked up. I was the last survivor hoisted to safety as night had closed in four and a half hours after shoot down.

The SAR team complemented the crew on the coordination and discipline during the SAR and said it was the smoothest multi-crew SAR they had seen. We assist in a smooth and rapid extraction. This was also the largest and most successful SAR operation in Southeast Asia (SEA). This Stinger 41 was the last daylight gunship mission. Sadly, we lost three comrades all of whom were true professionals.

Richard

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard C. Corbett', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Richard C. Corbett  
CMSgt, USAF (Ret)

## **Major Larry D. Barbee Affidavit**

Date: 3/11/21

To: Whom it may concern

From: Major Larry D. Barbee, USAF (Ret)

RE: The purpose of this letter is to describe the 2 May, 1972 mission of AC-119K gunship, tail # 826, call-sign Stinger 41, of the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing. Stinger 41 was lost to accurate anti-aircraft fire while repeatedly attempting to target enemy forces surrounding South Vietnamese forces and American military advisors.

Our gunship's mission was to fly from Bien Hoa Airbase, RVN to provide close air support to South Vietnamese forces and American advisors surrounded and under attack in the city of An Loc, a province capital north of Saigon, Vietnam. We would target North Vietnamese forces, including armor, artillery, and infantry. Significant enemy anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) defenses had been reported, and our squadron aircraft had been engaged by AAA in the area. During our mission briefing the Intelligence Officer told us that an estimated force of 30,000 enemy troops surrounded An Loc and that if the enemy took the town they would be set to head straight down Highway 13 to Saigon. It was critical to hold the town.

This was a daylight mission which eliminated the advantages of our AC-119K, which was optimized to fly during the hours of darkness. The lower fuselage and under-wings were painted black, and because our Vulcan cannons and mini-guns were mounted to fire only from the left side of the cargo bay, we flew in a continuous left hand orbit at low altitude and slow speed around our targets.

Our crew consisted of ten persons: Pilot and Co-Pilot, Flight Engineer, three Navigator/Sensor Operators: Navigator, Forward Looking Infrared Operator (FLIR), and Night Observation Sight (NOS) Operator, three Gunners who maintained and loaded the weapons, and the Illuminator Operator (IO) who handled the flare launcher and large spotlight.

The Gunners and the Illuminator Operator also served an especially important but hazardous duty as scanners to spot enemy ground fire. They strapped themselves into the aircraft's open doors and leaned out into the slipstream to detect gun muzzle flashes and tracers. They reported the ground fire to the pilots and directed "breaks" to maneuver the aircraft away from the paths of the anti-aircraft projectiles. The IO also served as the "Jumpmaster" in case of bailout. He would check the crewmembers to insure they were ready for bailout and to inform the cockpit crew when all crewmembers had jumped from the cargo compartment.

After takeoff, Stinger 41 proceeded north to the vicinity of An Loc and checked in with forward air controllers. The airspace was saturated with other aircraft lining up to deliver ordnance. While waiting for our target assignment, we synchronized our computers, sensors and guns to align them for best accuracy.

Shortly a forward air controller brought us up on frequency with a US Army controller on the ground at An Loc. He gave us a target of an enemy "recoilless rifle" at the edge of the jungle tree line firing into the town. We turned from our holding area and headed in. An Loc was a devastated shambles of streets and buildings. Burned tanks and vehicles littered the streets, and structures were collapsed rubble piles. The ground controller stated there should be some marker



panels in an open lot near the school. When we found the school, there were no panels to be seen. The controller said he would send someone out to put panels down.

In the meantime, we established an orbit on the east side of town. Abruptly a number of antiaircraft shells burst near us at our approximate altitude. We continued on around our orbit. Although the scanners were at a disadvantage because they couldn't see the tracers in the daylight, they remained exposed in their positions and called out air traffic and other information to the pilots. Despite the distraction of the bursting shells, Lt. Colonel Taschioglou, the FLIR Operator, selected and steadily held a reference point in the town so that we could always return to our orbit and quickly resume firing parameters, even as we changed our flight path in an attempt to throw off the AAA tracking us.

The ground controller came back and said that the panels were out. I found them with my binoculars, but they were not the same color he described. We informed the controller of the discrepancy. Meanwhile, we came around the eastern side of the orbit and were again bracketed by the AAA bursts. This time I could hear the shrapnel rattling on the airplane skin. Once again our scanners, crouching or standing in the open doors and battling the slipstream, tried to narrow down the area where the fire was coming from.

In our next orbit we saw that the marker panels had not yet been changed. Again the flak bursts surrounded us and there was more rattling on the aircraft skin. The pilot asked me to disconnect from the intercom and go back to the scanner to see if he could point out the gun's location. I did but during the time I was crouched at the door with the scanner, the gun did not fire again. I went back to my position in the front of the cargo compartment and told the pilot that the scanner believed the gun was to our east and outside of our orbit.

Once again, we couldn't confirm the marker panel was the correct one, but we persisted in attempting to locate the enemy. The gun fired again and had more near misses. On the intercom the pilot and Navigator, who acted as mission coordinator, decided that we would go around one more time, and if the gun fired again, we would leave the orbit, move away, and then come back in again. Unfortunately, as we came back into the east side of the orbit, the guns fired again and this time we felt at least three solid thumps as the shells impacted the right wing and fuselage. The voices on the intercom were very deliberate. I heard someone calmly say: "We're hit." Another voice: "The right jet's quit." Another voice: "The right recip's on fire." The Navigator gave the pilot the heading to a safe area and began to broadcast "Mayday" on the Guard Channel.

I looked toward the back of the cargo compartment. It appeared that there were flames in the interior of the fuselage. I grabbed a fire extinguisher and went as far to the rear as the interphone cord reached, and handed the extinguisher to a gunner. He looked at me oddly and put it aside. I then realized that the flames were not on the inside but were streaming back from the engine and wing, all the way past the tail and being reflected into the interior of the aircraft.

I went back to my position and stowed the night observation sight and stood by. Shortly I heard the pilot come over the intercom and calmly say "Prepare to abandon the aircraft." I put on my chest pack parachute and tightened my harness. Lt. Colonel Taschioglou secured the jump seat which could have blocked the path down from the cockpit to the cargo compartment and escape by parachute.

Then came the words; “Abandon the aircraft.”

I could see activity at the back of the cargo compartment. Our large flare launcher had been jettisoned and the Illuminator Operator was standing facing the front of the aircraft. He was deliberately checking everyone over. By the time I reached the back, I didn't see anyone left in the cargo compartment except the Illuminator Operator. He gestured for me to exit, so I grasped the D-Ring and stepped out the door. That was the last time I saw him.

When the tail of the aircraft passed over me, I pulled the ripcord and eventually the parachute opened. On the way down I had a glimpse of the aircraft. Its right landing gear was down, parts were flying off the wing, fire was streaming from the wing beyond the tail, and the plane was starting to roll right and the nose was dropping. I did not see any other chutes behind me. All the training on life support and escape and evasion came back almost automatically. The parachute descent was smooth but short as I fell through some trees. I was out of the chute in an instant and moved off through the trees to find a hiding place. The sounds of bombs, artillery and small arms filled the air.

Our airborne FAC had followed us out and watched us parachute. He did a very professional job to efficiently coordinate our rescue. He plotted each survivor's location and called for the rescue A1H aircraft and the Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters.

Our effective crew coordination and personal discipline stand out in my mind for making our rescue possible. There was no panic on the ground and no hesitation in cooperating with the rescue forces. Survival radio discipline was excellent. The first person to bail out was rescued by two American Army helicopters under enemy fire.

The A1H Search and Rescue fighters arrived and the lead pilot assumed on-scene command. They fired rockets and guns to suppress the enemy forces in our vicinity. At greater altitude an AC-130 Specter was firing its 20mm Vulcan cannon. Two Jolly Green Giant Helicopters came in and each picked up three survivors. One of the crewmen told me that this was the smoothest multi-person rescue pickup that he had seen.

Sadly, we lost three of our comrades: the pilot who maintained aircraft control to give us an opportunity to bail out, the navigator who had been such a calming and efficient voice in the cockpit and over the intercom, and the illuminator operator, who remained at his post until the last of us cleared the cargo compartment.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Larry D. Barbee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" and last name "Barbee" clearly legible.

Larry D. Barbee, Major  
USAF (Retired)

## Thomas J. Milligan Affidavit

To Whom It May Concern

AC-119 Stinger 41  
May 2, 1972

The following Is a narrative of events of that day as written by Thomas J. Milligan, Lt.Col. (Ret.) USAF.

On May 2, 1972, I was a Forward Air Controller (FAC), callsign SUNDOG 29, assigned to the 21<sup>st</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron, Sundog FACs, at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, South Vietnam. An Air Force captain, I was a highly experienced FAC and was the unit's assistant operations officer for training. I had a team of FAC instructors working with me and we evaluated and trained every new Fac coming into our unit. In addition, we often briefed new units flying in the region because as FACs we were the most qualified to provide new units information about enemy disposition and ground to air threats. I had just a week earlier flown to Bien Hoa Air Base and briefed and flown with the newly assigned HH-3 Jolly Green unit about threats in the area around An Loc.

The morning of May 2 was very typical. I went into the squadron at about 0800 and began my preparations for the day's flight and to complete some routine office paperwork. I knew that I was flying a FAC mission to support air strikes in and around the city of An Loc. The city was under siege by a determined large force of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong. In fact, there were three enemy divisions (5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup>) of about 35,000 total surrounding the city. An Loc was situated on Route 13 which was the key to taking Saigon. At that time, the city was being supplied only by air. There were about 7,500 South Vietnamese troops in An Loc and a small number of American advisors. The North Vietnamese were focused on taking the city which would have opened the way to Saigon. To stop the dropping of supplies into the city, the NVA had built up and very formidable anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) force which made flying over and around An Loc very dangerous.

When I visited our intelligence section to get my pre-mission briefing on the situation at An Loc, I was informed that I would be supporting another mission. An AC-119 Gunship, callsign Stinger 41, was going to fly out of Bien Hoa to An Loc with a mission to destroy supplies, including munitions that had been air dropped but had fallen near or behind the enemy lines. I was assigned to help the AC-119 find the target and to point out any AAA. My first thoughts were that this was going to be a very dangerous mission, especially for the slow-moving AC-119 Gunship. Gunships were big targets and so they most often flew at night. To put this slow-moving gunship over An loc, one of the most dangerous places for aircraft in South Vietnam, during the day must mean that the target was of high importance. The AC-119 was almost as slow as my slow-moving O-2A Skymaster FAC Aircraft and it was much, much larger.

I took off from Tan Son Nhut at about noon and flew to a rendezvous with Stinger 41. After we checked in, I took a position wide and in trail behind his right wing and we proceeded to An loc. The first couple of orbits over An Loc were uneventful. Neither of us could find the dropped supplies, which may have already been taken by the NVA troops. It wasn't very long before the first rounds of 37mm AAA started flying up from gun positions somewhere on the west side of town. The first rounds were not well-aimed and they were well behind, above and out right from the circling AC-119. I informed the flight crew but they already knew they were being shot at. The fact that the rounds were behind the AC-119 meant that they were close to me and I adjusted my position. Another circle of the AC-119 brought more rounds up from the ground and the AC-119 changed altitude about a 1,000 ft as the rounds better found his altitude and position. I informed the crew that the rounds were getting closer. Another circle and the 37mm was coming very close to the circling gunship. I

suggested to the pilot that it might be good to move away as the enemy gunners were getting smarter each time the AC-119 came around. He informed me that his gunners were working hard to find the enemy AAA positions but that he would only fly one more circle and then move off. (The rounds coming up at the AC-119 and exploding around it reminded me of the movies taken of our B-17s flying over Germany in WWII. The sky was filled with exploding 37mm rounds.)

As the AC-119 came around for the last time, another volley of 37MM came up and several rounds struck Stinger as it was turning toward the west in its circle. The right wing immediately was almost totally enveloped in bright orange and red flames which reached back to the rear of the fuselage. I gave a heading to the pilot to fly and informed my controller that Stinger 41 had been hit hard and that SAR forces should be launched ASAP. At the same time, the AC-119 pilot leveled his wings and fought to control the burning aircraft as it lost altitude and headed toward the WSW.

I watched the AC-119 heading west and tried to keep up with it as it continued to lose altitude. I called the pilot and suggested that he might start thinking about getting out of the aircraft because the fires were getting worse and the aircraft continued a slow decent toward the jungle. I don't even know if he heard me as he had many things to worry about. When the aircraft was clear of the city and out over the jungle, I saw the first parachutes coming out as the crew began to leave the stricken aircraft.

As each chute deployed and I saw the crewmember floating toward the jungle, it occurred to me that I would have a very difficult time trying to find the survivors as they floated into the jungle. From above I could see a small stream running near where the crewmembers were landing. With a grease pencil I marked the path of the stream on my forward windscreen and then put an "X" near the route of the stream as each parachute disappeared into the jungle. I only counted 7 chutes.

I was informed by my controller that a Sandy flight of A-1s and a flight of Jolly Green helicopters were both on their way. I descended lower as I was away from the primary threats around An Loc and started to call the crewmembers on their survival radios. As I made contact with each one, I informed them that help was on its way. They should stay under cover, drink some water and remain calm. Each survivor responded and followed my instructions in a most professional manner. (Later the rescued crewmembers told me that they could hear the sound of the Skymaster as it flew over their positions.)

Within 30 or so minutes I was contacted by Sandy and he took over control of the Search and Rescue (SAR) but not until I had pointed out each of the downed crewmembers by rocking my wings as I passed over their locations. I watched as helicopters came in and picked up six of the remaining survivors as one (the first to bail out) he been extracted by an Army helicopter flying near-by.

I stayed in the area of the crash long after the helicopters had departed just in case another crewmember was alive. After about an hour, I started my return to Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Once I had debriefed with my squadron, I went to the hospital where I had the privilege of meeting the surviving members of the crew of Sting 41.

Thomas J. Milligan

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tom J. Milligan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Lt. Col. (RET) USAF

ORIGINAL AWARDS PACKAGE

RESPONSE FROM AIR FORCE  
PERSONNEL CENTER

OCTOBER 2021



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER JOINT BASE  
SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH TEXAS**

October 15, 2021

Air Force Personnel Center  
550 C Street West  
Joint Base San Antonio-Randolph AFB, TX 78148

The Honorable Mark Kelly  
United States Representative/Senator  
407 West Congress Street,  
Suite 103 Tucson AZ 85701

Dear Senator Kelly

This is in reply to your inquiry on behalf of retired Chief Master Sergeant Richard C. Corbett regarding his desire for award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Congress established the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) on July 2, 1926. The medal is awarded to any persons who, after April 6, 1917, while serving in any capacity with the Air Force, distinguish themselves by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. Both heroism and achievement are entirely distinctive, involving operations that are not routine.

We reviewed Chief Corbett's official Master Personnel Record and found no documentation he was recommended for or awarded the DFC. Unfortunately, the documentation he provided does not include the required documents for a complete package.

If Chief Corbett wishes to pursue the award of the DFC, he must follow the procedures below.

Title 10 USC 1130 authorizes retirees and veterans to submit retroactive recommendations for awards beyond the 3-year time limitation. If referred by a Member of Congress, the law allows for the submission of award recommendations (and the upgrading of previously approved awards) without regard to any previously imposed time constraints for submission. Under the provisions of this law, the Member of Congress refers requests to the Secretary of the Air Force through the Secretary of the Air Force Liaison Office (SAF/LL). Additionally, the burden and costs for researching and assembling documentation to support award recommendations rest with the requester. Once received, the Secretary or designated representative will determine the merit of approving the award or decoration or any other determination necessary to comply with the provisions of the statute. The Secretary or designated representative reviews all

requests using the same process and standards used in reviewing other recommendations submitted in a timely fashion.

In order to consider a request under the provisions of this law requires the following information to assist in the preparation of a recommendation:

1. A reconstructed award recommendation. Each recommendation should contain information pertaining to the Airman and his unit of assignment during the period for which the Airman is being recognized and clearly identify what award is being recommended.
2. A narrative citation of the action(s) for which the Airman is being recognized.
3. Eyewitness statements that attest to the act(s) of valor or service performed, sworn affidavits, certificates, and any other related documentation. Former commanders, leaders, and fellow comrades, who had personal knowledge of the circumstances and events relative to the recommendation, provide the best corroborating evidence.

Although Chief Corbett provided eyewitness statements, the decorations package is incomplete as he did not provide a recommendation from someone within his chain of command at the time of the act/achievement, or a signed narrative citation. Absent a complete nomination package we cannot process his request under Title 10, Section 1130, for consideration by the Air Force Decorations Board.

However, absent the required documentation, there is no other means of administrative correction, therefore Chief Corbett may submit a request to the Air Force Board for Correction of Military Records (AFBCMR) for consideration. He should complete a Department of Defense Form 149, *Application for Correction of Military Record under the Provisions of Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 1552*, and submit it along with any supporting documentation he has for consideration.

We trust this information is helpful.

Sincerely,

[signed]

TERRY L. PIM, GS-11, DAF  
Complaints Resolution & Inquiries Specialist

AWARDS PACKAGE

WITH ADDITIONS AND CORRECTIONS

COL ROY A. DAVIS

JANUARY 2022



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STINGER 41

LOST AWARD PACKAGE

SUBMITTED TO SENATOR KELLY

12 JANUARY 2022

# The AC-119 Gunship Association

FROM: Roy A. Davis, Col,  
Gunship Association/VP  
12888 W Brookhart Way  
Peoria, Arizona 85383

SUBJECT: Lost Vietnam Aircrew Awards

TO: The Honorable Mark Kelly  
United States Senator  
2201 E Camelback Rd.  
Phoenix AZ 85016

Dear Senator Kelly

January 12, 2022

**BLUF:** During the Vietnam War in 1972, awards for nine airmen were submitted and then lost. They were involved in the crash of the only AC-119 gunship shot down in the war. Sir, we need your assistance in submitting the restructured award package and ensuring that the nine brave and heroic crew members of Stinger 41 can finally be properly recognized. If approved, we are planning a presentation on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the shootdown this coming May 2. The shootdown of Stinger 41 on 2 May 1972 is perhaps the most significant event in the history of the AC-119 gunship.

**Context:** Late in 1972 award packages were submitted for the heroic actions of the aircrew members on the final flight of Stinger 41. The packages were submitted by the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Operations Officer. These packages were indorsed by the squadron commander and wing commander then submitted to higher headquarters for processing. The aircraft commander was submitted for the Medal of Honor. The remainder of the crewmembers were submitted for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Unfortunately, the packages for nine of the ten-member crew were lost in the fog of war, the deactivation of the 18<sup>th</sup> SOS (December 1972), and the ending of the US air war (January 1973). Fortunately, the package for the aircraft commander was not lost and he was awarded the Air Force Cross, posthumously, for his heroic actions on this mission.

Our initial request to your office for these lost awards occurred this past June and you subsequently submitted an inquiry to the Air Force. The recent Air Force response respectfully identified several items were needed for this request to be acted upon.

On November 11, 2021, the AC-119 Gunship Association President created an Awards Committee to gather and provide everything necessary to resubmit the award packages through your office to the Secretary of the Air Force for review and action. This package now includes everything requested in that Air Force response.

**Background:** The AC-119K was built to fly in darkness, not daylight. It was painted black and flew in circles at low altitudes and low airspeeds. Its only defense against enemy anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) fire was to see the AAA muzzle flash and tracers before they reached the aircraft. For AC-119K gunships, darkness was their friend. Stinger 41 knew the likely outcome of flying in daylight. However, they placed faith in those assigning the mission as being critically important, and worth the almost certainty they would sustain damage from enemy fire. This was evidenced by the final flight of Stinger 41 on 2 May 1972. This aircraft was lost because they did not have darkness. It was a daylight mission. AAA scanners hanging out in the slipstream were unable to see AAA muzzle flashes or tracers. Their aircraft was hit and went down.

Once on the ground, in an area saturated with the enemy forces, darkness quickly became their enemy, not their friend. Because all rescue operations cease at dark, it would be highly unlikely that the downed crew members would have been able to survive the night in this hostile environment.

Without crew members performing above and beyond the call of duty while in the air, all would have been lost in the air. Without the crew members performing above and beyond the call of duty on the ground, seven crew members would not have survived the enemy and the jungle. True heroism, valor, and extraordinary achievement were exhibited in the air and on the ground by all crew members of Stinger 41.

**Mission Summary:** On May 2, 1972 Stinger 41, an AC-119K gunship, took off around noon from Bien Hoa Airbase, Republic of Vietnam, on its final flight. They were under the control of a US Air Force forward air controller aircraft (FAC). The mission was in support of the "Battle for An Loc" (5 April to 26 June 1972). They were to assist ground troops in the defense of An Loc, the Provincial Capital, and the most heavily defended city in South Vietnam. Approximately two hours later, this mostly black aircraft, flying low and slow, on a rare daylight mission, became the only AC-119 gunship in the Vietnam War to be shot down by enemy AAA. Three of the ten crew members died in the crash and the remaining seven were rescued from the enemy and the jungle. The first to arrive at the crash site in his command helicopter was Lt Gen James F. Hollingsworth, Commander, Third Regional Assistance Command. His rescue attempt was driven off by enemy ground fire. The second rescue attempt by US Air Force Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) aircraft was successful. The CSAR Commander said this was possibly one of the largest successful CSAR missions of the war.

V/R



Roy A. Davis, Col, USAF (Ret)  
AC-119 Gunship Association  
Vice President  
royadavis@yahoo.com

PS - For a short (7:00) video recreation of a Stinger mission and jungle rescue, click on this link [LAST FLIGHT OF STINGER 41](#).

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## ORIGINAL AWARD PACKAGE CORRECTIONS REQUESTED BY AFPC

(TERRY L. PIM, GS-11, DAF)

**AFPC RESPONSE:** In order to consider a request under the provisions of this law requires the following information to assist in the preparation of a recommendation:

1. A reconstructed award recommendation. Each recommendation should contain information pertaining to the Airman, his unit of assignment during the period for which the Airman is being recognized, and clearly identify what award is being recommended.
2. A narrative citation of the action(s) for which the Airman is being recognized.
3. Eyewitness statements that attest to the act(s) of valor or service performed, sworn affidavits, certificates, and any other related documentation. Former commanders, leaders, and fellow comrades, who had personal knowledge of the circumstances and events relative to the recommendation, provide the best corroborating evidence.
4. Although Chief Corbett provided eyewitness statements, the decorations package is incomplete as he did not provide a recommendation from someone within his chain of command at the time of the act/achievement, or a signed narrative citation.

### **AWARD COMMITTEE RESPONSE (also IAW AFM 36-2806 below)**

1. Reconstructed award recommendations for each airman to include unit of assignment and what award is being recommended.
2. Narratives and citations are included with each recommendation.
3. Included sworn affidavits of: fellow crew members who had personal knowledge of the circumstances and events and were on the fateful flight; unit Operations Officer at the time the event occurred; and two of the Search and Rescue pilots.
4. The recommending official has personal first-hand knowledge of the incident.

### AFM 36-2806 CHECKLIST

Table 3.1. Recommendation Checklist. Mark "X" Supporting Documents

X	Original or reconstructed narrative justification
X	Eyewitness statement(s) attesting to the actions performed by the nominee. Statements are written in the eyewitnesses' words (not on a prepared form), signed and notarized, and contain a complete description of the nominee's actions and the contact information for the eyewitnesses. Nominees may not submit a statement supporting their own recommendation
X	Sworn affidavit(s) from individual(s) making statement(s) on behalf of nominee (if applicable)
NA	Medical documentation substantiating wound(s) (if applicable)
X	Chain of command endorsements
NA	Written concurrence (signature) of member or primary next of kin (if applicable)
X	Proposed citation
X	Other relevant documents pertaining to the unit and the act(s) to be recognized (i.e., extracts of unit records, sketches, maps, diagrams, photographs, flight records, Report of Separation – WD AGO 53-55, DD Form 214, etc.). Determinations regarding decorations are based on verifiable facts, therefore other forms of information such as letters, books, newspaper and magazine articles, and personal diaries are not considered, as they are not official documents; however, they may be included to provide additional context.
X	List of all acronyms used in nomination packet (if applicable)
X	A letter from a member of Congress requesting the review

## SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

1. Sworn Affidavits (Eye witness accounts)

Charles Pollock (OPS OFFICER)

Tom Milligan (FAC)

Lamar Smith (CSAR COMMANDER)

Lt Gen Tom Waskow (FAC)

Larry Barbee (NAV)

Craig Corbett (GUNNER)

Frank Sledzinski (LEAD GUNNER)

2. Aircrew Oral History Video Links (videos of shoot down experience).

[Barbee and Corbett](#) (4:05)

[Barkalow](#) (5:13)

[Sledzinski](#) (8:49)

3. **Photos**

4. **Aircrew Orders**

5. **Individual Flight Record (Barbee)**

6. **Event Chronology 2 May 1972**

## CHARLES POLLOCK AFFIDAVIT

April 6, 2021

From: Charles D. Pollock  
Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired  
18<sup>th</sup> SOS Operations Officer Awards  
& Decorations Officer

Subject: Missing Vietnam Distinguished Flying  
Cross for crew of Stinger 41, AC-119K  
Gunship

To: To Whom It May Concern

On March 30, 1972 the North Vietnamese invaded South Vietnam. They quickly drove south towards Saigon. The allies decided to make a stand at An Loc, a provincial capital not far north of Saigon. This was a bloody campaign with our Air Force having to do the heavy lifting due to the drawdown of American troops as we tried to extricate ourselves from South Vietnam.

On May 2, 1972 Stinger 41 was assigned to a daylight mission at An Loc. Stinger gunships (AC-119K) were old and slow. A very effective aircraft at night for truck hunting down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and for close air support for friendly troops under attack. Flying low altitude in the daylight was not a mission it should have been used for. The crew demonstrated bravery and valor that day. Every man climbed on the doomed airplane to do their duty. Not a single crew member asked to be relieved.

Despite the conditions, including flying at a dangerous 3500 feet due to low clouds, the crew rolled in on the assigned target. They came under 37mm AAA attack almost immediately. They could not try to take evasive action because they could not see the tracers very well due it being daylight. After several orbits they were badly hit. They lost several feet of wing and an engine. The pilot and copilot heroically maintained enough control and with the efforts of the IO (jump master) 7 crew members were able to bailout.

The entire crew distinguished themselves by extraordinary achievement in combat on May 2, 1972 at An Loc, South Vietnam. As Awards and Decorations Officer for the 18th Special Operations Squadron at the time of the Stinger 41 shoot down, it was my honor to submit the aircraft commander, Captain Courtney, for the Congressional Medal of Honor and the rest of the crew for The Distinguished Flying Cross. Captain Courtney was ultimately awarded the Air Force Cross. I coordinated the submissions with our squadron commander and our wing commander. I submitted the packages up the chain of command in August 1972 at Nakhon Phanom Royal Air Force Base, Thailand. Crew members on Stinger 41 were:

Capt. Terence Courtney, KIA, Pilot (Awarded Air Force Cross.)  
Lt. Jim Barkalow, Co-pilot  
Capt David Slagle, KIA, Navigator  
SSgt. "Yogi" Bare, Flight Engineer



Lt Col, "Tash" Taschioglou, Forward looking infrared (FLIR) Operator  
Lt. Larry Barbee, Night observation scope (NOS) Operator  
SSgt. "Ski" Sledzinski, Lead Gunner SSgt.  
Dale Iman, Gunner  
AIC Craig Corbett, Gunner  
SSgt. Ken Brown, KIA, Illuminator (IO) Operator

It appears that these important awards got lost in the fog of war as we were closing out combat operations leading to our cease fire on January 27, 1975.

Please approve this award for the survivors and the families of our departed heroes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charles D. Pollock', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Charles D. Pollock

Lieutenant Colonel, USAF, Retired  
[camppollock@icloud.com](mailto:camppollock@icloud.com) 704.575.4607

## TOM MILLIGAN AFFIDAVIT

To Whom It May Concern  
AC-119 Stinger 41  
May 2, 1972

The following is a narrative of events of that day as written by Thomas J. Milligan, Lt. Col. (Ret.) USAF. On May 2, 1972, I was a Forward Air Controller (FAC), call sign SUND OG 29, assigned to the 21<sup>st</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron, Sundog FACs, at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Saigon, South Vietnam. As an Air Force captain, I was a highly experienced FAC and was the unit's assistant operations officer for training. I had a team of FAC instructors working with me and we evaluated and trained every new FAC coming into our unit. In addition, we often briefed new units flying in the region because as FACs we were the most qualified to provide new units information about enemy disposition and ground to air threats. I had just a week earlier flown to Bien Hoa Air Base and briefed and flown with the newly assigned HH-3 Jolly Green unit about threats in the area around An Loc.

The morning of May 2 was very typical. I went into the squadron at about 0800 and began my preparations for the day's flight and to complete some routine office paperwork. I knew that I was flying a FAC mission to support air strikes in and around the city of An Loc. The city was under siege by a determined large force of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong. In fact, there were three enemy divisions (5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup>) of about 35,000 total surrounding the city. An Loc was situated on Route 13 which was the key to taking Saigon. At that time, the city was being supplied only by air. There were about 7,500 South Vietnamese troops in An Loc and a small number of American advisors. The North Vietnamese were focused on taking the city which would have opened the way to Saigon. To stop the dropping of supplies into the city, the NVA had built up and very formidable anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) force which made flying over and around An Loc, very dangerous.

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gunners were working hard to find the enemy AAA positions but that he would only fly one more circle and then move off. (The rounds coming up at the AC-119 and exploding around it reminded me of the movies taken of our B-17s flying over Germany in WWII. The sky was filled with exploding 37mm rounds.)

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I stayed in the area of the crash long after the helicopters had departed just in case another crewmember was alive. After about an hour, I started my return to Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Once I had debriefed with my squadron, I went to the hospital where I had the privilege of meeting the surviving members of the crew of Sting 41.



Lt. Col. (RET) USAF

## LAMAR SMITH AFFIDAVIT

Statement Regarding Stinger 41 CSAR Mission, May 2, 1972, An Loc, Viet Nam

Submitted by Lamar C. Smith

On May 2, 1972 I was a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant USAF pilot assigned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Operations Squadron, located at Nakhon Phanom, Thailand. Our unit equipment was the venerable A-1 Skyraider which was perfectly suited to the special operations missions assigned to us and especially the combat search and rescue (CSAR) on-scene command role. We flew CSAR with the well-known Sandy tactical call sign. On this date I had been in country for 8 months and was both qualified as a Sandy lead and was experienced having directed several such CSAR efforts or portions thereof. Captain Dennis Morgan, my wingman, and I received the scramble order about 1450 hours as an AC-119 Gunship, call sign Stinger 41, had been shot down near the city of An Loc, about a 20-minute flight north of Bien Hoa. We were airborne in 10 minutes as were the 2 Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters on alert at nearby Tan Son Nhut airbase. During the flight to An Loc, the aircraft commander of the lead Jolly Green and I conferred and received a briefing from the excellent forward air controller Sundog 29, I know now was Captain Tom Milligan. Sundog 29 was controlling the Stinger 41 fire mission, witnessed the fatal AAA hits and followed Stinger 41 west as it descended and the crew bailed out.

Upon arrival in the area and after a quick low altitude "tour" conducted by Sundog 29, I assumed on scene command. The first order of business was to assess the presence of enemy troops in the area. Here I trolled for enemy ground fire by presenting an overwhelmingly tempting target for them and with the canopy open, flying low and slow, they could not resist. In the cockpit I could hear the AK-47 reports and see the muzzle flashes. I found there were many enemy troops in various concentrations throughout the area of the now 6 survivors. One of the 7 survivors had already been picked up by an Army helicopter, but only one as the ground fire was too intense for additional attempts.

Each CSAR mission was fluid as you never knew how challenging the tactical situation would be. The challenges where 6 survivors not the usual one or two. Only two A-1s versus the usual 4 to protect the very vulnerable hovering Jolly Green. But the main challenge was the limited time before sunset, as we had zero night pickup capability. It was clear that if we did not recover all these survivors before night fall, they would invariably be located and captured or killed that night.

As my wingman and I used some of our soft ordnance to deliver against the 3-4 most obvious concentrations of enemy troops so as deny them freedom to search for the survivors, I discussed the dangers with the two Jolly Green Giant aircraft commanders. The risk to them was high, but they insisted we should make the recovery attempts under these circumstances. This courageous

spirit on their part put into motion a critical requirement that all the moving parts would have to mesh precisely like gears in transmission. A major common denominator of this requirement was for the survivors to pay attention, communicate fully and efficiently, and to follow verbal direction from me and the Jolly Green crews precisely and instantly. The stress level was high for all involved, yet the 6 survivors could not have performed better.

Lance C Smith

Dec 9, 2021

## LT GEN THOMAS WASKOW AFFIDAVIT

To Whom It May Concern

AC-119 Stinger 41, 2 May 1972

Narrative of the events of the loss of Stinger 41, on 2 May 1972 as recorded by Lt Gen Tom Waskow USAF (Retired).

On 2 May 1972, I was a Forward Air Controller (FAC), callsign SUND OG 40, assigned to the 21<sup>st</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron, SUND OG FAC, at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. We flew the Cessna 0-2A, a close air support heavily modified Cessna 337. As a First Lieutenant, this was my first operational assignment following graduation from Undergraduate Pilot Training having volunteered for a combat assignment. At this point I was one of the most experienced FACS in the squadron having been assigned to forward operating locations at Phan Rang, Nha Trang and operations with the Special Operations Command at Ban Me Thuot East. Following the start of North Vietnam Army (NVA) invasion of South Vietnam during the Easter Offensive, I was deployed from Nha Trang to join the SUND OG FACS and provide air support in defense of the town of An Loc. I completed my combat tour in November 1972 having flown 282 combat sorties and completing 903 hours of combat flying. On 2 May 1972, I flew a 4.8- hour sortie (4.0-day VFR, 0.8-night VFR) in support of the STINGER 41 Search and Rescue (SAR).

The tempo in SUND OG operations on the morning of 2 May continued to increase as the NVA and Vietcong (VC) forces continued their siege of An Loc. The NVA's 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> infantry divisions supported by VC sappers and the 271<sup>st</sup> Anti-Aircraft Regiment totaling nearly 35,500 troops were committed to annihilate the 5,000 Army of Vietnam (ARVN) and Popular Forces (similar to our National Guard) forces. The NVA goal was to occupy An Loc, the provincial capital of Long Binh Province, by early May and continue down Highway 13 to capture Saigon by the end of the month. The fact that the NVA committed a full Air Defense regiment including track mounted 37mm, 23 mm, 14.7 mm and 51 caliber weapons to the fight was an acknowledgement that they were determined to succeed in their strategic goal. The ARVN forces supported by US Army advisor teams and American Airpower were determined not to let this happen.

That day, I was fragged to work the area East of Highway 13 from a line North of Hill 169 to a line just North of Quan Loi airfield. During my previous experience with Special Operations assets, I flew out of Quan Loi conducting insert operations in Cambodia, and my knowledge of the airfield compound (which had been overrun by the NVA) was critical to destroying the air defense units that the NVA had deployed there. As there was evidence that the NVA was repositioning infantry units to begin their final thrust into An Loc, our US Army advisors in An Loc needed us to focus on the eastern approaches to the city. During my Intelligence prebriefing, I was surprised to hear that the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron's AC-119Ks that were deployed to Bien Hoa, were going to continue to fly daylight combat sorties over An Loc in one of the most lethal anti-aircraft environments in South Vietnam. Having flown multiple missions in the vulnerable 0-2A, the SUND OG FACS had expressed concerns for the safety of the STINGER gunships and recommended that they be used after sunset only. For that day's

mission, SUND OG 29, Capt. Tom Milligan, was fragged to support STINGER 41 on a priority mission during the afternoon Time Over Target.

Takeoff, climb and enroute weapons check were all normal, and as I checked in with our controlling agency, III DASC (Direct Air Support Center) call sign PAWNEE TARGET, I was informed that STINGER 41 had checked in and was entering the target area with SUND OG 29. Upon arriving on station, I checked in the US Army advisor (EXTRA 72) in An Loc and was told that there were US Army Cobra gunships from F Troop/ 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (Air) near Quan Loi and they would be working in the area. I noted that the density of anti-aircraft activity began to increase. The frequency of 37 mm AAA was increasing with airbursts near the STINGER orbit. With every orbit, the accuracy of the airbursts near the AC-119K was increasing until I observed a large explosion between the right reciprocal engine and the jet engine on the right wing. At that point the fire intensity increased sending flames well beyond the right tail boom. I immediately changed to SUND OG 29's frequency and simultaneously heard STINGER 41's MAYDAY calls on UHF Guard frequency. STINGER 41 had received a mortal blow.

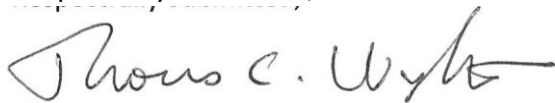
Immediately, I coordinated with SUND OG 29 and contacted PAWNEE TARGET to launch the SAR forces who were sitting alert at Bien Hoa. I then saw STINGER 41 begin to descend and begin a slow roll to the right followed by repeated attempts to level the wings. I noted an object that appeared to be the flare dispenser thrown out of the back of the aircraft followed by the first crewmember whose parachute opened quickly. Due to the prevailing western winds, the first crewmember, STINGER 41G, began to drift back toward Highway 13 and the concentrated location of enemy forces. There was a delay in the exit of the following crew members, and I identified 6 parachutes (although there were 7 survivors, I never saw the last crew member bail out he was so low.) STINGER 41 then began its final roll to the right and hit the ground at a 90 degree attitude followed by a large explosion at impact. At this point, SUND OG 29 had descended to low altitude to locate the survivors and I turned my attention to STINGER 41G's slow parachute descent. I contacted PAWNEE TARGET and directed them to keep me posted on the progress of the SAR forces, and to scramble the alert A-37s from the 8<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron at Bien Hoa. My concern was the history of NVA establishing Flack Traps to use downed airmen as bait for the ensuing SAR forces.

As STINGER 41G descended below the trees, I made note of his location and began to coordinate with EXTRA 72 to determine if there were any US Army aviation assets available to assist in the SAR pickups for the downed airmen. It was a race against time and I knew that we had to act quickly. He notified me that there was an Army UH-1, SHARKFISH 37, in the area and he gave me the contact information. I called SHARKFISH 37 and vectored him toward the location of STINGER 41G. In spite of the heavy ground fire, I directed the UH-1 into a pickup position and unfortunately, the trees were too high for him to land. He extended a rope to STINGER 41G who tied the rope to his harness and was evacuated to a safer clearing where he was picked up by a US Army Dustoff, medical support helicopter. At this time, I was notified that the NVA was beginning to move troops to the west toward the crash site and the location of the survivors. When the alert A-37s (Hawk 01 and 02) arrived, I immediately began to direct them against the advancing NVA to enable the safe rescue of STINGER 41G.

I then coordinated with SUND OG 29 to act as his radio relay for the arrival of the SAR package of SANDY 07 flight and JOLLY GREEN 23 and 33. Upon arrival, the SAR package then successfully recovered the 6 remaining STINGER 41 crew members. SUND OG 29 and I then remained on station in an attempt to determine if there were any more survivors well into darkness until fuel exhaustion forced both of us to return to Tan Son Nhut. Following our return to base, SUND OG 29 and I were escorted to the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital in Saigon for an emotional reunion with the 6 survivors who had been picked up by the JOLLY GREENs.

As I reflect on the events on 2 May 1972, I am reminded of the importance of our Air Force Command and Control responsibility to act on the advice of the aircrews who fly the day-to-day missions. I am still surprised that the AC-119K's were fragged to fly daylight missions over the AAA environment above An Loc. As FACS, we were intimately familiar with the environment and used every asset at our disposal to support the ground commanders. We had assets available to use for Troops in Contact situations where the precise use of airpower was required. We recommended against repeated daylight exposure for the STINGER crews. It was inappropriate to expose a highly vulnerable combat asset such as the AC-119K to the daytime environment over An Loc. Yet these brave crews performed their tasks in an extraordinary manner. I fully support any further recognition that might be bestowed on these great American crew members. They truly performed above and beyond the call of duty on that day over the town of An Loc.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Thomas C. Waskow", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas C. Waskow, Lt Gen USAF, (Retired)

9517 Northdowns Lane, Huntersville, NC

503.710.4689



## LARRY BARBEE AFFIDAVIT

Date: 3/11/21

To: Whom it may concern

From: Major Larry D. Barbee, USAF (Ret)

RE: The purpose of this letter is to describe the 2 May, 1972 mission of AC-119K gunship, tail # 826, call-sign Stinger 41, of the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing. Stinger 41 was lost to accurate anti-aircraft fire while repeatedly attempting to target enemy forces surrounding South Vietnamese forces and American military advisors.

Our gunship's mission was to fly from Bien Hoa Airbase, RVN to provide close air support to South Vietnamese forces and American advisors surrounded and under attack in the city of An Loc, a province capital north of Saigon, Vietnam. We would target North Vietnamese forces, including armor, artillery, and infantry. Significant enemy anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) defenses had been reported, and our squadron aircraft had been engaged by AAA in the area.

During our mission briefing the Intelligence Officer told us that an estimated force of 30,000 enemy troops surrounded An Loc and that if the enemy took the town, they would be set to head straight down Highway 13 to Saigon. It was critical to hold the town.

This was a daylight mission which eliminated the advantages of our AC-119K, which was optimized to fly during the hours of darkness. The lower fuselage and under-wings were painted black, and because our Vulcan cannons and mini-guns were mounted to fire only from the left side of the cargo bay, we flew in a continuous left hand orbit at low altitude and slow speed around our targets.

Our crew consisted of ten persons: Pilot and Co-Pilot, Flight Engineer, three Navigator/Sensor Operators: Navigator, Forward Looking Infrared Operator (FLIR), and Night Observation Sight (NOS) Operator, three Gunners who maintained and loaded the weapons, and the Illuminator Operator (IO) who handled the flare launcher and large spotlight.

The Gunners and the Illuminator Operator also served an especially important but hazardous duty as scanners to spot enemy ground fire. They strapped themselves into the aircraft's open doors and leaned out into the slipstream to detect gun muzzle flashes and tracers. They reported the ground fire to the pilots and directed "breaks" to maneuver the aircraft away from the paths of the anti-aircraft projectiles. The IO also served as the "Jumpmaster" in case of bailout. He would check the crewmembers to insure they were ready for bailout and to inform the cockpit crew when all crewmembers had jumped from the cargo compartment.

After takeoff, Stinger 41 proceeded north to the vicinity of An Loc and checked in with forward air controllers. The airspace was saturated with other aircraft lining up to deliver ordnance. While waiting for our target assignment, we synchronized our computers, sensors and guns to align them for best accuracy.

Shortly a forward air controller brought us up on frequency with a US Army controller on the ground at An Loc. He gave us a target of an enemy "recoilless rifle" at the edge of the jungle tree line firing into the town. We turned from our holding area and headed in.

An Loc was a devastated shambles of streets and buildings. Burned tanks and vehicles littered the streets, and structures were collapsed rubble piles. The ground controller stated there should be some marker panels in an open lot near the school. When we found the school, there were no panels to be seen. The controller said he would send someone out to put panels down.

In the meantime, we established an orbit on the east side of town. Abruptly a number of antiaircraft shells burst near us at our approximate altitude. We continued on around our orbit. Although the scanners were at a disadvantage because they couldn't see the tracers in the daylight, they remained exposed in their positions and called out air traffic and other information to the pilots. Despite the distraction of the bursting shells, Lt. Colonel Taschioglou, the FLIR Operator, selected and steadily held a reference point in the town so that we could always return to our orbit and quickly resume firing parameters, even as we changed our flight path in an attempt to throw off the AAA tracking us.

The ground controller came back and said that the panels were out. I found them with my binoculars, but they were not the same color he described. We informed the controller of the discrepancy.

Meanwhile, we came around the eastern side of the orbit and were again bracketed by the AAA bursts. This time I could hear the shrapnel rattling on the airplane skin. Once again, our scanners, crouching or standing in the open doors and battling the slipstream, tried to narrow down the area where the fire was coming from.

In our next orbit we saw that the marker panels had not yet been changed. Again, the flak bursts surrounded us and there was more rattling on the aircraft skin. The pilot asked me to disconnect from the intercom and go back to the scanner to see if he could point out the gun's location. I did but during the time I was crouched at the door with the scanner, the gun did not fire again. I went back to my position in the front of the cargo compartment and told the pilot that the scanner believed the gun was to our east and outside of our orbit.

Once again, we couldn't confirm the marker panel was the correct one, but we persisted in attempting to locate the enemy. The gun fired again and had more near misses. On the intercom the pilot and Navigator, who acted as mission coordinator, decided that we would go around one more time, and if the gun fired again, we would leave the orbit, move away, and then come back in again. Unfortunately, as we came back into the east side of the orbit, the guns fired again and this time we felt at least three solid thumps as the shells impacted the right wing and fuselage.

The voices on the intercom were very deliberate. I heard someone calmly say: "We're hit." Another voice: "The right jet's quit."

Another voice: "The right recip's on fire."

The Navigator gave the pilot the heading to a safe area and began to broadcast "Mayday" on the Guard Channel.

I looked toward the back of the cargo compartment. It appeared that there were flames in the interior of the fuselage. I grabbed a fire extinguisher and went as far to the rear as the interphone cord reached, and handed the extinguisher to a gunner. He looked at me oddly and put it aside. I then realized that the flames were not on the inside but were streaming back from the engine and wing, all the way past the tail and being reflected into the interior of the aircraft.

I went back to my position and stowed the night observation sight and stood by. Shortly I heard the pilot come over the intercom and calmly say "Prepare to abandon the aircraft." I put on my chest pack parachute and tightened my harness. Lt. Colonel Taschioglou secured the jump seat which could have blocked the path down from the cockpit to the cargo compartment and escape by parachute.

Then came the words; "Abandon the aircraft."

I could see activity at the back of the cargo compartment. Our large flare launcher had been jettisoned and the Illuminator Operator was standing facing the front of the aircraft.

He was deliberately checking everyone over. By the time I reached the back, I didn't see anyone left in the cargo compartment except the Illuminator Operator. He gestured for me to exit, so I grasped the D- Ring and stepped out the door. That was the last time I saw him,

When the tail of the aircraft passed over me, I pulled the ripcord and eventually the parachute opened. On the way down I had a glimpse of the aircraft. Its right landing gear was down, parts were flying off the wing, fire was streaming from the wing beyond the tail, and the plane was starting to roll right and the nose was dropping. I did not see any other chutes behind me.

All the training on life support and escape and evasion came back almost automatically. The parachute descent was smooth but short as I fell through some trees. I was out of the chute in an instant and moved off through the trees to find a hiding place. The sounds of bombs, artillery and small arms filled the air.

Our airborne FAC had followed us out and watched us parachute. He did a very professional job to efficiently coordinate our rescue. He plotted each survivor's location and called for the rescue A1H aircraft and the Jolly Green Giant rescue helicopters.

Our effective crew coordination and personal discipline stand out in my mind for making our rescue possible. There was no panic on the ground and no hesitation in cooperating with the rescue forces. Survival radio discipline was excellent. The first person to bail out was rescued by two American Army helicopters under enemy fire.

Sadly, we lost three of our comrades: the pilot who maintained aircraft control to give us an opportunity to bail out, the navigator who had been such a calming and efficient voice in the cockpit and over the intercom, and the illuminator operator, who remained at his post until the last of us cleared the cargo compartment

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Larry D. Barbee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Larry D. Barbee, Major  
USAF (Retired)

## RICHARD CORBETT AFFIDAVIT

From: Richard C. Corbett, CMSgt, USAF (Ret)

Subject: Purpose of this document is to describe the 2  
May 1972 mission of an AC-119K gunship, tail  
# 826, call sign, Stinger 41, of the 18th Special  
Operations Squadron, 56th Special  
Operations Wing, Nakhon Phanom RTAFB

To: Whom It May Concern

Our mission was an urgent need requirement to fly from Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and provide daylight close air support to RVN forces and their US Advisors who were surrounded in the Provincial Capital of An Loc, some 60 miles north of Saigon and under direct attack by an estimated 30,000 North Vietnam troops supported by armor, artillery, infantry and anti-aircraft defenses. The belief was if An Loc fell Saigon would be next.

A daylight mission minimizes the advantages of the AC-119K as the gunship is optimized to fly in hours of darkness in a steady orbit no higher than 6500 feet above ground level (AGL) and no lower than 2500 feet AGL where our six gatling guns were effective and on board sensors could better find targets, scanners could provide better Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) evasive break calls and the black underside of the aircraft would afford better concealment. This knowledge along with reports from other Stinger crews who previously flew the early, daylight missions over An Loc of accurate AAA threat and at least one aircraft returning to base with possible battle damage concerned our crew.

We briefed that the more experienced gunners would scan since the AAA threat was high. Being the newest crew member, I would man the guns. We all discussed different mission aspects to ensure we had all possible concerns covered.

After takeoff, we proceeded to the target area but were told to hold short due the multiple aircraft on scene over An Loc. We used this time to bore sight guns and sensors which would ensure our systems were the most effective and thus less time exposed to AAA threats.

Once cleared into the target area, we joined up with an O-2 forward air control (FAC) aircraft, Sundog 29, who would assist us locating targets. We entered the target area at 4700 feet AGL but the weather forced us down to 3500 feet AGL. The FAC brought us up on the radio with a US Army ground controller on scene, who directed us to target an enemy recoilless rifle. He stated marker panels were deployed to assist in target identification. The Night Observation Scope (NOS) Operator identified the area but there were no panels. While that was being rectified, we established an orbit to the east side of An Loc. Just then the Illuminator Operator

(IO) stated we were being shot at by 37mm AAA and he could not see tracers until it was too late to react but we could hear the rounds passing and could see the air bursts above. All scanners tried to determine where the guns were and continued to scan for tracers and muzzle fire. Each time the altitude changed, I would readjust the weapons for azimuth and elevation.

When I wasn't changing the gun settings and 1st Lt Barbee was waiting on proper target identification, we were aiding the IO in scanning for what was very accurate AAA.

The cloud layer above was dissipating so the pilots were able climb to 4500 feet AGL and still be able to acquire the targets but the AAA was still accurate and a second 37mm started firing at us. We could hear the shrapnel from the exploding rounds raining on the aircraft skin. We had made four orbits and the pilot told us we would make one more and if we could not find the gun or our target, we would exit the area and try another approach.

It was on this final orbit at when at least three rounds of 37mm AAA hit our right wing, wheel well and reciprocating engine. We could hear and feel it as the IO stated we are hit and on fire. Our right jet engine also quit. Flames were trailing to the rear crew entrance door. With only the two left engines running, and the aircraft still on fire, the plane was fast becoming uncontrollable and losing altitude.

The pilot and co-pilot where both using full left rudder and aileron control trying to keep the aircraft flying. The Flight Engineer was working with the pilots going through the emergency procedures to try and get the fire out and keep the aircraft airborne. The Navigator was calling MAYDAY and providing a safe bailout heading to the pilots. It was then the pilot ordered us to "Abandon aircraft!" The Lead Gunner had pushed the flare launcher out of the aircraft to allow the crew to bail out. The IO was acting as jump master checking everyone over to ensure everyone was properly in parachutes as they abandoned the aircraft. Once eight crew members were out, the IO would inform the pilot and exit the aircraft. Throughout this mission, the whole crew maintained exceptional crew coordination, ensured backup was available when and where needed and each crew member remained calm and professional. Each demonstrated gallantry under severe conditions and very accurate and deadly AAA. Everyone performed well during the emergency procedures and egress.

When we bailed out, Sundog 29 immediately became on scene commander and started search and rescue (SAR) of survivors. Suddenly, US Army helicopters made a pass overhead firing rockets and machine guns. Unnerving, but they were attempting to rescue our lead gunner who was being shot at by a machine gun very close to his landing position.

We started checking in and vectoring the Sundog 29 over our positions. I saw two enemy running past me. Shortly afterwards two A-1H Sandy aircraft arrived. Sundog showed Sandy our positions and Sandy made some low, slow passes to draw fire. They laid down smoke and asked Stinger 41 Delta and India to flash them with mirrors. Delta radioed the sun was too low and the light too poor for mirrors to be effective.

Sandy then asked Stinger 41 Alpha to come up on radio. When Alpha did not come up Sandy asked for the Stinger closest to the wreckage to come up. Sandy stated no one was coming up on the radio and asked any Stinger come up on radio. That led to several Stingers coming up simultaneously. Sandy reverted to the alphabet and called for Bravo to 'pop smoke' which the Co-Pilot did. All calls after that were for the next closest to 'pop smoke' until all survivors were on the two HH-3 Jolly Green aircraft. It took four and a half hours from the time we were

The SAR team complemented the crew on the coordination and discipline during the SAR and said it was the smoothest multi-crew SAR they had seen. We assist in a smooth and rapid extraction. This was also the largest and most successful SAR operation in Southeast Asia (SEA). This Stinger 41 was the last daylight gunship mission. Sadly, we lost three comrades all of whom were true

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Richard C. Corbett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Richard C. Corbett  
professionals.

CMSgt, USAF (Ret)

## FRANK SLEDZINSKI AFFIDAVIT

Date: 05/02/2021

To: Whom It May Concern

From: Francis J. Sledzinski, SSgt, USAF (Ret)

RE: Purpose of this document is to describe the 2 May 1972 mission of an AC-119K gunship, Tail #826, call sign Stinger 41, of the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing, RTAFB

Our mission was to fly from Bien Hoa Air Base, Republic of Vietnam (RVN) and provide daylight close air support to RVN forces and their US Advisors who were surrounded in the Provincial Capital of An Loc, some 60 miles north of Saigon, and under direct attack by an estimated 35,000 North Vietnamese troops supported by armor, artillery, infantry, and anti-aircraft defenses. The belief was that if An Loc fell, Saigon would be next.

A daylight mission minimizes the advantages of the AC-119K as it is optimized to fly in hours of darkness when onboard sensors could better find targets, scanners could provide better Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) evasive break calls, and the black painted underside of the aircraft would afford better concealment.

Our crew of ten consisted of:

- Capt Terrence Courtney, Killed In Action (KIA), Pilot (Awarded Air Force Cross)
- 1Lt Jimmy Barkalow, Co-Pilot
- Capt David Slagle, KIA, Navigator
- SSgt Allen Bare, Flight Engineer
- Lt Col Byron Taschioglou, Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR) Operator
- 1Lt. Larry Barbee, Night Observation Scope (NOS) Operator
- SSgt Francis Sledzinski, Lead Gunner
- SSgt Delanor Iman, Gunner
- AIC Richard Corbett, Gunner
- SSgt Kenneth Brown, KIA, Illuminator Operator (IO)

After takeoff, Stinger 41 proceeded to the target area, but was told to hold short due to the multiple aircraft on scene over An Loc. We used this time to bore sight guns and sensors on some destroyed trucks. Having all systems bore-sighted together would increase our accuracy and lessen our exposure to AAA threats.

Once cleared into the target area, we joined up with an O-2 forward air control (FAC), call sign Sundog

29. He would assist us in spotting targets. We entered the target area at 4700 feet Above Ground Level (AGL), but the weather forced us down to 3500 feet AGL. The FAC brought us up on the radio with a US Army ground controller on scene. His task would be to prioritize and direct our firepower to each target. He stated the first target, a recoilless rifle, was attacking his position was marked with panels to assist in target identification. The recoilless rifle was shooting at a school where the ground controller was held up. The NOS identified the school but there were no panels were in place to identify the target. While that was being rectified, we established an orbit to the east side of An Loc. Just then the IO stated we were being fired upon by 37mm AAA. We could not see tracers until it was too late to react, but we could hear the rounds passing, and could see the air bursts above. The scanners tried to determine where The guns were and continued to scan for tracers and muzzle fire. At one point two 1 Lt Barbee and AIC Corbett were aiding the IO in identifying what was becoming very accurate.

The cloud layer above was dissipating, allowing us to climb to 4500 feet AGL. However, the AAA was still accurate, and AIC Corbett spotted a second 37mm AAA firing at us. We could hear the shrapnel from the exploding rounds raining down on the aircraft skin.

I was the first to bail out, and as the tail boom passed, pulled my "D" ring. My chute opened up and I saw the aircraft below me burning and going down. Other chutes started appearing from the stricken aircraft. The aircraft started to roll and exploded as it hit the ground. It was now very quiet and I could hear this popping sound. Looking up, small holes were appearing in my parachute canopy. NVA soldiers were shooting at me and I steered my chute away from them. Landing in a tree right above the ground, I unhooked from the chute and crawled to a fallen log. I got on my radio and listened for others in my crew to come up on radio.

Sundog 29 kept flying over the area. About 15 minutes later as the FAC was over me once more, I radioed telling him he was over my position. He came back over me and we made eye contact and waved. I told him there was heavy ground fire around my position. He said that Sandy search and rescue team were on their way. At the same time, some Huey helicopters came in with rockets and machine gun fire. The FAC said they would be my cover for the next few hours. I was told to pop smoke because a Huey was coming in to rescue me, but it was then hit by ground fire and it aborted the rescue. After about 40 minutes a second helicopter came in with a dangling rope which I hooked up to. We went approximately 200 feet up while taking heavy ground fire.

We flew to a fire support base where we landed and I was cut loose from the helicopter. A few minutes later another Army helicopter came to take me to the 1<sup>st</sup> Air CAV base. The 1<sup>st</sup> Air CAV Commanding Officer wanted to talk to me. After arriving at the base, I saw the first helicopter that responded to my rescue sitting and still smoking and leaking fluids. One of the pilots told me it was the Commander's helicopter and he was flying it during my first rescue attempt. I met the General who showed me maps of where we were shot down. He asked where we thought the 37mm AAA was located. I told him we thought it was two guns, but could not locate them. He said his pilots would fly me back to Bien Hoa Air Base.



Francis J. Sledzinski





AC-119K STINGER GUNSHIP

Lithograph by Darby Perrin



O-2 SKYMASTER FORWARD AIR CONTROL AIRCRAFT



A-1 SKYRAIDER SEARCH AND RESCUE AIRCRAFT



STINGER 41 CREW MEMBERS AFTER BEING RESCUED

Left to right:

Tasch Taschioglou, Larry Barbee, Yogi Bare Heading  
to the hospital





SURVIVORS OF THE STINGER 41 SHOOT DOWN ON 2 MAY 1972

Top Row: Yogi Bare, Tasch Taschioglou, Ski Sledzinski, Jimmy Barkalow  
Front row: Craig Corbett, Dale Iman, Larry Barbee



SURVIVORS OF THE STINGER 41 SHOOT DOWN ON 2 MAY 1972

Top Row: Larry Barbee, Craig Corbett, Ski Sledzinski, Tasch Taschioglou  
Front Row: Yogi Bare, Dale Iman, Jimmy Barkalow

Aircraft is the A1-E flown by Sandy lead involved in Stinger 41 rescue



APRIL 2021 SURVIVORS FORTY-NINE YEARS LATER

FAC Tom Milligan, Gunner Ski Sledzinski, SAR Lamar Smith, Gunner Craig Corbett, Nav Larry Barbee

# AIRCREW FLIGHT ORDER (Front)

REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION FOR TEMPORARY TRAVEL - MILITARY				
TO: 56th Cmbt Spt Gp/HCA APO San Francisco 96310		FROM: 18th Spec Ops Sq/CC APO San Francisco 96310		TELEPHONE 3411
The following individual(s) will proceed on TDY:				
1. GRADE	2. LAST NAME, FIRST, MIDDLE INITIAL SEE REVERSE	3. SSAN	4. ORGANIZATION	5. SECURITY CLEARANCE
6. EFFECTIVE ON OR ABOUT 29 Apr 72		7. APPROXIMATE NO. OF DAYS (Indicate travel time) 20		8. <input type="checkbox"/> VARIATIONS AUTHORIZED
9. DAILY	10. LEAVE ADDRESS		11. ITINERARY FROM: Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand TO: Bien Hoa Afd, RVN  RETURN TO: Nakhon Phanom RTAFB, Thailand	
12. PURPOSE OF TDY Operational Support of Forward Operating Location				
13. IF TDY IS OF THIRTY OR MORE DAYS DURATION, WITHIN THE UNITED STATES, THEN: PURSUANT TO AFR 30-16, YOU OR YOUR AGENCY WILL REPORT TO THE BASE HOUSING OFFICE/HOUSING REFERRAL OFFICE SERVING YOUR TDY STATION BEFORE ENTERING INTO ANY RENTAL OR LEASE AGREEMENT FOR OFF-BASE HOUSING.				
14. POC TRAVEL WITHIN CONUS OR WITHIN OVERSEA AREA: A. <input type="checkbox"/> TPC. TRAVEL TIME BY MOST ECONOMICAL CARRIER AVAILABLE IS _____ DAYS. TRAVEL TIME IN EXCESS IS CHARGED TO LEAVE AUTH IN ITEM 9. B. <input type="checkbox"/> TPA. THIS MODE HAS BEEN DETERMINED MORE ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT.				
15. EXCESS BAGGAGE AUTHORIZED PER PERSON: POUNDS 100 PIECES		16. APPROVED _____ IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF AFR 30-6 FOR ALL NECESSARY TRAVEL EXPENDITURES INCLUDING \$ _____ FOR REGISTRATION AND/OR ADMISSION FEES. (Items 18 Through 22 Apply For Overseas Travel)		17. BAS RATE (Almon Only) ** \$1.46 *0
18. NAME OF DESIGNATED OFFICIAL COURIER		19. AIR MOVEMENT DESIGNATOR ASSIGNED IS		20. <input type="checkbox"/> PROPER AREA CLEARANCES HAVE BEEN OBTAINED
21. MODES OF TRANSPORTATION AUTHORIZED FOR TRAVEL TO, FROM, AND WITHIN OVERSEA AREA: A. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY AIRCRAFT B. <input type="checkbox"/> AIRCRAFT C. <input type="checkbox"/> AIRCRAFT (First Class Accommodations) D. <input type="checkbox"/> RAIL E. <input type="checkbox"/> BUS				
22. C. PRIOR TO TRAVEL OVERSEAS COMPLY WITH THE FOREIGN CLEARANCE GUIDE FOR PASSPORT, IMMUNIZATION, AND CLEARANCE REQUIREMENTS. D. RETURN AIR MOVEMENT DESIGNATOR WILL BE OBTAINED FROM THE LOCAL AREA PRIORITY ISSUING AGENCY.				
23. REMARKS Claim for reimbursement of travel expenses will be submitted within five working days upon completion of travel. Military air is directed when available. Area clearance not required, PACAF Reg 30-5.  <div style="text-align: right;">18 SOS (CC)</div>				
24. DATE 28 Apr 72		25. ORDERS ISSUING/APPROVING OFFICIAL (Typed Name and Title) ROBERT H. BUSS, Colonel, USAF Deputy Commander for Operations		26. SIGNATURE <i>Robert H Buss</i>
27. AUTHORITY AFM 36-11, AFM 39-11		28. SPECIAL ORDER NO. T-1079		29. DATE 28 Apr 72
30. DESIGNATION AND LOCATION OF HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE HQ 56TH CMBT SPT GP (PACAF) APO SAN FRANCISCO 96310		31. EXPENSES CHARGEABLE TO ACCOUNTING CLASSIFICATION 5723400 302 7458 413090 02 407 409 (900) 5527700 OR# 1657 CIC 4 4 274 0230 527700 <i>Cwin</i>		
32. DISTRIBUTION 15 - Individual 8 - CRFO 2 - Acct & Fin 1 - 13th AF APO 96274 1 - Orgn 1 - SCW 1 - File		33. SIGNATURE ELEMENT OF ORDERS AUTHENTICATING OFFICIAL <i>Kenneth G. Robinson</i> KENNETH G. ROBINSON, MSgt, USAF Asst Chief of Administration		

AF FORM 294

PREVIOUS EDITION OF THIS FORM WILL BE USED UNTIL STOCK IS EXHAUSTED

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1966 O - 355-005

CAPT	COUNTNEY, TERENCE F.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px;"></div>	18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET
1ST LT	BARKALOW, JIM R.		18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET
CAPT	SLAGLE, DAVID R.		18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET
LT COL	TASCHIOGLU, BYRON J.		18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET
1ST LT	BARBEE, LARRY D.		18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET
*SSGT	BARE, ALLEN W.		18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET
*SGT	SLEDZINSKI, FRANCIS J.		18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET
*SSGT	IMAN, DELANOR E.		18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET
*AIC	CORBETT, RICHARD C.		18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET
*SSGT	BROWN, KENNETH R.		18 SOSq (PACAF)	SECRET

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INDIVIDUAL FLIGHT RECORD (BARBEE)

STINGER 41 A/C 826

PREPARED 72 JUN 02

RATED NON PILOT

BARBEE LARRY D

1LT

S 0018

DATE	M/D/S	T/N	MSN SYM	DUTY POS	TOTAL	D A Y	NIGHT
04 17	AC119K	154	T3	NN	1.4	1.4	
04 28	AC119K	830	01A	NN	2.8		2.8
04 30	AC119K	826	01A	NN	3.0		3.0
04 30	AC119K	830	01A	NN	8.0	4.0	4.0
05 02	AC119K	826	01A	NN	1.9	1.9	
05 14	AC119K	121	01A	NN	3.4		3.4
05 17	AC119K	864	01A	NN	3.1		3.1
05 19	AC119K	121	01A	NN	.6		.6
05 19	AC119K	154	01A	NN	.5		.5
05 21	AC119K	154	01A	NN	3.7		3.7
05 22	AC119K	121	01A	NN	2.1	.7	1.4
05 23	AC119K	121	01A	NN	3.4		3.4
05 25	AC119K	850	01A	NN	3.2		3.2
05 26	AC119K	850	01A	NN	3.6		3.6
05 27	AC119K	850	01A	NN	3.7		3.7
05 27	AC119K	854	01A	NN	3.0		3.0
					* 47.4	8.0	39.4
					** 47.4	8.0	39.4
					TOTAL	NAVIG	NAV=BOM
THIS MONTH					47.4	47.4	.0
TO DATE					122.2	122.2	.0
STUDENT					226.3		WPN=SYS
CIV(OVER 450)					.0		.0
OTH US MILFR					.0		.0
FRGN MILTOT					.0		
TOTAL TIME					348.5		

**CHRONOLOGY 2 MAY 1972**  
**(TIMES ARE APPROXIMATE)**

1200 STINGER 41 TAKEOFF

1245 STINGER 41 ARRIVES AT TARGET AREA (AN LOC)  
STINGER 41 BORESIGHTS GUNS

1330 STINGER 41 SETS UP FIRING CIRCLE

1350 STINGER 41 HIT BY AAA

1400 STINGER 41 CRASHES

1415 SEARCH AND RESCUE (SAR) FORCES, TWO SANDYS AND TWO JOLLY GREEN GIANTS,  
LAUNCHED OFF 15 MINUTE GROUND ALERT

1445 SAR FORCES ARRIVE IN THE AREA OF OPERATIONS, WERE BRIEFED BY THE FORWARD  
AIR CONTROLLER AND ASSUMED ON-SCENE COMMAND

1830 SUNSET IN AN LOC AS RUN IN STARTED TO PICK UP LAST SURVIVOR

1845 LAST STINGER 41 AIRCREW MEMBER SAFE IN JOLLY GREEN HELICOPTER



## ACRONYMS

1st AIR CAV	1ST AIR CAVALRY ARMY HELICOPTER UNIT
20MM	20 MILLIMETER BULLET
37MM	37 MILLIMETER BULLET
73rd SOS	ASSOCIATIONS ACTIVE DUTY LEGACY SQUADRON
A/C 826	STINGER 41 TAIL NUMBER
A-1	SEARCH AND RESCUE AIRCRAFT
A-1E	SEARCH AND RESCUE AIRCRAFT
A-1H	SEARCH AND RESCUE AIRCRAFT
AAA	SEARCH AND RESCUE AIRCRAFT
AC-119	GUNSHIP AIRCRAFT
AC-130	GUNSHIP AIRCRAFT
AFM	AIR FORCE MANUAL
AFPC	AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER
AGL	ABOVE GROUND LEVEL
AK-47	CHINESE RIFLE
ARVN	SOUTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS
ASAP	AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
B-17	WORLD WAR TWO BOMBER
CSAR	COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE
COL	COLONEL
"D" RING	HANDLE FOR PARACHUTE DEPLOYMENT
DASC	DIRECT AIR SUPPORT CENTER
DUSTOFF	MEDICAL EVACUATION HELICOPTER
FAC	FORWARD AIR CONTROLLER
FLIR	FORWARD LOOKING INFRARED RADAR
HH-3	JOLLY GREEN RESCUE HELICOPTER
IFR	INSTRUMENT FLIGHT RULES
IO	ILLUMINATOR OPERATOR CREW POSITION
KIA	KILLED IN ACTION
LT COL	LIEUTENANT COLONEL
LT GEN	LIEUTENANT GENERAL
MAYDAY	EMERGENCY RADIO CALL
NAV	NAVIGATOR
NOS	NIGHT OBSERVATION SCOPE CREW POSITION
NVA	NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY
O-2A	FORWARD AIR CONTROLLER AIRCRAFT
RECIP	REIPROCATING ENGINE
RET	RETIRED
RTAFB	ROYAL THAI AIR FORCE BASE
RVN	REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
SANDY	SARCH AND RESCUE CALL SIGN
SAR	SEARCH AND RESCUE
SOS	SPECIAL OPERATION SQUADRON
STINGER	AC-119K GUNSHIP CALL SIGN
STINGER 41G	LEAD GUNNER CALL SIGN
SUNDOG	FORWARD AIR CONTROLLER CALL SIGN
VC	VIET CONG-NORTH VIETNAMSE SOLDIER
VFR	VISUAL FLIGHT RULES
WSW	WEST SOUTH WEST
WWII	WORLD WAR TWO

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER WITH "V" DEVICE)  
TO  
FIRST LIEUTENANT LARRY D. BARBEE

First Lieutenant Larry D. Barbee distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Navigator and Night Observation Scope Operator, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On that date, Lieutenant Barbee's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, visually located hostile artillery and after his aircraft was fatally damaged, coordinated with the Search and Rescue (SAR) forces to assure his crew mates could safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The AC-119K was strategically designed to take advantage of the period of darkness with onboard Night Scope and Forward Looking Infrared sensors optimized to locate targets at night; visual scanners could better see Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) and make calls to the pilots to perform evasive maneuvers; and the black painted underside of the aircraft afforded better night-time concealment. With all these preventive measures in place, not a single AC-119 was ever shot down by AAA on an operation during the period of darkness. Those advantages disappeared during daylight operations, where the AC-119K's big, black, and slow profile, increased their exposure to enemy observation and overall risk exponentially, especially in a known high concentration of hostile fire. During this period of the war, American advisors were embedded with Republic of Vietnam forces and attempting to maintain control of the Provincial Capital of An Loc, 60 miles north of Saigon. It was widely understood that if An Loc fell to the heavily armed 35,000 North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the city, Saigon would inevitably be captured soon after. With all roads in and out of An Loc blocked by enemy forces, friendly resupplies were conducted by C-130s conducting low altitude airdrops. The North Vietnamese strategically placed numerous AAA locations around the city to thwart airdrop operations. An Loc became one of the most lethal AAA environments in South Vietnam. C-130s began conducting airdrops from a much higher altitude to avoid being shot down. As a result of this amended tactic, numerous resupply pallets missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Despite an extraordinarily high risk in a hostile environment, Lieutenant Barbee accepted a close air support mission during the day to destroy an airdrop resupply pallet containing various munitions. At 1200 hours, STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and was forced to maintain a dangerously low altitude to conduct their mission below the rapidly descending cloud deck. This further increased the crew's risk factor as they would not be able to effectively evade incoming AAA due to the tracer fire not being visible in daylight. At 1400 hours, STINGER 41 was established overhead the target area and preparing to conduct close air support fires to destroy the resupply pallets marked by the ground party. Lieutenant Barbee was responsible for locating the target set designated by the American Army advisors and after several minutes attempting to get visual contact of the target, he was able to spot a marker panel that did not match the description given by the ground party. After back and forth communications with the ground forces, he was able to accurately locate the target and began coordination with the pilot right as they were engaged by 37-millimeter rounds targeting the aircraft from the dense tree-line below. The Aircraft Commander directed him to visually locate the artillery's location from the scanner door. The artillery ceased fire, so Lieutenant Barbee returned to his position and informed the pilots that he believed the gunfire originated east of their orbit. Moments later, STINGER 41 was once again engaged by the artillery and the aircraft was struck by it. The rounds destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from its already low altitude. As soon as Lieutenant Barbee realized there was no saving the aircraft, he donned his parachute for bailout of the plane in hostile territory. He jumped out, deployed his parachute, and attempted to rendezvous with the other survivors in an actively hostile environment. As darkness approached, he successfully evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours prior to being safely recovered by American search and rescue specialists. Lieutenant Barbee heroically put himself in the line of fire to visually locate the hostile artillery, and seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to his superb coordination with the SAR forces, assuring that all crew members could safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The successful recovery was largely a result of his extensive evasion knowledge and ability to effectively direct the search and rescue helicopters to his location utilizing smoke signals and directional noise procedures. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Barbee reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(WITH "V" DEVICE)  
TO  
STAFF SERGEANT ALLEN W. BARE

Staff Sergeant Allen W. Bare distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Flight Engineer, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On that date, Sergeant Bare's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, assured his fatally damaged aircraft flew long enough for his crewmates to bail out safely; enabling their successful rescue before nightfall and imminent capture. The AC-119K was strategically designed to take advantage of the period of darkness with onboard Night Scope and Forward Looking Infrared sensors optimized to locate targets at night; visual scanners could better see Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) and make calls to the pilots to perform evasive maneuvers; and the black painted underside of the aircraft afforded better night-time concealment. With all these preventive measures in place, not a single AC-119 was ever shot down by AAA on an operation during the period of darkness. Those advantages disappeared during daylight operations, where the AC-119K's big, black, and slow profile, increased their exposure to enemy observation and overall risk exponentially, especially in a known high concentration of hostile fire. During this period of the war, American advisors were embedded with Republic of Vietnam forces and attempting to maintain control of the Provincial Capital of An Loc, 60 miles north of Saigon. It was widely understood that if An Loc fell to the heavily armed 35,000 North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the city, Saigon would inevitably be captured soon after. With all roads in and out of An Loc blocked by enemy forces, friendly resupplies were conducted by C-130s conducting low altitude airdrops. The North Vietnamese strategically placed numerous AAA locations around the city to thwart airdrop operations. An Loc became one of the most lethal AAA environments in South Vietnam. C-130s began conducting airdrops from a much higher altitude to avoid being shot down. As a result of this amended tactic, numerous resupply pallets missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Despite an extraordinarily high risk in a hostile environment, Sergeant Bare willingly accepted a close air support mission during the day to destroy an airdrop resupply pallet containing various munitions. At 1200 hours, STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and was forced to maintain a dangerously low altitude to conduct their mission below the rapidly descending cloud deck. This further increased the crew's risk factor as they would not be able to effectively evade incoming AAA due to the tracer fire not being visible during the day. At 1400 hours, STINGER 41 was established overhead the target area and preparing to conduct close air support fires to destroy the resupply pallets when they were engaged by 37-millimeter rounds targeting the aircraft from the dense tree-line below. The rounds destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft and the flame engulfed right wing sustained major damage causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Sergeant Bare immediately began coordinating with the pilots to run the emergency procedures required to extinguish the flames and try to regain control of the aircraft. Multiple systems crucial to flight were damaged by the AAA including the Axillary Power Unit, hydraulic systems, and multiple electrical components. Sergeant Bare utilized his extensive aircraft systems knowledge and took control of the power control levers, attempting to utilize as much thrust as possible without destroying the remaining two engines. He assisted the pilots by providing them a stable aircraft long enough for them to maneuver the plane in a safer direction away from known enemy fortified positions. Once directed by the Aircraft Commander, Sergeant Bare bailed out of the aircraft and parachuted down to the insurgent infested jungle below. He was able to rendezvous with the Search and Rescue (SAR) forces with the remaining six survivors despite being separated throughout in the actively hostile environment. As darkness approached, he evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours, coordinating with the SAR forces to assure the surviving crew members could safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The successful recovery was largely a result of his extensive evasion knowledge and his ability to effectively direct the SAR helicopters to his location utilizing smoke signals and directional noise procedures. Sergeant Bare showed great courage on a daylight mission in the face of withering ground fire; extraordinary actions in the face of fatal damage to his aircraft to assure the aircraft flew long enough for his crewmates to bail out safely; and great heroism to enable his successful rescue before nightfall and imminent capture. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Sergeant Bare's heroic act of ensuring the fatally stricken aircraft had sufficient power to sustain flight long enough for all able crew to bailout of the plane. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Bare in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE SILVER STAR  
TO  
FIRST LIEUTENANT JIM R. BARKALOW

First Lieutenant Jim R. Barkalow distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Pilot, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On that date, Lieutenant Barkalow's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, assured his fatally damaged aircraft flew long enough for his crewmates to bail out safely; enabling their successful rescue before nightfall and imminent capture. The AC-119K was strategically designed to take advantage of the period of darkness with onboard Night Scope and Forward Looking Infrared sensors optimized to locate targets at night; visual scanners could better see Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) and make calls to the pilots to perform evasive maneuvers; and the black painted underside of the aircraft afforded better night-time concealment. With all these preventive measures in place, not a single AC-119 was ever shot down by AAA on an operation during the period of darkness. Those advantages disappeared during daylight operations, where the AC-119K's big, black, and slow profile, increased their exposure to enemy observation and overall risk exponentially, especially in a known high concentration of hostile fire. During this period of the war, American advisors were embedded with Republic of Vietnam forces and attempting to maintain control of the Provincial Capital of An Loc, 60 miles north of Saigon. It was widely understood that if An Loc fell to the heavily armed 35,000 North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the city, Saigon would inevitably be captured soon after. With all roads in and out of An Loc blocked by enemy forces, friendly resupplies were conducted by C-130s conducting low altitude airdrops. The North Vietnamese strategically placed numerous AAA locations around the city to thwart airdrop operations. An Loc became one of the most lethal AAA environments in South Vietnam. C-130s began conducting airdrops from a much higher altitude to avoid being shot down. As a result of this amended tactic, numerous resupply pallets missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Despite an extraordinarily high risk in a hostile environment, Lieutenant Barkalow willingly accepted a close air support mission during the day to destroy an airdrop resupply pallet containing various munitions that had missed its intended target. At 1200 hours, STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and was forced to maintain a dangerously low altitude to conduct their mission below a rapidly descending cloud deck, further increasing their risk factor as they would not be able to effectively evade incoming AAA due to the tracer fire not being visible in daylight. At 1400 hours, STINGER 41 was established overhead the target area and preparing to conduct close air support fire to destroy the resupply pallets when they were struck by numerous 37-millimeter rounds from the dense tree-line below. The rounds destroyed both engines on the right wing and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major structural and flight control damage, causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Lieutenant Barkalow coordinated with the Aircraft Commander to maneuver the aircraft in a direction away from the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong forces prior to having the crew bailout. Once in a suitable direction, the Aircraft Commander directed the crew to bailout of the plane before it inevitably crashed into the jungle but was unable to fully control the doomed aircraft by himself. Both he and Lieutenant Barkalow were wrapped around the control yoke using maximum rudder, aileron, elevators, and power to keep the aircraft flying. Had Lieutenant Barkalow not stayed behind to help the Aircraft Commander until the last possible moment, the aircraft would not have been controllable enough to allow the other crewmembers to bailout. Six crewmembers successfully bailed out of the aircraft when the Aircraft Commander directed Lieutenant Barkalow to bailout as well. Less than 30 seconds after he egressed the aircraft 300 feet above the trees, STINGER 41 unfortunately spiraled out of control and impacted the ground. Lieutenant Barkalow's parachute opened as he hit the trees, resulting in internal contusions and numerous lacerations. Lieutenant Barkalow managed to mend his severe wounds and as darkness approached, successfully evade enemy forces for four and a half hours prior to being recovered by American search and rescue specialists. Lieutenant Barkalow showed great valor in going on a daylight mission in the face of withering ground fire; selfless heroism in the face of fatal damage to his aircraft to assure the aircraft flew long enough for his crewmates to bail out safely; and extraordinary achievement to enable his successful rescue before nightfall and imminent capture. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Lieutenant Barkalow's heroic act of staying at the flight controls until the last moment, assuring the fatally struck aircraft was controlled long enough to allow his crewmates to bailout. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Barkalow in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE SILVER STAR  
TO  
STAFF SERGEANT KENNETH R. BROWN

Staff Sergeant Kenneth R. Brown distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Illuminator Operator and Jumpmaster, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On that date, Sergeant Brown's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions on a highly vulnerable daylight mission, in the face of withering ground fire; and in the face of fatal damage to his aircraft where he was Killed In Action, assured the survival of seven of his crewmates. The AC-119K was strategically designed to take advantage of the period of darkness with onboard Night Scope and Forward Looking Infrared sensors optimized to locate targets at night; visual scanners could better see Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) and make calls to the pilots to perform evasive maneuvers; and the black painted underside of the aircraft afforded better night-time concealment. With all these preventive measures in place, not a single AC-119 was ever shot down by AAA on an operation during the period of darkness. Those advantages disappeared during daylight operations, where the AC-119K's big, black, and slow profile, increased their exposure to enemy observation and overall risk exponentially, especially in a known high concentration of hostile fire. During this period of the war, American advisors were embedded with Republic of Vietnam forces and attempting to maintain control of the Provincial Capital of An Loc, 60 miles north of Saigon. It was widely understood that if An Loc fell to the heavily armed 35,000 North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the city, Saigon would inevitably be captured soon after. With all roads in and out of An Loc blocked by enemy forces, friendly resupplies were conducted by C-130s conducting low altitude airdrops. The North Vietnamese strategically placed numerous AAA locations around the city to thwart airdrop operations. An Loc became one of the most lethal AAA environments in South Vietnam. C-130s began conducting airdrops from a much higher altitude to avoid being shot down. As a result of this amended tactic, numerous resupply pallets missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Despite an extraordinarily high risk in a hostile environment, Sergeant Brown willingly accepted a close air support mission during the day to destroy an airdrop resupply pallet containing various munitions that had missed its intended target. At 1200 hours, STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and was forced to maintain a dangerously low altitude to conduct their mission below the rapidly descending cloud deck. This further increased the crew's risk factor as they would not be able to effectively evade incoming AAA due to the tracer fire not being visible during the day. At 1400 hours, STINGER 41 was established overhead the target area and preparing to conduct close air support fires to destroy the resupply pallets when they were engaged by what Sergeant Brown assessed to be 37-millimeter rounds targeting the aircraft from the dense tree-line below. Although he was at a great disadvantage by not being able to visually see the tracer rounds in the daylight, Sergeant Brown remained exposed in the slipstream doorway to locate the AAA and pass the location to the Aircraft Commander. Stinger 41 was hit, and the rounds destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and the flame- engulfed right wing sustained major damage, causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Sergeant Brown began to clear an egress path in the cargo bay and checked each crewmember's parachute equipment prior to them bailing out of the plane. Six members had successfully bailed out when the Copilot ran to the back of the plane and jumped out. As the Copilot egressed the plane, Sergeant Brown quickly worked to secure the last remaining crewmember's parachute when the aircraft lost control and began spiraling towards the ground. Unable to deploy his parachute prior to the aircraft impacting with the jungle, Sergeant Brown was fatally wounded and tragically did not survive the crash. Sergeant Brown showed great valor in going on a daylight mission in the face of withering ground fire; and selfless heroism in the face of fatal damage to his aircraft while assuring his crewmates could bail out safely. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Sergeant Brown's heroic act of remaining at his Jumpmaster position until all able crewmembers bailed out of the fatally struck aircraft. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Brown in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(WITH "V" DEVICE)  
TO  
AIRMAN FIRST CLASS RICHARD C. CORBETT

Airman First Class Richard C. Corbett distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Aerial Gunner, 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron, 56<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On that date, Airman Corbett's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, assured the crew members of their fatally damaged Stinger Gunship could rapidly and safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The AC-119K was strategically designed to take advantage of the period of darkness with onboard Night Scope and Forward Looking Infrared sensors optimized to locate targets at night; visual scanners could better see Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) and make calls to the pilots to perform evasive maneuvers; and the black painted underside of the aircraft afforded better night-time concealment. With all these preventive measures in place, not a single AC-119 was ever shot down by AAA on a night operation. Those advantages disappeared during daylight operations, where the AC-119K's big, black, slow profile, increased their exposure to enemy observation and overall risk exponentially, especially in a known high concentration of hostile fire. During this period of the war, American advisors were embedded with Republic of Vietnam forces and attempting to maintain control of the Provincial Capital of An Loc, approximately 60 miles north of Saigon. It was widely understood that if An Loc fell to the heavily armed 35,000 North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the city, Saigon would inevitably be captured soon after. With all roads in and out of An Loc blocked by enemy forces, friendly resupplies were conducted by C-130s conducting low altitude airdrops. The North Vietnamese strategically placed numerous AAA locations around the city to thwart airdrop operations. C-130s began conducting airdrops from a much higher altitude to avoid being shot down. As a result of this amended tactic, numerous resupply pallets missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Despite an extraordinarily high risk in a hostile environment, Airman Corbett accepted a daylight close air support mission to destroy an airdrop resupply pallet containing various munitions. At 1200 hours, STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and was forced to maintain a dangerously low altitude to conduct their mission below a rapidly descending cloud deck. This further increased the crew's risk factor as they would not be able to effectively evade incoming AAA due to the tracer fire not being visible during the day. At 1400 hours, STINGER 41 was established overhead the target area and despite being the least experienced crewmember and Gunner, Airman Corbett was tasked to man the aircraft's four miniguns and two 20-millimeter cannons by himself to allow the rest of the cargo bay crew to scan for AAA threats. During several orbits, as Stinger 41 descended below the clouds attempting to visually acquire the resupply pallets, they were engaged by 37-millimeter AAA and had to change their firing altitude to reduce their vulnerability. Each altitude change demanded that Airman Corbett realign each of the Stinger's 6 guns to a new azimuth and elevation solution to ensure that each round fired would effectively terminate their targets. Multiple crewmembers reported that there was a flurry of artillery being fired in the target area, so he left his position to further assist in the acquisition of the Anti-Aircraft Artillery locations. They were hit by multiple 37-millimeter AAA rounds that destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Airman Corbett returned to his station and strapped on his parachute in anticipation of the Aircraft Commander giving the order to bailout of the plane. Once directed to do so, he egressed the aircraft knowing the forest below was infested with North Vietnamese and Vietcong insurgents. Separated from the rest of his crew in a hostile environment, and as darkness approached, Airman Corbett successfully evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours prior to being recovered by American search and rescue specialists. Airman Corbett's actions under enemy fire assured Stinger 41's accurate firing capability and were essential to their ability to complete their high risk mission, and his extraordinary professionalism during and after bailout ensured a safe and rapid extraction of the downed aircrew before nightfall, with its assured capture or death. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Airman Corbett reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER WITH "V" DEVICE)  
TO  
STAFF SERGEANT DELANOR E. IMAN

Staff Sergeant Delanor E. Iman distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Aerial Gunner, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On that date, Sergeant Iman's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, assured the crew members of their fatally damaged Stinger Gunship could rapidly and safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. With all these preventive measures in place, no AC-119 was ever shot down by AAA on a night operation. Those advantages disappeared during daylight operations, where the AC-119K's big, black, slow profile, increased their exposure to enemy observation and overall risk exponentially, especially in a known high concentration of hostile fire. During this period of the war, American advisors were embedded with Republic of Vietnam forces and attempting to maintain control of the Provincial Capital of An Loc, approximately 60 miles north of Saigon. It was widely understood that if An Loc fell to the heavily armed 35,000 North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the city, Saigon would inevitably be captured soon after. With all roads in and out of An Loc blocked by enemy forces, friendly resupplies were conducted by C-130s conducting low altitude airdrops. The North Vietnamese strategically placed numerous AAA locations around the city to thwart airdrop operations. C-130s began conducting airdrops from a much higher altitude to avoid being shot down. As a result of this amended tactic, numerous resupply pallets missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Despite an extraordinarily high risk in a hostile environment, Airman Corbett accepted a daylight close air support mission to destroy an airdrop resupply pallet containing various munitions. At 1200 hours, STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and was forced to maintain a dangerously low altitude to conduct their mission below a rapidly descending cloud deck. This further increased the crew's risk factor as they would not be able to effectively evade incoming AAA due to the tracer fire not being visible during the day. At 1400 hours, STINGER 41 was established overhead the target area and Sergeant Iman's extensive combat experience was leveraged to assure the most experienced crew members occupied visual scanner locations on the plane to watch for incoming hostile fire. As the crew descended below the clouds, Sergeant Iman worked with the less experienced Gunner to ensure their guns' azimuth and elevation solutions were readjusted. Proper alignment of the guns would be crucial to guarantee that each round fired would effectively terminate their targets. During several orbits, as Stinger 41 descended below the clouds attempting to visually acquire the resupply pallets, they were engaged by 37-millimeter AAA and had to change their firing altitude to reduce their vulnerability. Multiple crewmembers reported that there was a flurry of artillery being fired in the target area. Sergeant Iman reported the direction of fire to the crew in hopes of someone being able to visually acquire the AAA locations. They were hit by multiple 37- millimeter AAA rounds that destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Sergeant Iman strapped on his parachute in anticipation of the Aircraft Commander giving the order to bailout. Once directed to do so, he egressed the aircraft knowing the forest below was infested with North Vietnamese and Vietcong insurgents. Separated from the rest of his crew in a hostile environment, and as darkness approached, Sergeant Iman successfully evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours, coordinating with the SAR forces to assure the surviving crew members could safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The successful recovery was largely a result of his extensive evasion knowledge and his ability to effectively direct the search and rescue helicopters to his location utilizing smoke signals and directional noise procedures. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Sergeant Iman's heroic actions ensuring a safe and rapid extraction of the downed aircrew. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Iman reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(WITH "V" DEVICE)  
TO  
CAPTAIN DAVID R. SLAGLE

Captain David R. Slagle distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Navigator, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On that date, Captain Slagle's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions where he was Killed In Action, assured rescue forces were rapidly available to his fatally damaged aircraft. Seven crewmembers survived due to Captain Slagle's heroic actions to ensure their best possible rescue chances. The AC-119K was strategically designed to take advantage of the period of darkness with onboard Night Scope and Forward Looking Infrared sensors optimized to locate targets at night; visual scanners could better see Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) and make calls to the pilots to perform evasive maneuvers; and the black painted underside of the aircraft afforded better night-time concealment. With all these preventive measures in place, not a single AC-119 was ever shot down by AAA on an operation during the period of darkness. Those advantages disappeared during daylight operations, where the AC-119K's big, black, and slow profile, increased their exposure to enemy observation and overall risk exponentially, especially in a known high concentration of hostile fire. During this period of the war, American advisors were embedded with Republic of Vietnam forces and attempting to maintain control of the Provincial Capital of An Loc, 60 miles north of Saigon. It was widely understood that if An Loc fell to the heavily armed 35,000 North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the city, Saigon would inevitably be captured soon after. With all roads in and out of An Loc blocked by enemy forces, friendly resupplies were conducted by C-130s conducting low altitude airdrops. The North Vietnamese strategically placed numerous AAA locations around the city to thwart airdrop operations. An Loc became one of the most lethal AAA environments in South Vietnam. C-130s began conducting airdrops from a much higher altitude to avoid being shot down. As a result of this amended tactic, numerous resupply pallets missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Despite an extraordinarily high risk in a hostile environment, Captain Slagle accepted a close air support mission during the day to destroy an airdrop resupply pallet containing various munitions. At 1200 hours, STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and was forced to maintain a dangerously low altitude to conduct their mission below the rapidly descending cloud deck. This further increased the crew's risk factor as they would not be able to effectively evade incoming AAA due to the tracer fire not being visible during the day. At 1400 hours, STINGER 41 was established overhead the target area and preparing to conduct close air support fires to destroy the resupply pallets marked by the ground party. Captain Slagle was responsible for coordinating with the American Army advisors on the location of the targets and after several minutes attempting to get visual contact of the target, the crew was able to spot a marker panel that did not match the description given by the ground party. After back and forth communications with the ground forces, he was able to get confirmation that the marker panels they observed were in fact the target. Captain Slagle began coordination with the pilot right as they were engaged by 37-millimeter rounds targeting the aircraft from the dense tree-line below. The rounds destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Captain Slagle immediately began coordination with the Forward Air Controller to locate an area with less hostile presence in hopes of having the crew avoid capture or death after bailing out of the aircraft. He relayed a safe escape heading to the Aircraft Commander and broadcast "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday" on the radio to inform all nearby American personnel of the impending crash and to help expedite their safe recovery. Captain Slagle stayed until the last moments. Unable to deploy his parachute prior to the aircraft impacting with the jungle, Captain Slagle was fatally wounded and tragically did not survive. Captain Slagle showed great courage in going on a daylight mission in the face of withering ground fire. His actions in the face of fatal damage to his aircraft assured rescue forces were rapidly available. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Captain Slagle's heroic actions to ensure their best possible rescue chances. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Captain Slagle in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
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TO  
STAFF SERGEANT FRANCIS J. SLEDZINSKI

Staff Sergeant Francis J. Sledzinski distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Lead Aerial Gunner, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On that date, Sergeant Sledzinski's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, assured the crew members of their fatally damaged Stinger Gunship could rapidly and safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The AC-119K was strategically designed to take advantage of the period of darkness with onboard Night Scope and Forward Looking Infrared sensors optimized to locate targets at night; visual scanners could better see Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) and make calls to the pilots to perform evasive maneuvers; and the black painted underside of the aircraft afforded better night-time concealment. With all these preventive measures in place, no AC-119 was ever shot down by AAA at night. Those advantages disappeared during daylight operations, where the AC-119K's big, black, slow profile increased their exposure to enemy observation and overall risk exponentially, especially in a known high concentration of hostile fire. During this period of the war, American advisors were embedded with Republic of Vietnam forces and attempting to maintain control of the Provincial Capital of An Loc, approximately 60 miles north of Saigon. It was widely understood that if An Loc fell to the heavily armed 35,000 North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the city, Saigon would inevitably be captured soon after. With all roads in and out of An Loc blocked by enemy forces, friendly resupplies were conducted by C-130s conducting low altitude airdrops. The North Vietnamese strategically placed numerous AAA locations around the city to thwart airdrop operations. An Loc became one of the most lethal AAA environments in South Vietnam. C-130s began conducting airdrops from a much higher altitude to avoid being shot down. As a result of this amended tactic, numerous resupply pallets missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Despite an extraordinarily high risk in a hostile environment, Sergeant Sledzinski volunteered to replace the Lead Gunner for STINGER 41 and accepted a daylight close air support mission to destroy an airdrop resupply pallet containing various munitions. At 1200 hours, STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and was forced to maintain a dangerously low altitude to conduct their mission below a rapidly descending cloud deck, increasing the crew's risk factor as they would not be able to effectively evade incoming AAA due to the tracer fire not being visible in daylight. At 1400 hours, STINGER 41 was established overhead the target area and preparing to conduct close air support fire to destroy the resupply pallets when 37-millimeter rounds hit the aircraft. The rounds destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage causing it to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Sergeant Sledzinski immediately recognized the aircraft was irreparably damaged and would soon crash into the Vietnam jungle. He jettisoned the flare launcher to clear the left bailout door and informed the crewmembers in the cargo bay that their aircraft was fatally damaged and to don their parachutes and prepare for a low altitude bailout. Sergeant Sledzinski led by example, bailing out of the aircraft as soon as the Aircraft Commander gave the "Abandon aircraft" call, leading the remaining members to recognize their need to bailout. As he parachuted down, his canopy sustained multiple holes from enemy gunfire attempting to shoot at the distressed aircrew. Once Sergeant Sledzinski landed, he immediately made contact with the Forward Air Controller who directed the launch of the medical evacuation helicopters sitting on alert at their staging airfield. On the first rescue attempt, the helicopter received effective gunfire from multiple enemy locations and had to abort the rescue. As darkness approached, Sergeant Sledzinski successfully evaded enemy forces long enough for a second helicopter to arrive and safely recover him. The aft cargo area crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Sergeant Sledzinski's immediate recognition that emergency procedures were inadequate to recover their fatally damaged aircraft, and that calm, swift bailouts were their only way to survive. His actions to prepare for bailout, and to rapidly create awareness in the aft cargo crew that their aircraft was going down, assured those crewmembers were able to exit the aircraft while it was still flying, and with time to be recovered before the vulnerabilities of darkness in an enemy saturated area made recovery impossible. Sergeant Sledzinski showed great courage in going on a daylight mission in the face of withering ground fire; great valor in his actions in the face of fatal damage to his aircraft and assuring the crew bailed out safely; and great heroic action to enable his successful rescue before nightfall and imminent capture. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Sledzinski reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

NARRATIVE TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(WITH "V" DEVICE)

TO

LIEUTENANT COLONEL BYRON J. TASCHIOGLOU

Lieutenant Colonel Byron J. Taschioglou distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Forward Looking Infrared Operator, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On that date, Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou's exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, assured the crew members of their fatally damaged Stinger Gunship could rapidly and safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The AC-119K was strategically designed to take advantage of the period of darkness with onboard Night Scope and Forward Looking Infrared sensors optimized to locate targets at night; visual scanners could better see Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA) and make calls to the pilots to perform evasive maneuvers; and the black painted underside of the aircraft afforded better night-time concealment. With all these preventive measures in place, not a single AC-119 was ever shot down by AAA on an operation during the period of darkness. Those advantages disappeared during daylight operations, where the AC-119K's big, black, and slow profile, increased their exposure to enemy observation and overall risk exponentially, especially in a known high concentration of hostile fire. During this period of the war, American advisors were embedded with Republic of Vietnam forces and attempting to maintain control of the Provincial Capital of An Loc, 60 miles north of Saigon. It was widely understood that if An Loc fell to the heavily armed 35,000 North Vietnamese soldiers surrounding the city, Saigon would inevitably be captured soon after. With all roads in and out of An Loc blocked by enemy forces, friendly resupplies were conducted by C-130s conducting low altitude airdrops. The North Vietnamese strategically placed numerous AAA locations around the city to thwart airdrop operations. An Loc became one of the most lethal AAA environments in South Vietnam. C-130s began conducting airdrops from a much higher altitude to avoid being shot down. As a result of this amended tactic, numerous resupply pallets missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Despite an extraordinarily high risk in a hostile environment, Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou volunteered to replace the Forward Looking Infrared Operator for STINGER 41 and accepted a close air support mission during the day to destroy an airdropped resupply pallet containing various munitions that had missed its intended target. At 1200 hours, STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and was forced to maintain a dangerously low altitude to conduct their mission below the rapidly descending cloud deck. This further increased the crew's risk factor as they would not be able to effectively evade incoming AAA due to the tracer fire not being visible during the day. At 1400 hours, STINGER 41 was established overhead the target area and preparing to conduct close air support fires to destroy the resupply pallets marked by the ground party. Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou was responsible for visually identifying the critical mission targets with his Infrared Sensor. After back and forth communications with the ground forces, he was able to get confirmation that the marker panels he observed through his sensor were in fact the markers placed by friendly forces to target the pallets they needed Stinger 41 to destroy. Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou began strike coordination with the pilot right as they were engaged by 37- millimeter rounds targeting the aircraft from the dense tree-line below. To assist the pilots as they evaded incoming munitions, he maintained a steady reference point of An Loc so that the pilots could easily return to their firing orbit when they were ready to prosecute the objective. Unfortunately, the 37 mm rounds again targeted their aircraft, destroying both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from its already low altitude. Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou secured the jump seat so that the flight deck had a clear path to quickly egress out of the aircraft. He successfully bailed out the plane before it crashed into the jungle and was able to rendezvous with the Search and Rescue (SAR) forces with six others despite being separated in the actively hostile environment. As darkness approached, he evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours, coordinating with the SAR forces to assure the surviving crew members could safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The successful recovery was largely a result of his extensive evasion knowledge and his ability to effectively direct the search and rescue helicopters to his location utilizing smoke signals and directional noise procedures. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou's heroic actions to ensure a safe and rapid extraction of the downed aircrew. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
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(FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER WITH "V" DEVICE)

TO

FIRST LIEUTENANT LARRY D. BARBEE

First Lieutenant Larry D. Barbee distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Navigator and Night Observation Scope Operator, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On this date, his exemplary performance and decisive actions allowed for seven members of STINGER 41 to safely bailout of the aircraft prior to it succumbing to damage inflicted by North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft Artillery. STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and prepared to conduct daylight close air support fire to destroy resupply pallets that had missed their intended target and were now at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Lieutenant Barbee was responsible for locating the target set designated by the American Army advisors, and after several minutes attempting to get visual contact of the target, was able to accurately locate the target. He began coordination with the pilot but they were immediately engaged by enemy 37-millimeter Triple A targeting the aircraft from the dense tree-line below. The Aircraft Commander directed Lieutenant Barbee to visually locate the artillery's location from the scanner door in hopes of conducting a defensive strike against the hostile forces. After several attempts at achieving defensive strikes, enemy Triple A hit their aircraft, destroying both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and with major damage to the right wing, causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Lieutenant Barbee realized there was no saving the aircraft and donned his parachute in preparation for bailout in hostile territory. He jumped out of the plane, deployed his parachute, and although separated from his crew mates, he attempted to rendezvous with the other survivors in an actively hostile environment. As darkness approached, he successfully evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours prior to being safely recovered by American search and rescue specialists. Lieutenant Barbee's heroic act of putting himself in the line of fire to visually locate the hostile artillery, and superb coordination with the SAR forces assured the safe recovery of all seven surviving crew members before nightfall with its certainty of capture or death. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Barbee reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
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TO  
STAFF SERGEANT ALLEN W. BARE

Staff Sergeant Allen W. Bare distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Flight Engineer, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On this date, his exemplary performance and decisive actions allowed for seven members of STINGER 41 to safely bailout of the aircraft prior to it succumbing to damage inflicted by North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft Artillery. STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and established overhead the target area. As the crew prepared to conduct close air support fires to destroy the resupply pallets, they were struck by numerous 37-millimeter rounds from the dense tree-line below. The rounds destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft and the flame engulfed right wing sustained major damage causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Sergeant Bare immediately coordinated with the pilots to run the emergency procedures required to extinguish the flames and try to regain control of the aircraft. Multiple systems crucial to flight were damaged by the artillery and he utilized his extensive aircraft systems knowledge to take control of power control levers, attempting to utilize as much thrust as possible without destroying the remaining engines. He assisted the pilots by providing them a stable aircraft long enough for them to maneuver the plane in a safer direction away from enemy fortified positions. Once directed by the Aircraft Commander, Sergeant Bare bailed out of the aircraft and parachuted down to the insurgent infested jungle below. As darkness approached, he successfully evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours prior to being recovered by American search and rescue specialists. Sergeant Bare showed great courage on a daylight mission in the face of withering ground fire; extraordinary actions in the face of fatal damage to his aircraft to assure the aircraft flew long enough for his crewmates to bail out safely; and great heroism to enable his successful rescue before nightfall and imminent capture. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Sergeant Bare's heroic act of ensuring the fatally stricken aircraft had sufficient power to sustain flight long enough for all able crew to bailout of the plane. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Bare in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE SILVER STAR  
TO  
FIRST LIEUTENANT JIM R. BARKALOW

First Lieutenant Jim R. Barkalow distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Pilot, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On this date, his exemplary knowledge and outstanding airmanship, displayed under extremely hazardous conditions, assured his fatally damaged aircraft flew long enough for his STINGER 41 crewmates to safely bailout prior to their aircraft succumbing to damage inflicted by North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft Artillery, and enabling their successful rescue before nightfall and imminent capture. STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, to conduct a daylight close air support mission to destroy resupply pallets that had missed their intended target. Once established overhead at the target area, they were hit by numerous 37-millimeter rounds that destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage, causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Lieutenant Barkalow and the Aircraft Commander struggled to maneuver their fatally stricken aircraft in a direction away from the North Vietnamese Army and Viet Cong forces prior to having the crew bailout. Lieutenant Barkalow wrapped himself around the control yoke using maximum rudder, aileron, elevators, and power to keep the aircraft flying long enough for everyone to bailout. Six crewmembers had successfully bailed out of the aircraft when the Aircraft Commander directed Lieutenant Barkalow to bailout as well. Less than 30 seconds after he egressed the aircraft, STINGER 41 spiraled out of control and impacted the Vietnamese jungle. Lieutenant Barkalow managed to mend his severe wounds, coordinate with Search and Rescue forces, and successfully evade enemy insurgents for four and a half hours before being rescued. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Lieutenant Barkalow's heroic act of staying at the flight controls until the last moment, assuring the fatally struck aircraft was controlled long enough to allow his crewmates to bailout. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Barkalow in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE SILVER STAR  
TO  
STAFF SERGEANT KENNETH R. BROWN

Staff Sergeant Kenneth R. Brown distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Illuminator Operator and Jumpmaster, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On this date, his exemplary performance and decisive actions allowed for seven members of STINGER 41 to safely bailout of the aircraft prior to it succumbing to damage inflicted by North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft Artillery. STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, to conduct a daylight close air support mission to destroy resupply pallets that had missed their intended target. Once established overhead at the target area, they were fired upon by 37-millimeter Anti-Aircraft Artillery. Although he was at a great disadvantage by not being able to visually see the tracer rounds in the daylight, Sergeant Brown remained exposed in the slipstream doorway to locate the artillery site and pass the location to the Aircraft Commander. Stinger 41 was hit by the enemy artillery fire that destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage, causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Sergeant Brown began to clear an egress path in the cargo bay and checked each crewmember's parachute equipment prior to them bailing out of the aircraft. Six members had successfully bailed out when the Copilot ran to the back of the plane and jumped out. As the Copilot egressed the plane, Sergeant Brown quickly worked to secure the last remaining crewmember's parachute, when the aircraft lost control and began spiraling towards the ground. Unable to deploy his parachute prior to the aircraft impacting with the jungle, Sergeant Brown was fatally wounded and tragically did not survive the crash. Sergeant Brown showed great valor in going on a daylight mission in the face of withering ground fire; and selfless heroism in the face of fatal damage to his aircraft while assuring his crewmates could bail out safely. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Sergeant Brown's heroic act of remaining at his Jumpmaster position until all able crewmembers bailed out of the fatally struck aircraft. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Brown in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
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AIRMAN FIRST CLASS RICHARD C. CORBETT

Airman First Class Richard C. Corbett distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Aerial Gunner, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On this date, his exemplary performance and decisive actions allowed for seven members of STINGER 41 to safely bailout of the aircraft prior to it succumbing to damage inflicted by North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft Artillery. STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and prepared to conduct daylight close air support fire to destroy resupply pallets that had missed their intended target and were now at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. As they descended below the clouds, the other Gunners were scanning for Triple A while Airman Corbett realigned the Stinger guns' azimuth and elevation solutions multiple times, ensuring that each round fired could effectively terminate their targets. Several crewmembers reported that there was a flurry of enemy artillery being fired in the target area, and after several orbits attempting to visually acquire the resupply pallets, STINGER 41 was hit by 37-millimeter rounds, destroying both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and with major damage to the right wing, causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Airman Corbett strapped on his parachute in anticipation of the Aircraft Commander giving the order to bailout. Once directed to do so, he bailed out before Stinger 41 crashed into the jungle, knowing the forest below was infested with insurgents. He attempted to rendezvous with the remaining six survivors separated throughout the hostile environment, and as darkness approached, he evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours prior to being recovered by American search and rescue specialists. His successful recovery was largely thanks to his extensive evasion knowledge and ability to effectively direct the search and rescue helicopters to his location utilizing smoke signals and directional noise procedures. Airman Corbett's actions under enemy fire assured Stinger 41's accurate firing capability and were essential to their ability to complete their high risk mission, and his extraordinary professionalism during and after bailout ensured a safe and rapid extraction of all of Stinger 41's downed aircrew before nightfall, with its assured capture or death. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Airman Corbett reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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TO  
STAFF SERGEANT DELANOR E. IMAN

Staff Sergeant Delanor E. Iman distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Forward Looking Infrared Operator, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Combat Support Group, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On this date, his exemplary performance and decisive actions allowed for seven members of STINGER 41 to safely bailout of the aircraft prior to it succumbing to damage inflicted by North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft Artillery. STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, established overhead the target area and prepared to conduct daylight close air support fire to destroy resupply pallets that had missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Sergeant Iman's role as a scanner was to identify and evade enemy fire as well as visual target coordination with the pilot, both occurring as they were engaged by 37-millimeter rounds targeting the aircraft. Unfortunately, several 37- millimeter rounds hit Stinger 41, destroying both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage, causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Sergeant Iman successfully bailed out of the plane before it crashed into the jungle and attempted to rendezvous with the remaining six survivors. Separated from the rest of his crew in a hostile environment, and as darkness approached, Sergeant Iman successfully evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours, coordinating with the Search and Rescue forces to assure the surviving crew members could safely be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The successful recovery was largely a result of his extensive evasion knowledge and his ability to effectively direct the search and rescue helicopters to his location utilizing smoke signals and directional noise procedures. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Sergeant Iman's heroic actions ensuring a safe and rapid extraction of the downed aircrew. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Iman reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(WITH "V" DEVICE)  
TO  
CAPTAIN DAVID R. SLAGLE

Captain David R. Slagle distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Navigator, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Combat Support Group, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On this date, his exemplary performance and decisive actions allowed for seven members of STINGER 41 to safely bailout of the aircraft prior to it succumbing to damage inflicted by North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft Artillery. STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, established overhead the target area and prepared to conduct daylight close air support fires to destroy resupply pallets that had missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Captain Slagle was responsible for coordinating with the American Army advisors on the location of the target, and after several minutes attempting to visually acquire the target, the crew was able to spot a marker panel, but it did not match the description given by the ground party. After back and forth communications with the ground forces, Captain Slagle was able confirm that the marker panels they observed were in fact the target. He began coordination with the pilot but they were immediately engaged by 37-millimeter Anti-Aircraft Artillery fire targeting the aircraft from the dense tree-line below. After several attempts to acquire their mission target, Anti-Aircraft Artillery hit their aircraft, destroying both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and with major damage to the right wing, causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Captain Slagle immediately began coordination with the Forward Air Controller to locate an area with less hostile presence in to reduce the crew's risk of capture after bailing out. He relayed a safe escape heading to the Aircraft Commander and broadcasted "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday" on the radio to inform all nearby American personnel of the impending crash and to help expedite their safe recovery. Unable to deploy his parachute prior to the aircraft impacting with the jungle, Captain Slagle was fatally wounded and tragically did not survive. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Captain Slagle's heroic actions to ensure they could safely bailout and be recovered before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Captain Slagle in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(FIRST OAK LEAF CLUSTER WITH “V” DEVICE)  
TO  
STAFF SERGEANT FRANCIS J. SLEDZINSKI

Staff Sergeant Francis J. Sledzinski distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Lead Aerial Gunner, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Special Operations Wing, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On this date, his exemplary performance and decisive actions allowed for seven members of STINGER 41 to safely bailout of the aircraft prior to it succumbing to damage inflicted by North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft Artillery. STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, and established overhead the target area. As the crew prepared to conduct their daylight, close air support fire to destroy resupply pallets that had missed their intended target, they were struck by enemy 37-millimeter rounds. The rounds destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage, causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Sergeant Sledzinski immediately recognized that the aircraft was irreparably damaged and would soon crash into the Vietnam jungle. He jettisoned the flare launcher to clear the left bailout door and instructed the six crewmembers in the cargo bay to don their parachutes and prepare for a low altitude bailout. He led the crew in their bailouts, and as he parachuted down, his canopy sustained damage from North Vietnamese gunfire attempting to shoot at the distressed aircrew. Once Sergeant Sledzinski landed, he immediately radioed the Forward Air Controller to identify his location. As darkness approached, he successfully evaded enemy forces including an initial wave-off of recovery forces when they took ground fire, and a subsequent successful extraction dangling from a rope with enemy fire all around. The successful recovery was largely thanks to his extensive evasion knowledge and actions. Sergeant Sledzinski's heroic actions led the crew to rapidly get out of the aircraft and ensure extraction before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Sledzinski reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(WITH "V" DEVICE)

TO

LIEUTENANT COLONEL BYRON J. TASCHIOGLOU

Lieutenant Colonel Bryon J. Taschioglou distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as an AC-119K Forward Looking Infrared Operator, 18th Special Operations Squadron, 56th Combat Support Group, on 2 May 1972, during the Battle of An Loc in support of the Vietnam War. On this date, his exemplary performance and decisive actions allowed for seven members of STINGER 41 to safely bailout of the aircraft prior to it succumbing to damage inflicted by North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft Artillery. STINGER 41 took off from Bien Hoa Airfield, Republic of Vietnam, established overhead the target area and prepared to conduct daylight close air support fire to destroy resupply pallets that had missed their intended target and were at risk of being captured by hostile insurgents. Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou was responsible for identifying the critical mission targets with his Infrared Sensor. After back and forth communications with the ground forces, he was able to confirm that the marker panels he observed through his sensor were in fact the target. Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou began strike coordination with the pilot right as they were engaged by 37-millimeter rounds targeting the aircraft from the dense tree-line below. To assist the pilots as they evaded incoming munitions, he maintained a steady reference point of An Loc so that the pilots could easily return to their firing orbit when they were ready to prosecute the objective. Unfortunately, the 37-millimeter rounds hit Stinger 41 and destroyed both engines on the right side of the aircraft, and the flame-engulfed right wing sustained major damage causing STINGER 41 to uncontrollably descend from their already low altitude. Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou successfully bailed out of the plane before it crashed into the jungle and attempted to rendezvous with the remaining six survivors separated throughout the hostile environment. As darkness approached, he evaded enemy forces for four and a half hours prior to being recovered by American search and rescue specialists. The successful recovery was largely thanks to his extensive evasion knowledge and his ability to effectively direct the search and rescue helicopters to his location utilizing smoke signals and directional noise procedures. Seven crewmembers from STINGER 41 survived due to Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou's heroic actions to ensure a safe and rapid extraction of the downed aircrew before nightfall with its assured capture or death. The selfless devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Colonel Taschioglou in the dedication of his service to his country reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION DEPLOYMENT/CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS			
<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT</b></p> <p style="margin: 0;">AUTHORITY: 10 U.S.C., Section 8013, SECAF: AFI 36-2406, Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems; Executive Order 9397 (SSN), as amended.</p> <p style="margin: 0;">PURPOSE: To provide performance-based decorations while in deployed operations</p> <p style="margin: 0;">ROUTINE USES: Disclosures generally permitted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(b) of the Privacy Act may specifically be disclosed outside the DoD as a routine use pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Section 552a(b) and may be specifically disclosed to other federal agencies. Blanket Routine Uses apply.</p> <p style="margin: 0;">DISCLOSURE: Voluntary; however, nondisclosure may result in missing and/or inaccurate documents in the individual's master personnel records.</p>			
FROM: (Deployed Unit) 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON		TO: (Awarding authority) SENATOR MARK KELLY (AZ)	
NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial) BARBEE, LARRY D.	RANK/GRADE 1 LT	SSAN _____	DEPLOYED UNIT AT TIME OF ACTION 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON
RECOMMENDATION FOR:		"V" DEVICE? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT/SERVICE:
<input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL	OLC: 1		FROM: 2 MAY 1972
<input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL	Are other persons being recommended for this same action? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		TO: 2 MAY 1972
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS			
OCCASION FOR AWARD: <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEROISM <input type="checkbox"/> POSTHUMOUS			
HOME UNIT FORWARDING ADDRESS ROY A DAVIS, COL, USAF (RET) AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION 12888 W BROOKHART WAY PEORIA AZ 85383		PARENT MAJCOM NA	
SUMMARY OF ACTION/MERITORIOUS SERVICE (Use specific bullet examples of act or service):			
<p>SEE ATTACHED CITATION AND NARRATIVE.</p> <p>Background: Late in 1972 award packages were submitted for the heroic actions of the aircrew members of the last flight of Stinger 41. The packages were submitted by the 18th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Operations Officer. These packages were in endorsed by the squadron commander, the wing commander and then submitted to higher headquarters for processing. Unfortunately, the packages for nine of the ten members were lost in the fog of war, the deactivation of the 18th SOS, and the ending of the war.</p> <p>On November 11, 2021, the AC-119 Gunship Association President formed an Awards Committee to resubmit the lost awards packages in accordance with AFM 36-2806 and Title 10 U.S. Code Section 1130. An award package was submitted earlier this past June to the Air Force Personnel Center, but was returned for additional information. It is the purpose of this committee to resubmit the packages to the Air Force Personnel Center for review and include the additional information requested. The 73rd Special Operations Commander and his Awards and Decorations officer have provided us with assistance in this process.</p>			
NAME, RANK, TITLE OF ORIGINATOR LAESSIG, WAYNE F., LT COL, USAF (RET) RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL		SIGNATURE <i>Wayne F. Laessig</i>	DATE 12 Jan 2022
ENDORSEMENTS:			
TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE, RANK AND DATE	
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MPF ACTION		APPROVAL AUTHORITY: PINNED IN THEATER? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
UPDATED		<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE	
FILED		<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVE	
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO ACTION (Include in end of tour)	
		SIGNATURE BLOCK, SIGNATURE & DATE	


AF FORM 3994, 20190610

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RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION DEPLOYMENT/CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS			
<b>PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT</b>			
<b>AUTHORITY:</b> 10 U.S.C., Section 8013, SECAF: AFI 36-2406, Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems; Executive Order 9397 (SSN), as amended. <b>PURPOSE:</b> To provide performance-based decorations while in deployed operations <b>ROUTINE USES:</b> Disclosures generally permitted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(b) of the Privacy Act may specifically be disclosed outside the DoD as a routine use pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Section 552a(b) and may be specifically disclosed to other federal agencies. Blanket Routine Uses apply. <b>DISCLOSURE:</b> Voluntary; however, nondisclosure may result in missing and/or inaccurate documents in the individual's master personnel records.			
<b>FROM:</b> (Deployed Unit) 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON		<b>TO:</b> (Awarding authority) SENATOR MARK KELLY (AZ)	
<b>NAME</b> (Last, First, Middle Initial) BARE, ALLEN W.	<b>RANK/GRADE</b> SSGT	<b>SSAN</b> _____	<b>DEPLOYED UNIT AT TIME OF ACTION</b> 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON
<b>RECOMMENDATION FOR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS		<b>"V" DEVICE?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <b>OLC:</b> Are other persons being recommended for this same action? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<b>PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT/SERVICE:</b> <b>FROM:</b> 2 MAY 1972 <b>TO:</b> 2 MAY 1972	
<b>OCCASION FOR AWARD:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEROISM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POSTHUMOUS			
<b>HOME UNIT FORWARDING ADDRESS</b> ROY A DAVIS, COL, USAF (RET) AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION 12888 W BROOKHART WAY PEORIA AZ 85383		<b>PARENT MAJCOM</b> NA	
<b>SUMMARY OF ACTION/MERITORIOUS SERVICE</b> (Use specific bullet examples of act or service):  SEE ATTACHED CITATION AND NARRATIVE.  Background: Late in 1972 award packages were submitted for the heroic actions of the aircrew members of the last flight of Stinger 41. The packages were submitted by the 18th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Operations Officer. These packages were in endorsed by the squadron commander, the wing commander and then submitted to higher headquarters for processing. Unfortunately, the packages for nine of the ten members were lost in the fog of war, the deactivation of the 18th SOS, and the ending of the war.  On November 11, 2021, the AC-119 Gunship Association President formed an Awards Committee to resubmit the lost awards packages in accordance with AFM 36-2806 and Title 10 U.S. Code Section 1130. An award package was submitted earlier this past June to the Air Force Personnel Center, but was returned for additional information. It is the purpose of this committee to resubmit the packages to the Air Force Personnel Center for review and include the additional information requested. The 73rd Special Operations Commander and his Awards and Decorations officer have provided us with assistance in this process.			
<b>NAME, RANK, TITLE OF ORIGINATOR</b> LAESSIG, WAYNE F., LT COL, USAF (RET) <b>RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL</b>		<b>SIGNATURE</b> <i>Wayne F. Laessig</i>	<b>DATE</b> 12 Jan 2022
<b>ENDORSEMENTS:</b>			
	<b>TO</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>SIGNATURE, RANK AND DATE</b>
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<b>MPF ACTION</b> <input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE <input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVE <input type="checkbox"/> NO ACTION (Include in end of tour)		<b>APPROVAL AUTHORITY: PINNED IN THEATER?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <b>SIGNATURE BLOCK, SIGNATURE &amp; DATE</b>	

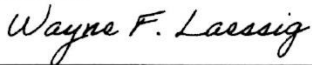
AF FORM 3994, 20190610

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RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION DEPLOYMENT/CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS			
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<b>FROM:</b> (Deployed Unit) 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON		<b>TO:</b> (Awarding authority) SENATOR MARK KELLY (AZ)	
<b>NAME</b> (Last, First, Middle Initial) BARKALOW, JIM R.	<b>RANK/GRADE</b> 1 LT	<b>SSAN</b> 	<b>DEPLOYED UNIT AT TIME OF ACTION</b> 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON
<b>RECOMMENDATION FOR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER SILVER STAR		<b>"V" DEVICE?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <b>OLC:</b> Are other persons being recommended for this same action? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>OCCASION FOR AWARD:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEROISM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POSTHUMOUS		<b>PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT/SERVICE:</b> <b>FROM:</b> 2 MAY 1972 <b>TO:</b> 2 MAY 1972	
<b>HOME UNIT FORWARDING ADDRESS</b> ROY A DAVIS, COL, USAF (RET) AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION 12888 W BROOKHART WAY PEORIA AZ 85383		<b>PARENT MAJCOM</b> NA	
<b>SUMMARY OF ACTION/MERITORIOUS SERVICE</b> (Use specific bullet examples of act or service):  <p>SEE ATTACHED CITATION AND NARRATIVE.</p> <p>Background: Late in 1972 award packages were submitted for the heroic actions of the aircrew members of the last flight of Stinger 41. The packages were submitted by the 18th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Operations Officer. These packages were in endorsed by the squadron commander, the wing commander and then submitted to higher headquarters for processing. Unfortunately, the packages for nine of the ten members were lost in the fog of war, the deactivation of the 18th SOS, and the ending of the war.</p> <p>On November 11, 2021, the AC-119 Gunship Association President formed an Awards Committee to resubmit the lost awards packages in accordance with AFM 36-2806 and Title 10 U.S. Code Section 1130. An award package was submitted earlier this past June to the Air Force Personnel Center, but was returned for additional information. It is the purpose of this committee to resubmit the packages to the Air Force Personnel Center for review and include the additional information requested. The 73rd Special Operations Commander and his Awards and Decorations officer have provided us with assistance in this process.</p>			
<b>NAME, RANK, TITLE OF ORIGINATOR</b> LAESSIG, WAYNE F., LT COL, USAF (RET) <b>RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL</b>		<b>SIGNATURE</b> 	<b>DATE</b> 12 Jan 2022
<b>ENDORSEMENTS:</b>			
TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE, RANK AND DATE	
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<b>MPF ACTION</b>		<b>APPROVAL AUTHORITY: PINNED IN THEATER?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> NO ACTION (Include in end of tour)		<b>SIGNATURE BLOCK, SIGNATURE &amp; DATE</b>	

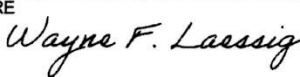
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RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION DEPLOYMENT/CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS			
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT</b></p> <p><b>AUTHORITY:</b> 10 U.S.C., Section 8013, SECAF: AFI 36-2406, Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems; Executive Order 9397 (SSN), as amended.</p> <p><b>PURPOSE:</b> To provide performance-based decorations while in deployed operations</p> <p><b>ROUTINE USES:</b> Disclosures generally permitted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(b) of the Privacy Act may specifically be disclosed outside the DoD as a routine use pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Section 552a(b) and may be specifically disclosed to other federal agencies. Blanket Routine Uses apply.</p> <p><b>DISCLOSURE:</b> Voluntary; however, nondisclosure may result in missing and/or inaccurate documents in the individual's master personnel records.</p>			
<b>FROM: (Deployed Unit)</b> 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON		<b>TO: (Awarding authority)</b> SENATOR MARK KELLY (AZ)	
<b>NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)</b> BROWN, KENNETH R.	<b>RANK/GRADE</b> SSGT	<b>SSAN</b> 	<b>DEPLOYED UNIT AT TIME OF ACTION</b> 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON
<b>RECOMMENDATION FOR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER SILVER STAR		<b>"V" DEVICE?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <b>OLC:</b> Are other persons being recommended for this same action? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<b>PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT/SERVICE:</b> <b>FROM:</b> 2 MAY 1972 <b>TO:</b> 2 MAY 1972	
<b>OCCASION FOR AWARD:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEROISM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POSTHUMOUS			
<b>HOME UNIT FORWARDING ADDRESS</b> ROY A DAVIS, COL, USAF (RET) AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION 12888 W BROOKHART WAY PEORIA AZ 85383		<b>PARENT MAJCOM</b> NA	
<b>SUMMARY OF ACTION/MERITORIOUS SERVICE (Use specific bullet examples of act or service):</b>  <p>SEE ATTACHED CITATION AND NARRATIVE.</p> <p>Background: Late in 1972 award packages were submitted for the heroic actions of the aircrew members of the last flight of Stinger 41. The packages were submitted by the 18th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Operations Officer. These packages were in endorsed by the squadron commander, the wing commander and then submitted to higher headquarters for processing. Unfortunately, the packages for nine of the ten members were lost in the fog of war, the deactivation of the 18th SOS, and the ending of the war.</p> <p>On November 11, 2021, the AC-119 Gunship Association President formed an Awards Committee to resubmit the lost awards packages in accordance with AFM 36-2806 and Title 10 U.S. Code Section 1130. An award package was submitted earlier this past June to the Air Force Personnel Center, but was returned for additional information. It is the purpose of this committee to resubmit the packages to the Air Force Personnel Center for review and include the additional information requested. The 73rd Special Operations Commander and his Awards and Decorations officer have provided us with assistance in this process.</p>			
<b>NAME, RANK, TITLE OF ORIGINATOR</b> LAESSIG, WAYNE F., LT COL, USAF (RET) <b>RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL</b>		<b>SIGNATURE</b> 	<b>DATE</b> 12 Jan 2022
<b>ENDORSEMENTS:</b>			
TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE, RANK AND DATE	
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<b>MPF ACTION</b>		<b>APPROVAL AUTHORITY: PINNED IN THEATER?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> NO ACTION (Include in end of tour)		<b>SIGNATURE BLOCK, SIGNATURE &amp; DATE</b>	

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RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION DEPLOYMENT/CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS			
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT</b></p> <p><b>AUTHORITY:</b> 10 U.S.C., Section 8013, SECAF: AFI 36-2406, Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems; Executive Order 9397 (SSN), as amended.</p> <p><b>PURPOSE:</b> To provide performance-based decorations while in deployed operations</p> <p><b>ROUTINE USES:</b> Disclosures generally permitted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(b) of the Privacy Act may specifically be disclosed outside the DoD as a routine use pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Section 552a(b) and may be specifically disclosed to other federal agencies. Blanket Routine Uses apply.</p> <p><b>DISCLOSURE:</b> Voluntary; however, nondisclosure may result in missing and/or inaccurate documents in the individual's master personnel records.</p>			
<b>FROM:</b> (Deployed Unit) 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON		<b>TO:</b> (Awarding authority) SENATOR MARK KELLY (AZ)	
<b>NAME</b> (Last, First, Middle Initial) CORBETT, RICHARD C.	<b>RANK/GRADE</b> A1C	<b>SSAN</b>	<b>DEPLOYED UNIT AT TIME OF ACTION</b> 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON
<b>RECOMMENDATION FOR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS		<b>"V" DEVICE?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <b>OLC:</b> Are other persons being recommended for this same action? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>OCCASION FOR AWARD:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEROISM <input type="checkbox"/> POSTHUMOUS		<b>PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT/SERVICE:</b> <b>FROM:</b> 2 MAY 1972 <b>TO:</b> 2 MAY 1972	
<b>HOME UNIT FORWARDING ADDRESS</b> ROY A DAVIS, COL, USAF (RET) AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION 12888 W BROOKHART WAY PEORIA AZ 85383		<b>PARENT MAJCOM</b> NA	
<b>SUMMARY OF ACTION/MERITORIOUS SERVICE</b> (Use specific bullet examples of act or service):  <p>SEE ATTACHED CITATION AND NARRATIVE.</p> <p>Background: Late in 1972 award packages were submitted for the heroic actions of the aircrew members of the last flight of Stinger 41. The packages were submitted by the 18th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Operations Officer. These packages were in endorsed by the squadron commander, the wing commander and then submitted to higher headquarters for processing. Unfortunately, the packages for nine of the ten members were lost in the fog of war, the deactivation of the 18th SOS, and the ending of the war.</p> <p>On November 11, 2021, the AC-119 Gunship Association President formed an Awards Committee to resubmit the lost awards packages in accordance with AFM 36-2806 and Title 10 U.S. Code Section 1130. An award package was submitted earlier this past June to the Air Force Personnel Center, but was returned for additional information. It is the purpose of this committee to resubmit the packages to the Air Force Personnel Center for review and include the additional information requested. The 73rd Special Operations Commander and his Awards and Decorations officer have provided us with assistance in this process.</p>			
<b>NAME, RANK, TITLE OF ORIGINATOR</b> LAESSIG, WAYNE F., LT COL, USAF (RET) RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL		<b>SIGNATURE</b> 	<b>DATE</b> 12 Jan 2022
<b>ENDORSEMENTS:</b>			
TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE, RANK AND DATE	
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<b>MPF ACTION</b>		<b>APPROVAL AUTHORITY: PINNED IN THEATER?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> NO ACTION (Include in end of tour)		<b>SIGNATURE BLOCK, SIGNATURE &amp; DATE</b>	

AF FORM 3994, 20190610

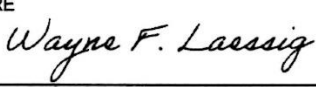
PRIVACY ACT INFORMATION: The information in this form is FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY. Protect IAW the Privacy Act of 1974.



RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION DEPLOYMENT/CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS			
<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT</b></p> <p style="margin: 0;"><b>AUTHORITY:</b> 10 U.S.C., Section 8013, SECAF: AFI 36-2406, Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems; Executive Order 9397 (SSN), as amended.</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><b>PURPOSE:</b> To provide performance-based decorations while in deployed operations</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><b>ROUTINE USES:</b> Disclosures generally permitted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(b) of the Privacy Act may specifically be disclosed outside the DoD as a routine use pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Section 552a(b) and may be specifically disclosed to other federal agencies. Blanket Routine Uses apply.</p> <p style="margin: 0;"><b>DISCLOSURE:</b> Voluntary; however, nondisclosure may result in missing and/or inaccurate documents in the individual's master personnel records.</p>			
<b>FROM: (Deployed Unit)</b> 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON		<b>TO: (Awarding authority)</b> SENATOR MARK KELLY (AZ)	
<b>NAME (Last, First, Middle Initial)</b> IMAN, DELANOR E.	<b>RANK/GRADE</b> SSGT	<b>SSAN</b> 	<b>DEPLOYED UNIT AT TIME OF ACTION</b> 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON
<b>RECOMMENDATION FOR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS		<b>"V" DEVICE?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <b>OLC: 1</b> Are other persons being recommended for this same action? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>OCCASION FOR AWARD:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEROISM <input type="checkbox"/> POSTHUMOUS		<b>PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT/SERVICE:</b> FROM: 2 MAY 1972 TO: 2 MAY 1972	
<b>HOME UNIT FORWARDING ADDRESS</b> ROY A DAVIS, COL, USAF (RET) AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION 12888 W BROOKHART WAY PEORIA AZ 85383		<b>PARENT MAJCOM</b> NA	
<b>SUMMARY OF ACTION/MERITORIOUS SERVICE (Use specific bullet examples of act or service):</b>  SEE ATTACHED CITATION AND NARRATIVE.  <p>Background: Late in 1972 award packages were submitted for the heroic actions of the aircrew members of the last flight of Stinger 41. The packages were submitted by the 18th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Operations Officer. These packages were in endorsed by the squadron commander, the wing commander and then submitted to higher headquarters for processing. Unfortunately, the packages for nine of the ten members were lost in the fog of war, the deactivation of the 18th SOS, and the ending of the war.</p> <p>On November 11, 2021, the AC-119 Gunship Association President formed an Awards Committee to resubmit the lost awards packages in accordance with AFM 36-2806 and Title 10 U.S. Code Section 1130. An award package was submitted earlier this past June to the Air Force Personnel Center, but was returned for additional information. It is the purpose of this committee to resubmit the packages to the Air Force Personnel Center for review and include the additional information requested. The 73rd Special Operations Commander and his Awards and Decorations officer have provided us with assistance in this process.</p>			
<b>NAME, RANK, TITLE OF ORIGINATOR</b> LAESSIG, WAYNE F., LT COL, USAF (RET) RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL		<b>SIGNATURE</b> 	<b>DATE</b> 12 Jan 2022
<b>ENDORSEMENTS:</b>			
TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE, RANK AND DATE	
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<b>MPF ACTION</b>		<b>APPROVAL AUTHORITY: PINNED IN THEATER?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> NO ACTION (Include in end of tour)		<b>SIGNATURE BLOCK, SIGNATURE &amp; DATE</b>	


AF FORM 3994, 20190610

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<b>PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT</b> <b>AUTHORITY:</b> 10 U.S.C., Section 8013, SECAF: AFI 36-2406, Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems; Executive Order 9397 (SSN), as amended. <b>PURPOSE:</b> To provide performance-based decorations while in deployed operations <b>ROUTINE USES:</b> Disclosures generally permitted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(b) of the Privacy Act may specifically be disclosed outside the DoD as a routine use pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Section 552a(b) and may be specifically disclosed to other federal agencies. Blanket Routine Uses apply. <b>DISCLOSURE:</b> Voluntary; however, nondisclosure may result in missing and/or inaccurate documents in the individual's master personnel records.			
<b>FROM:</b> (Deployed Unit) 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON		<b>TO:</b> (Awarding authority) SENATOR MARK KELLY (AZ)	
<b>NAME</b> (Last, First, Middle Initial) SLAGLE, DAVID R.	<b>RANK/GRADE</b> CAPT	<b>SSAN</b>	<b>DEPLOYED UNIT AT TIME OF ACTION</b> 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON
<b>RECOMMENDATION FOR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS		<b>"V" DEVICE?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <b>OLC:</b> Are other persons being recommended for this same action? YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<b>PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT/SERVICE:</b> <b>FROM:</b> 2 MAY 1972 <b>TO:</b> 2 MAY 1972	
<b>OCCASION FOR AWARD:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEROISM <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POSTHUMOUS			
<b>HOME UNIT FORWARDING ADDRESS</b> ROY A DAVIS, COL, USAF (RET) AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION 12888 W BROOKHART WAY PEORIA AZ 85383		<b>PARENT MAJCOM</b> NA	
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<b>NAME, RANK, TITLE OF ORIGINATOR</b> LAESSIG, WAYNE F., LT COL, USAF (RET) <b>RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL</b>		<b>SIGNATURE</b> 	<b>DATE</b> 12 Jan 2022
<b>ENDORSEMENTS:</b>			
TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE, RANK AND DATE	
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<b>MPF ACTION</b>		<b>APPROVAL AUTHORITY: PINNED IN THEATER?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> NO ACTION (Include in end of tour)		<b>SIGNATURE BLOCK, SIGNATURE &amp; DATE</b>	

AF FORM 3994, 20190610

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<b>FROM:</b> (Deployed Unit) 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON		<b>TO:</b> (Awarding authority) SENATOR MARK KELLY (AZ)	
<b>NAME</b> (Last, First, Middle Initial) SLEDZINSKI, FRANK J.	<b>RANK/GRADE</b> SGT	<b>SSAN</b>	<b>DEPLOYED UNIT AT TIME OF ACTION</b> 18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON
<b>RECOMMENDATION FOR:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL <input type="checkbox"/> AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS		<b>"V" DEVICE?</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <b>OLC:</b> 1 <b>Are other persons being recommended for this same action?</b> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	
		<b>PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT/SERVICE:</b> <b>FROM:</b> 2 MAY 1972 <b>TO:</b> 2 MAY 1972	
<b>OCCASION FOR AWARD:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> ACHIEVEMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SERVICE <input type="checkbox"/> COURAGE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HEROISM <input type="checkbox"/> POSTHUMOUS			
<b>HOME UNIT FORWARDING ADDRESS</b> ROY A DAVIS, COL, USAF (RET) AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION 12888 W BROOKHART WAY PEORIA AZ 85383		<b>PARENT MAJCOM</b> NA	
<b>SUMMARY OF ACTION/MERITORIOUS SERVICE</b> (Use specific bullet examples of act or service):  SEE ATTACHED CITATION AND NARRATIVE.  Background: Late in 1972 award packages were submitted for the heroic actions of the aircrew members of the last flight of Stinger 41. The packages were submitted by the 18th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Operations Officer. These packages were in endorsed by the squadron commander, the wing commander and then submitted to higher headquarters for processing. Unfortunately, the packages for nine of the ten members were lost in the fog of war, the deactivation of the 18th SOS, and the ending of the war.  On November 11, 2021, the AC-119 Gunship Association President formed an Awards Committee to resubmit the lost awards packages in accordance with AFM 36-2806 and Title 10 U.S. Code Section 1130. An award package was submitted earlier this past June to the Air Force Personnel Center, but was returned for additional information. It is the purpose of this committee to resubmit the packages to the Air Force Personnel Center for review and include the additional information requested. The 73rd Special Operations Commander and his Awards and Decorations officer have provided us with assistance in this process.			
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<b>ENDORSEMENTS:</b>			
TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE, RANK AND DATE	
1			
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<b>MPF ACTION</b>		<b>APPROVAL AUTHORITY: PINNED IN THEATER?</b> <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
<input type="checkbox"/> APPROVE		<b>SIGNATURE BLOCK, SIGNATURE &amp; DATE</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISAPPROVE			
<input type="checkbox"/> NO ACTION (Include in end of tour)			
<b>UPDATED</b>			
<b>FILED</b>			

AF FORM 3994, 20190610

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**RECOMMENDATION FOR DECORATION DEPLOYMENT/CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS**

**PRIVACY ACT STATEMENT**

**AUTHORITY:** 10 U.S.C., Section 8013, SECAF: AFI 36-2406, Officer and Enlisted Evaluation Systems; Executive Order 9397 (SSN), as amended.

**PURPOSE:** To provide performance-based decorations while in deployed operations

**ROUTINE USES:** Disclosures generally permitted under 5 U.S.C. 552a(b) of the Privacy Act may specifically be disclosed outside the DoD as a routine use pursuant to 5 U.S.C. Section 552a(b) and may be specifically disclosed to other federal agencies. Blanket Routine Uses apply.

**DISCLOSURE:** Voluntary; however, nondisclosure may result in missing and/or inaccurate documents in the individual's master personnel records.

**FROM:** (Deployed Unit)

18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON

**TO:** (Awarding authority)

SENATOR MARK KELLY (AZ)

**NAME** (Last, First, Middle Initial)

TASCHIOGLOU, BYRON J.

**RANK/GRADE**

LT COL

**SSAN**

**DEPLOYED UNIT AT TIME OF ACTION**

18TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON

**RECOMMENDATION FOR:**

☐ AIR FORCE ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL

☐ AIR FORCE COMMENDATION MEDAL

☒ OTHER DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

**"V" DEVICE?** ☒ YES ☐ NO

**OLC:**

Are other persons being recommended for this same action? YES ☒ NO ☐

**PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT/SERVICE:**

**FROM:** 2 MAY 1972

**TO:** 2 MAY 1972

**OCCASION FOR AWARD:** ☐ ACHIEVEMENT ☐ SERVICE ☐ COURAGE ☒ HEROISM ☒ POSTHUMOUS

**HOME UNIT FORWARDING ADDRESS**

ROY A DAVIS, COL, USAF (RET)  
AC-119 GUNSHIP ASSOCIATION  
12888 W BROOKHART WAY  
PEORIA AZ 85383

**PARENT MAJCOM**

NA

**SUMMARY OF ACTION/MERITORIOUS SERVICE** (Use specific bullet examples of act or service):

SEE ATTACHED CITATION AND NARRATIVE.

Background: Late in 1972 award packages were submitted for the heroic actions of the aircrew members of the last flight of Stinger 41. The packages were submitted by the 18th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) Operations Officer. These packages were in endorsed by the squadron commander, the wing commander and then submitted to higher headquarters for processing. Unfortunately, the packages for nine of the ten members were lost in the fog of war, the deactivation of the 18th SOS, and the ending of the war.

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**NAME, RANK, TITLE OF ORIGINATOR**  
LAESSIG, WAYNE F., LT COL, USAF (RET)  
**RECOMMENDING OFFICIAL**

**SIGNATURE**

*Wayne F. Laessig*

**DATE**

12 Jan 2022

**ENDORSEMENTS:**

	TO	ACTION	SIGNATURE, RANK AND DATE
1			
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**MPF ACTION**

**APPROVAL AUTHORITY: PINNED IN THEATER?** ☐ YES ☐ NO

☐ APPROVE

☐ DISAPPROVE

☐ NO ACTION (Include in end of tour)

**UPDATED**

**FILED**

**SIGNATURE BLOCK, SIGNATURE & DATE**

## STINGER 41 AIRCREW MEMBERS

Capt Terrence F. Courtney, Pilot, (KIA)

Recommended for Medal of Honor (1972)

Awarded Air Force Cross (1972)

1Lt Jim R. Barkalow, Copilot (Deceased)

Oral History Video

Award package lost

Recommended for Silver Star

Capt David R. Slagle, Navigator (KIA)

Award package lost

Recommended for Distinguished Flying Cross

SSgt Allen W. Bare, Flight Engineer (Deceased)

Award package lost

Recommended for Distinguished Flying Cross

Lt Col Byron J. Taschioglou, Navigator/FLIR (Deceased)

Award package lost

Recommended for Distinguished Flying Cross

1Lt Larry D. Barbee, Navigator/NOS

Published book [Gunship Chronicles](#) (includes the story of Stinger 41)

Oral History Video

Affidavit

Award package lost

Recommended for Distinguished Flying Cross

SSgt Francis J. Sledzinski, Lead Gunner

Oral History Video

Affidavit

Award package lost

Recommended for Distinguished Flying Cross

SSgt Delanor E. Iman, Gunner

Award package lost

Recommended for Distinguished Flying Cross

A1C Richard C. Corbett, Gunner

Oral History Video

Affidavit

Award package lost

Recommended for Distinguished Flying Cross

SSgt Kenneth R. Brown, Illuminator Operator (KIA)

Award package lost

Recommended for Silver Star

## STINGER 41 AWARDS COMMITTEE

Committee members were selected because of their experience and knowledge of the Stinger 41 gunship mission, and in particular, the 2 May 1972 mission.

- Three of five members are AC-119K pilots.
- Two of five members were AC-119K pilots in the same unit and same time (May 1972) when Stinger 41 was shot down.
- Two of five members flew missions at An Loc the same day as Stinger 41. One flew the mission before and one flew the mission after.
- Four of five members have awards and decorations experience (Lt Col Pollock wrote and submitted the lost awards packages in 1972).
- One of the members was the Combat Search and Rescue Commander for Stinger 41.
- One of the members was an eye witness to the entire event (Lt Gen Waskow) .

Roy A. Davis, Col, USAF (Ret)  
Awards and Decorations Committee Chair  
Past Association Vice President  
AC-119K Pilot  
[roy@island-escape.com](mailto:roy@island-escape.com)  
253.549.2044

Thomas C. Waskow, Lt Gen (Ret), USAF  
O-2 Forward Air Controller (1972)  
Incident eye witness  
[waskowvisions@gmail.com](mailto:waskowvisions@gmail.com)  
503.710.4689

Charlie D. Pollock, Lt Col USAF (Ret)  
Squadron Operations Officer, DaNang, 1972  
Squadron Awards and Decorations Officer, 1972  
AC-119K Pilot, Bien Hoa, 1972  
[camppollock@icloud.com](mailto:camppollock@icloud.com)  
828.479.2068

Wayne F. Laessig, Lt Col USAF (Ret)  
Award Recommending Official  
Past Association President  
Awards and Decorations Officer  
AC-119K Pilot, Bien Hoa, 1972  
[Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Qadvocate@sbcglobal.net)  
707.592.4492

Lamar C. Smith, Capt USAF  
First Command Financial Planning, CEO  
Awards and Decorations Officer  
Combat Search and Rescue Commander, Stinger 41, 1972  
[Lamar@trismiths.com](mailto:Lamar@trismiths.com)  
817.307.5850

STINGER 41

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR BOARD

SUBMITTED TO SENATOR KELLY

19 MAY 2022



# *The* AC-119 Gunship *Association*

FROM: Roy A. Davis, Col, USAF (Ret)  
AC-119 Gunship Association/VP  
12888 W Brookhart Way  
Peoria, Arizona 85383

SUBJECT: Additional Board Information

TO: The Honorable Mark Kelly  
United States Senator  
2201 E Camelback Rd. Phoenix AZ 85016

Dear Senator Kelly

19 May 2022

**BLUF:** The information below is new and may be of interest to the Decorations Board adjudicating Stinger 41. I would appreciate it if you would pass this on.

**Background:** On 18 April 1972 a C-130, call sign Manta 75, was shot down while attempting a low level airdrop of palletized ammunition near an Loc. Damage to the aircraft was caused by AAA to the right engine and right wing. Bailout was ruled out and the airplane crash landed. All crewmembers survived. The surviving crewmembers attest to the fact that all six were awarded the Silver Star in 1972. The pilots of the rescue helicopters were also awarded Silver Stars, albeit 45 years later using Article 10—Section 1130 (Congressional route).

Two weeks later an AC-119K gunship, call sign Stinger 41, was shot down while attempting to destroy a short airdrop of palletized ammunition near An Loc. On their third attempt to establish a firing orbit, Stinger 41 was hit by AAA. Damage to the aircraft was caused to the right engine and right wing. The aircraft was able to maintain flight only with both pilots at the controls. The pilot gave the “abandon the aircraft” command. When all were out, with the exception of the jumpmaster, the pilot ordered the copilot to bailout. The copilot exited the troop door at 300 feet AGL, pulled his D-ring, hit the trees, and fell to the ground suffering injuries requiring over 50 stitches. The airplane rolled over and crashed with the pilot, navigator and jumpmaster aboard. The jumpmaster’s duties required him to stay with the airplane until all others had bailed out. He was unable to bailout. These three sacrificed their lives to save others.

These two missions are very similar. The award packages for Stinger 41 were submitted and lost. If their awards were adjudicated in 1972, as they should have been, they would most likely have been awarded at the same level as Manta 75

V/R



Roy A. Davis, Col, USAF (Ret)  
royadavis@yahoo.com  
(253)549-2044

3 Attachments

1. Endorsement Lt Gen Waskow
2. Manta 75 aircrew
3. Affidavit Lt Gen Waskow



**ENDORSEMENT BY LT GEN THOMAS C. WASKOW**

To Whom It May Concern

AC-119 Stinger 41, 2 May 1972

We have uncovered some new information that was not available when the Stinger 41 awards package was submitted. I believe that this new information may be of value to the Decorations Board. As a young officer flying the O-2 as a Forward Air Controller, I have personal knowledge of this incident. I saw the AAA hit the aircraft, watched the aircrew bailout, and coordinated their successful rescue from a very hostile jungle environment.

I have attached an affidavit which was included in the awards packaging recognizing the aircrew of Stinger 41. They accepted an extremely dangerous daylight mission against a high value target in the most heavily defended area in South Vietnam. Three crewmembers knowingly sacrificed their lives to save their fellow crewmembers. I feel they deserve recognition after being forgotten for fifty years and performing so heroically.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas C. Waskow".

Thomas C. Waskow, Lt General USAF (Ret)

Atch 1

## **MANTA 75 AIRCREW MEMBERS**

C-130 mission  
An Loc, Vietnam  
18 April 1972  
Call sign Manta 75  
Tail number 63-7775

Capt. Don B. Jensen  
Pilot  
Silver Star  
Stars and Stripes article

Maj. Leigh Pratt  
Copilot  
Silver Star  
Grave Marker

Maj. Robert W. Kirkpatrick  
Navigator  
Silver Star  
Orders

Tech Sgt. Ralph W. Kent  
Flight Engineer  
Silver Star  
Orders

Staff Sgt. Ralph T. Bemis  
Loadmaster  
Silver Star  
Orders

Sgt. Charles C. Armistead  
Loadmaster  
Silver Star  
Orders

Atch 2

## LT GEN TOM WASKOW AFFIDAVIT

To Whom It May Concern  
AC-119 Stinger 41, 2 May 1972

Narrative of the events of the loss of Stinger 41, on 2 May 1972 as recorded by Lt Gen Tom Waskow  
USAF (Retired).

On 2 May 1972, I was a Forward Air Controller (FAC), callsign SUND OG 40, assigned to the 21<sup>st</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron, SUND OG FAC, at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Republic of Vietnam. We flew the Cessna 0-2A, a close air support heavily modified Cessna 337. As a First Lieutenant, this was my first operational assignment following graduation from Undergraduate Pilot Training having volunteered for a combat assignment. At this point I was one of the most experienced FACS in the squadron having been assigned to forward operating locations at Phan Rang, Nha Trang and operations with the Special Operations Command at Ban Me Thuot East. Following the start of North Vietnam Army (NVA) invasion of South Vietnam during the Easter Offensive, I was deployed from Nha Trang to join the SUND OG FACS and provide air support in defense of the town of An Loc. I completed my combat tour in November 1972 having flown 282 combat sorties and completing 903 hours of combat flying. On 2 May 1972, I flew a 4.8-hour sortie (4.0-day VFR, 0.8-night VFR) in support of the STINGER 41 Search and Rescue (SAR).

The tempo in SUND OG operations on the morning of 2 May continued to increase as the NVA and Vietcong (VC) forces continued their siege of An Loc. The NVA's 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> infantry divisions supported by VC sappers and the 271<sup>st</sup> Anti-Aircraft Regiment totaling nearly 35,500 troops were committed to annihilate the 5,000 Army of Vietnam (ARVN) and Popular Forces (similar to our National Guard) forces. The NVA goal was to occupy An Loc, the provincial capital of Binh Long Province, by early May and continue down Highway 13 to capture Saigon by the end of the month. The fact that the NVA committed a full Air Defense regiment including track mounted 37mm, 23 mm, 14.7 mm and 51 caliber weapons to the fight was an acknowledgement that they were determined to succeed in their strategic goal. The ARVN forces supported by US Army advisor teams and American Airpower were determined not to let this happen.

That day, I was fragg ed to work the area East of Highway 13 from a line North of Hill 169 to a line just North of Quan Loi airfield. During my previous experience with Special Operations assets, I flew out of Quan Loi conducting insert operations in Cambodia, and my knowledge of the airfield compound (which had been overrun by the NVA) was critical to destroying the air defense units that the NVA had deployed there. As there was evidence that the NVA was repositioning infantry units to begin their final thrust into An Loc, our US Army advisors in An Loc needed us to focus on the eastern approaches to the city. During my Intelligence prebriefing, I was surprised to hear that the 18<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron's AC-119Ks that were deployed to Bien Hoa, were going to continue to fly daylight combat sorties over An Loc in one of the most lethal anti-aircraft environments in South Vietnam. Having flown multiple missions in the vulnerable 0-2A, the SUND OG FACS had expressed concerns for the safety of the STINGER gunships and recommended that they be used after sunset only. For that day's mission, SUND OG 29, Capt. Tom Milligan, was fragg ed to support STINGER 41 on a priority mission during the afternoon Time Over Target.

Takeoff, climb and enroute weapons check were all normal, and as I checked in with our controlling agency, III DASC (Direct Air Support Center) callsign PAWNEE TARGET, I was informed that STINGER 41 had checked in and was entering the target area with SUND OG 29. Upon arriving on station, I checked in the US Army advisor (EXTRA 72) in An Loc and was told that there were US Army Cobra gunships

from F Troop/ 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry (Air) near Quan Loi and they would be working in the area. I noted that the density of anti-aircraft activity began to increase. The frequency of 37 mm AAA was increasing with airbursts near the STINGER orbit. With every orbit, the accuracy of the airbursts near the AC-119K was increasing until I observed a large explosion between the right reciprocal engine and the jet engine on the right wing. At that point the fire intensity increased sending flames well beyond the right tail boom. I immediately changed to SUNDDOG 29's frequency and simultaneously heard STINGER 41's MAYDAY calls on UHF Guard frequency. STINGER 41 had received a mortal blow.

Immediately, I coordinated with SUNDOG 29 and contacted PAWNEE TARGET to launch the SAR forces who were sitting alert at Bien Hoa. I then saw STINGER 41 begin to descend and begin a slow roll to the right followed by repeated attempts to level the wings. I noted an object that appeared to be the flare dispenser thrown out of the back of the aircraft followed by the first crewmember whose parachute opened quickly. Due to the prevailing western winds, the first crewmember, STINGER 41G, began to drift back toward Highway 13 and the concentrated location of enemy forces. There was a delay in the exit of the following crew members, and I identified 6 parachutes (although there were 7 survivors, I never saw the last crew member bail out he was so low.) STINGER 41 then began its final roll to the right and hit the ground at a 90 degree attitude followed by a large explosion at impact. At this point, SUNDOG 29 had descended to low altitude to locate the survivors and I turned my attention to STINGER 41G's slow parachute descent. I contacted PAWNEE TARGET and directed them to keep me posted on the progress of the SAR forces, and to scramble the alert A-37s from the 8<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron at Bien Hoa. My concern was the history of NVA establishing Flack Traps to use downed airmen as bait for the ensuing SAR forces.

As STINGER 41G descended below the trees, I made note of his location and began to coordinate with EXTRA 72 to determine if there were any US Army aviation assets available to assist in the SAR pickups for the downed airmen. It was a race against time and I knew that we had to act quickly. He notified me that there was an Army UH-1, SHARKFISH 37, in the area and he gave me the contact information. I called SHARKFISH 37 and vectored him toward the location of STINGER 41G. In spite of the heavy ground fire, I directed the UH-1 into a pickup position and unfortunately, the trees were too high for him to land. He extended a rope to STINGER 41G who tied the rope to his harness and was evacuated to a safer clearing where he was picked up by a US Army Dustoff, medical support helicopter. At this time, I was notified that the NVA was beginning to move troops to the west toward the crash site and the location of the survivors. When the alert A-37s (Hawk 01 and 02) arrived, I immediately began to direct them against the advancing NVA to enable the safe rescue of STINGER 41G.

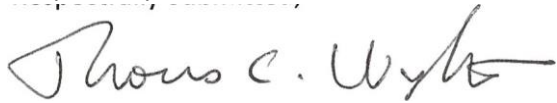
I then coordinated with SUNDOG 29 to act as his radio relay for the arrival of the SAR package of SANDY 05 flight and JOLLY GREEN 23 and 33. Upon arrival, the SAR package then successfully recovered the 6 remaining STINGER 41 crew members. SUNDOG 29 and I then remained on station in an attempt to determine if there were any more survivors well into darkness until fuel exhaustion forced both of us to return to Tan Son Nhut. Following our return to base, SUNDOG 29 and I were escorted to the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Hospital in Saigon for an emotional reunion with the 6 survivors who had been picked up by the JOLLY GREENs.

As I reflect on the events on 2 May 1972, I am reminded of the importance of our Air Force Command and Control responsibility to act on the advice of the aircrews who fly the day-to-day missions. I am still surprised that the AC-119K's were fragged to fly daylight missions over the AAA environment above An Loc. As FACS, we were intimately familiar with the environment and used every asset at our disposal to support the ground commanders. We had assets available to use for Troops in Contact situations where

the precise use of airpower was required. We recommended against repeated daylight exposure for the STINGER crews. It was inappropriate to expose a highly vulnerable combat asset such as the AC-119K to the daytime environment over An Loc. Yet these brave crews performed their tasks in an extraordinary manner. I fully support any further recognition that might be bestowed on these great American crew members. They truly performed above and beyond the call of duty on that day over the town of An Loc.

If you have any questions about this summary. Please call me at the phone number below. These men represent the finest of the Air Force combat experience.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Thomas C. Waskow". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Thomas C. Waskow, Lt Gen USAF, (Retired)  
9517 Northdowns Lane, Huntersville, NC,  
28078  
503.710.4689

Atch 3

STINGER 41 VIDEO AND ORAL HISTORY VIDEO QR CODES

LAST FLIGHT OF STINGER 41



LAST FLIGHT STINGER 41

THE HONORABLE JAMES BARKALOW



BARKALOW

LARRY BARBEE AND CRAIG CORBETT



BARBEE-CORBETT

FRANK SLEDZINSKI



SLEDZINSKI

CORRECTED AWARDS PACKAGE

RESPONSE FROM AIR FORCE  
PERSONNEL CENTER

JUNE 2022



DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER  
JOINT BASE SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH TEXAS

Air Force Personnel Center  
550 C Street West  
JBSA Randolph T 78150-4703  
The Honorable Mark Kelly

United States Senator  
2201 East Camelback Road, Suite 115  
Phoenix, AZ 85016

Dear Senator Kelly

This is in reply to your inquiry on behalf of retired Colonel Roy A. Davis, regarding his desire for award of the Silver Star and Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor to the aircrew for Stinger 41.

On 27 April 2022 the Air Force Decorations Board, composed of senior members of the Secretary of the Air Force Personnel Council (SAF/PC), considered the nomination package for nine of the air crew members, in accordance with the statutory and regulatory eligibility requirements set forth in AFMAN 362806, Awards and Memorialization Program, for the Silver Star (para A2.5.) and the Distinguished Flying Cross (para A2.7.).

On behalf of the Secretary of the Air Force the nominations for the below individuals were thoroughly considered by the Board and the results are listed below:

- Lt Col Byron J. Taschioglou: Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross disapproved.
- Captain David R. Slagle (KIA): Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross is downgraded to award of the Air Medal.
- First Lieutenant Jimmy R. Barkalow: Award of the Silver Star is disapproved.
- First Lieutenant Larry D. Barbee: Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross is disapproved.
- Staff Sergeant Kenneth R. Brown (KIA): Award of the Silver Star is downgraded to award of Distinguished Flying Cross.
- Staff Sergeant Allen W. Bare: Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross is disapproved.
- Staff Sergeant Francis J. Sledzinski: Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross is disapproved.
- Staff Sergeant Delanor E. Iman: Award of the Distinguished Flying Cross is disapproved.
- Airman First Class Richard C. Corbett: Consideration for award of the Distinguished Flying Cross is deferred pending receipt of the official military personnel record from the National Personnel Records Center which must be reviewed IAW Public Law 1 16-92, Section 528 and Department of Defense Instruction 1348.33, DOD Military Decorations and Awards Program, attachment 19f.



Captain Slagle's official military personnel record will be corrected to reflect award of Air Medal. Sergeant Brown's official military personnel record will be corrected to reflect award of the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The medals and decoration elements were mailed to your Phoenix office.

We trust this information is helpful.

Sincerely ,

Date 2022.06.02

STEVEN N. HARRIS, GS-13, DAF

Director of Complaints Resolution

AWARDS PACKAGE RECONSIDERATION

F. WHITTEN PETERS

FORMER SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE

MAY 2023

F. Whitten Peters  
3615 Newark Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20016  
(202) 549-0317

May 8, 2023

Alex Wagner  
Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower  
and Reserve Affairs  
1660 Air Force Pentagon  
Room 4E1010  
Washington, DC 20330

Lt Gen Caroline M. Miller  
Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel,  
and Services  
1040 Air Force Pentagon  
Room 4D765  
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary Wagner and General Miller:

I am writing on behalf of myself, the AC-119 Gunship Association and a group of retired senior officers (see Attachment 1), all combat veterans, to ask for reconsideration of a June 2, 2022, decision of the Decorations Review Board, which declined to provide the requested relief for the crew of Stinger 41, an AC-119K gunship that was shot down over An Loc, Vietnam, on May 2, 1972. The goal of this effort is to recognize the heroism of these airmen based on recommendations submitted for these awards in May 1972, which we believe were lost during the decommissioning of the 18th SOS in the following months. We are not asking for anything other than the completion of an action that was initiated over 50 years ago. The awards package was reconstructed by the AC-119 Gunship Association and submitted to the Review Board by Senator Mark Kelly in early 2022.

At the time the Board acted, the Deputy Director of the SAF Personnel Council stated that the Board had not had an opportunity to review the history of decorations given to other units who served at An Loc during the siege of that city in April and May 1972. I would now like to provide the history that we have been able to piece together from public sources, including additional information about the known danger of hostile action accepted by the Stinger 41 crew. I know from my experience sponsoring a Medal of Honor upgrade for Bill Pitsenbarger that the office of the Air Force Historian or the Board itself would be able to fill in some of the missing pieces. In summary, members of other aircrews flying or shot down in the extremely dense anti-aircraft environment at An Loc have been awarded the Silver Star and at least three airmen were awarded the Air Force Cross.

There are four attachments to this letter for your consideration:

- (1) list of General Officer endorsers;
- (2) a short history of An Loc operations, the mission of Stinger 41 at An Loc, and public record information about decorations awarded at An Loc;
- (3) requested awards and current status for each member of the Stinger 41 crew; and
- (4) award submissions in the form provided to Senator Kelly (AZ).

As our Nation celebrates the 50th anniversary of the end of the war in Vietnam, I hope that you can act favorably on this request. I note in this regard, that many of the records kept in the field in Vietnam were lost or were incomplete, as evidenced by the upgrade action taken for Bill Pitsenbarger and the two dozen veterans more recently awarded Medals of Honor for actions taken in Vietnam. While records are undoubtedly incomplete, I believe enough remains to justify the relief requested.

Very truly yours,

[signed]

F. Whitten Peters

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

Retired general officers, all with combat experience, who have read and concur with the requests for corrections of awards (sorted by rank, then date of rank).

GEN RONALD R. FOGLEMAN

GEN MICHAEL E. RYAN

GEN JOHN P. JUMPER

GEN CHARLES T. "TONY" ROBERTSON JR.

GEN CHARLES R. HOLLAND

GEN NORTON A. SCHWARTZ

GEN LANCE L. SMITH

LT GEN JOHN S. FAIRFIELD

LT GEN JOHN H. CAMPBELL

LT GEN TIMOTHY A. KINNAN

LT GEN TOME H. WALTERS JR.

LT GEN RICHARD E. "TEX" BROWN III

LT GEN THOMAS C. WASKOW

LT GEN BRUCE A. WRIGHT

LT GEN STEPHEN G. WOOD

LT GEN DONALD C. WURSTER

LT GEN ERIC E. FIEL

LT GEN BRADLEY A. HEITHOLD

LT GEN THOMAS J. TRASK

LT GEN MARSHALL B. "BRAD" WEBB

MAJ GEN RICHARD C. MARR

MAJ GEN DOUGLAS S. METCALF

MAJ GEN MICHAEL J. KINGSLEY

BRIG GEN DALE E. STOVALL

## ATTACHMENT 2

### A. THE SIEGE OF AN LOC

In early April 1972, North Vietnamese (NVA) forces began a concerted attack on An Loc, a city only 65 miles north of Saigon and situated on Route 13, which provided a path directly to Saigon.<sup>1</sup> The NVA quickly cut off ground access to An Loc from the north. On April 7, the invaders overran an airstrip northeast of An Loc used by the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) for helicopter operations. On the same day, the NVA secured control of Route 13, cutting off resupply of An Loc by ground from the south. Within days, the NVA had control of the high ground overlooking An Loc and had positioned spotters and anti-aircraft artillery around the city.

“The NVA had all avenues of approach covered with massive .51-caliber, 23-mm, 37-mm, and 57-mm [AAA] fire. Additionally, they had introduced the SA-7 Strella heat-seeking antiaircraft missile \* \* \*. Furthermore, a system of early warning spotters enabled the North Vietnamese to identify incoming aircraft so that their gunners would be ready to fire. The result was a devastating pattern of antiaircraft fire every time an aircraft got close to the city.”<sup>2</sup>

With only airlift left for supplying An Loc after April 7, ARVN forces used helicopters for resupply missions until helicopter resupply was deemed too dangerous on April 12, 1972, after an ARVN CH-47 was shot down. Three U.S. aircraft had also been damaged by AAA during the air resupply effort through April 12.<sup>3</sup>

At about the same time helicopter operations were stopped, the NVA began tank and infantry assaults on An Loc itself. These were met by Air Force and Navy tactical aircraft and Army helicopters, which rained ordnance on the NVA forces. In addition, AC-119 and AC-130 gunships were brought into the fight. Shortly thereafter, B-52 “Arc Light” missions began to attack NVA staging areas and troop concentrations around the city. To coordinate the air strikes,

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<sup>1</sup> See generally Wilbanks, *The Battle of An Loc*, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Combat Studies Institute at 22ff (1993). Wilbanks was a U.S. Advisor serving in An Loc at the time of the siege in April 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Wilbanks, at 24. A safe operating altitude in SA-7 threat areas for the slow-flying aircraft for which the SA-7 was the greatest threat was 7000 feet. This made the AC-119 “an immediate casualty to the SA-7 envelope because it was only effective up to 4500 feet (3500 feet optimum) with its miniguns (7.62mm machine guns) and up to 6500 feet with its 20mm cannon.” HQ PACAF, PROJECT CHECO SOUTHEAST ASIA REPORT, *THE BATTLE FOR AN LOC 5 APRIL – 26 JUNE 1972* (31 Dec. 1973) (declassified 31 DEC 1981) [“CHECO 1 Report”] at 48.

<sup>3</sup> LaValle, USAF Southeast Asia Monograph Series, Volume II, Monograph 3, *Airpower and the 1972 Spring Invasion* (Office of Air Force History 1985) [“LaValle”], at 86.

three USAF forward air controllers<sup>4</sup> flew over An Loc continuously to relay strike requests from ground elements to tactical and bomber aircraft as they approached An Loc.

## B. Fixed-wing Resupply at An Loc

After April 12, ARVN fixed-wing aircraft continued to perform resupply using a small drop zone located at the soccer stadium. From April 12 through April 14, ARVN C-123 aircraft flew 27 sorties with 135 tons of supplies to the drop zone. However, only 34 tons reached friendly forces; the rest fell to the enemy.<sup>5</sup> On the 14th, a C-123 was shot down during a resupply mission. Another was shot down on April 18th or 19th.<sup>6</sup>

The Air Force was tasked to use C-130 aircraft to drop pallets into An Loc using the Container Delivery System (CDS) during daylight drops.<sup>7</sup> The drop zone was a 200-meter square soccer field in the southern part of An Loc. Five missions were planned, two each on April 15 and 16 and one on April 18. These missions were designed to ingress at high speed and low altitude, with a climb to 600 feet for a low-speed pass over the drop zone.<sup>8</sup> Flights near the drop zone quickly proved highly dangerous because of the massed AAA.<sup>9</sup>

The first C-130 mission on April 15 dropped its load but was hit by ground fire. Even so, it made it back to base. However, the second –“Spare 617” – was not so lucky. Before it could drop its pallets of ammunition, AAA came through the cockpit, wounded the co-pilot, and killed the engineer. AAA also hit the engines and wing on the left side of the aircraft and fire broke out on the aircraft including in the cargo compartment which still held pallets of live ammunition. The loadmaster, Shaub, was able to put out the fire long enough to release the pallets, which exploded just after leaving the aircraft. Even with serious damage, the aircraft was able to return to its base. For his actions in combat, the pilot was awarded the Air Force Cross. The loadmaster, who was burned while putting out the fire and releasing the pallets, was nominated for the Medal of Honor but was awarded the Air Force Cross.<sup>10</sup>

The first mission on April 16 missed the drop zone. Because of weather, the second mission for April 16, Manta 75, was delayed until April 18. On the 18th, Manta 75 flew into massive amounts of AAA and was forced to ditch in a field south of An Loc. Because the flight was too low to allow bailout, the pilots flew away from An Loc until they found a clearing and could execute a crash landing. Miraculously, the ditching was witnessed by Army helicopters

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<sup>4</sup> LaValle at 81.

<sup>5</sup> LTC Len Funk, *The Siege at An Loc: How Air Resupply Helped Save the City* (National Museum of the United States Army (downloaded from armyhistory.org on 4/14/2023) [“Funk”], at 4

<sup>6</sup> LaValle at 86; CHECO 1 Report at 28.

<sup>7</sup> LaValle at 87.

<sup>8</sup> LaValle at 87.

<sup>9</sup> LaValle at 87.

<sup>10</sup> LaValle at 89

returning from a mission north of An Loc, whose pilots saw the Manta 75 crew crawling out of the wreckage and then landed to provide assistance and call in additional rescue helicopters. All six crew members of Manta 75 were awarded the silver star. The Army helicopter pilots and their aerial gunners who rescued the crew also got Silver Stars, but 45 years later, in 2017.<sup>11</sup>

The loss of Manta 75 and another ARVN C-123 (with loss of the crew) caused daylight low-level drops to be suspended.<sup>12</sup> No missions were flown until the Air Force modified its standard aerial resupply procedures and gunship operations to reduce the risk to those operations.<sup>13</sup> The public record has two different accounts of how those operations were changed.

One source states that after April 18, a decision was made to fly low-level C-130 missions only at night to reduce the threat of AAA.<sup>14</sup> Night missions were then flown with limited success on April 24 and 25, when a C-130 flying at night was shot down with the loss of all on board. After a pause, night drops were continued until May 3, when another C-130 flying at night was shot down with loss of the crew.<sup>15</sup> At that point, all low-level operations were terminated.

A second source states that after April 18-19, low-level drops were abandoned in favor of drops from higher altitudes, which were ultimately unsuccessful:

Unwilling to risk C-130 aircraft and crews on low-level missions any longer, the Air Force decided to attempt resupply using the Ground Radar Aerial Delivery System (GRADS). Flying at a relatively "safe" altitude of 6000-9000 feet, the aircraft was vectored to a Computed Aerial Release Point (CARP) by a ground radar station (MSQ-71). Upon arrival, the aircraft accomplished a high-altitude drop with a low opening parachute (HALO) \* \* \*. In eight missions between 19-23 April, the GRADS failed due to parachute malfunctions of every type imaginable. Some bundles smashed into the ground, but most drifted outside the defensive perimeter to succor the enemy.<sup>16</sup>

Because GRADS flights had not been successful, low-level daylight CDS drops were reinstated on April 23<sup>17</sup> and continued until another C-130 was shot down on April 25 or 26 with

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<sup>11</sup> See Thomas Ward, *How 9th Cavalry Hueys Save a Downed Crew at An Loc*, Historynet.com (5/4/2022).

<sup>12</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 28

<sup>13</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 57.

<sup>14</sup> Funk at 5.

<sup>15</sup> LaValle at 90-91.

<sup>16</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 28-29; LaValle at 89

<sup>17</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 29.



no survivors. Night drops were then attempted but were not effective, with less than 30% of pallets being recovered and many of the rest falling to the enemy.<sup>18</sup> The major problem with the night drops was the inability of the C-130 crews to see the drop zone. For a very short while, AC-130 and AC-119 gunships were used to illuminate the drop zone. “Showing the lights for as little as five seconds vastly improved drop chances [but increased risk] for the gunships to be struck by ground fire and missiles because the light attracted ordnance both literally and figuratively.”<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, use of the gunship lights was quickly discontinued.<sup>20</sup>

After the loss of another C-130 on May 3, and the first firing of an SA-7 missile by the NVA on April 29,<sup>21</sup> all low-level missions were stopped and replaced with high-level drops to avoid the massed AAA and the SA-7 threat.

By the time the low-level missions stopped, three C-123 and three C-130 aircraft had been shot down and 38 C-130s, over half the aircraft assigned, had sustained moderate to severe battle damage.<sup>22</sup> A PACAF report to the Air Staff summed up the low-level missions flown at An Loc this way:

Until the siege of An Loc, the USAF had found the CDS to be not only workable but very efficient. \* \* \*. To be successful, this system required an element of surprise and a relatively permissive environment, neither of which existed at An Loc. The VC/NVA ground forces were able to predict the path of the incoming aircraft by plotting locations received from ground observers strung throughout the area around An Loc. Surrounding the provincial capital and located on all possible air approaches to the city, heavy small arms, .51 caliber machine gun, and AAA fire were easily directed at the C-130s. Enemy gunfire could be especially effective over the drop zone where all the C-130s had to pass at speeds as slow as 130 knots. Even when FACs coordinated tactical suppression missions along the same track the C-130 was to follow, only reduction – not elimination – of AAA was effected. *The result was entirely predictable: 100 percent of the aircraft employing CDS techniques received battle damage.*<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 30.

<sup>19</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 33.

<sup>20</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 33.

<sup>21</sup> Funk at 6.

<sup>22</sup> Funk at 5.

<sup>23</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 29-30 (emphasis added).

### C. The Mission of Stinger 41

By 1972, the Air Force knew well that all of its gunships were very vulnerable to massed AAA.<sup>24</sup> This was true of all gunships operating in Southeast Asia, the AC-47, AC-119G, the AC-119K, and the AC-130.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, to prevent damage to the aircraft, AC-130s were often accompanied by three F-4 aircraft and a tanker for continuous “flak suppression” by the rotating F-4 aircraft.<sup>26</sup> Apparently, without such flak suppression, four AC-47 gunships had been shot down in Laos in 1965-66, in an area of “concentrated automatic weapons and anti-aircraft artillery,” which “precipitated the decision to withdraw the aircraft from Laos in July 1966.”<sup>27</sup> It is not at all surprising given this history that the Air Force in early April 1972 wanted to pull the gunships out of An Loc because the surrounding AAA was so fierce, but that desire was countermanded by higher command.<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, the Air Force generally did not choose to task the AC-119 gunship to fly near or over An Loc. And, as noted above, even night operations near An Loc were very dangerous if a gunship became visible even for a few seconds. Accordingly, the Stingers were “forced up and away from the highly defended city.”<sup>29</sup> There was, however, one exception, the AC-119K mission on May 2, 1972, called Stinger 41.

Throughout the period of low-level drops, a persistent problem was supplies falling not only outside the drop zone but outside the defensive perimeter, where the dropped pallets

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<sup>24</sup> HQ PACAF, PROJECT CHECO SOUTHEAST ASIA REPORT, *FIXED WING GUNSHIPS IN SEA* (30 Nov. 1971) (declassified 8/15/2006) [“CHECO 2 Report”] at xv; 4 (“the AC-47’s chances for survival were not good in an area of concentrated automatic weapons and anti-aircraft artillery”); 19 (AC-119G could operate in daytime so long as FAC directed them away from high threat areas); 23 (gunship operations in Cambodia were successful where “no dense concentration of enemy AAA”); 30 (The AC-119K was extremely effective as a truck killer, but care had to be taken to avoid areas of heavy AAA concentration. As with other gunships, the AC-119K’s relatively slow speed and predictable attack pattern made it vulnerable to AAA”); 31 (AC-119K forced to fly at 7,000 feet AGL when AAA present); 43 (“Limitations evolving from their relatively slow speeds and the necessity to operate at low altitude dictate that air superiority must exist and areas of heavy automatic weapons and/or anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) fire must be avoided,” *quoting* TACM 55-249, *Aircrew Operational Procedures, AC-119 and AC-130* (30 Jan 70)); 45 (“AC-130s must operate in a permissive environment and this weapon system cannot survive in heavy enemy AAA fire or SAM threat areas,” *quoting* *16th SOS History, January – March 1971*, Annex B).

<sup>25</sup> See previous footnote.

<sup>26</sup> See CHECO 2 Report, at 43; 46.

<sup>27</sup> See CHECO 2 Report at 3-4.

<sup>28</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 41, citing Maj Gen James F. Hollingsworth, CG TRAC, to Gen C. Abrams, “Daily Commander’s Evaluation,” 091000H-101000H Apr 72 (C).

<sup>29</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 59.

resupplied the enemy. "Ground commanders were concerned that drops were becoming more harmful than helpful to their cause."<sup>30</sup> This was particularly true of pallets of ammunition. Thus it was on May 2, 1972, Stinger 41 was sent to search out and destroy a pallet of ammunition that had fallen outside the defensive perimeter at An Loc. Locating such a pallet required a daylight flight. It also required Stinger 41 to fly close to the drop zone, which was the area most heavily defended by AAA, and where 38 C-130s had suffered moderate to severe battle damage, nine airmen had been killed, and three C-123s and two (later three) C-130s had been shot down, one a week earlier with all crew lost. Indeed, a C-130 operating in the same area was shot down with all crew lost the very next day, May 3, after which all low-level resupply was stopped permanently.

Therefore, when Stinger 41 took off from Bien Hoa Air Base, everyone understood that it was being tasked to fly in daylight into the thick of extremely dangerous AAA. The Stinger was not designed for daylight work or to fly in an AAA environment. The aircraft was painted black and flew low and slow in circles, which in daylight made it an easy target. The Stinger gunship crews were specifically trained only to fly night combat missions. The crew of ten accepted this mission, even though they knew it would be very dangerous.

Once in the target area, they attempted to set up a firing circle but were driven off by accurate 37-mm AAA. They made several additional attempts to acquire the target, and on their final try, intense AAA hit their right wing. Both engines on the right side were destroyed, the landing gear dropped down and fire trailed beyond the tail of the aircraft. It took both pilots at the controls to keep the aircraft in the air long enough to enable the crew to bail out. The jumpmaster assumed his aircraft emergency duty at the rear door to ensure all aircrew parachutes were properly attached. At that point, both pilots and the jumpmaster knew they would most likely have to go down with the aircraft in order to save their fellow crew members.

The pilot announced "ABANDON THE AIRCRAFT" and seven crew members bailed out into the hostile enemy jungle below. One was shot at on the way down, with bullets piercing his parachute. Thirty seconds before impact, 300 feet above the ground, the pilot directed the copilot to abandon the aircraft. The copilot ran to the rear of the aircraft and dove out the troop door. He pulled his "D" ring, his chute opened almost immediately, and he hit the tops of the 200-foot-high jungle canopy. His chute collapsed and he fell through the foliage and miraculously survived. His injuries required over 50 stitches. With the copilot no longer at the controls and assisting the pilot, the aircraft rolled over to the right and crashed. Three crew members were KIA and seven survived.

The seven survivors were now in the dense enemy-controlled jungle. They had four hours to be rescued before nightfall or they would not survive the night. Their heroism and skill were demonstrated by their professionalism in the aircraft and now they had to match that to survive on the ground. All of the jungle survival skills they had trained for paid off. With the help of two forward air controllers (one of which is now Lt Gen (RET) Tom Waskow) and a

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<sup>30</sup> CHECO 1 Report at 34.

combat search and rescue team, they made it out of the jungle at dusk. This was one of the largest group rescues of the war.

Stinger 41 thus became the only AC-119K to be shot down in the war in Vietnam.

Shortly after the survivors were rescued, their wartime squadron and wing commanders recommended the pilot for the Medal of Honor, and the other crew members for awards ranging from the Silver Star to the Distinguished Flying Cross w/Valor to recognize their heroism. The pilot subsequently was awarded the Air Force Cross posthumously. The awards for the other nine crew members appear to have been lost, as no actions were ever taken on them.

#### D. AWARD PRECEDENCE

There is no public information about decorations awarded to aircrew on aircraft that were damaged or crashed in the defense of An Loc other than Spare 617 and Manta 75.

The second supply mission over An Loc was Spare 617, a mission on which the co-pilot was wounded and the navigator killed by an initial burst of AAA. For saving the crippled aircraft and getting it back to base, the pilot was awarded the Air Force Cross. The senior loadmaster, who was burned while putting out fire in the cargo area and releasing the pallets of ammunition before they exploded, was nominated for the Medal of Honor but was also awarded the Air Force Cross. There is no public record of any decorations being awarded to the navigator (KIA), the wounded co-pilot, the engineer, or a second loadmaster.

Manta 75 was shot down on April 18, 1972, at low level with all six crew aboard, all of whom survived a crash landing and were rescued. The wartime Decorations Board in 1972 awarded each of the six crewmembers the Silver Star. The two Army helicopter pilots and two enlisted aerial gunners who assisted in the rescue also ultimately received Silver Stars, albeit not until decades later when their records were reviewed.<sup>31</sup>

In 2022, through the efforts of the AC-119 Gunship Association, the lost decorations recommendations for the nine crew members who had received no contemporaneous award were reconstructed for those lost in 1972 and submitted with Congressional endorsement to the Secretary of the Air Force. The co-pilot, who performed exactly the same duties as the pilot who had received the Air Force Cross, and who also was willing to sacrifice his life to save his fellow crew members, was nominated for the Silver Star – the same award given to the co-pilot of Manta 75 -- but the 2022 Decorations Board disapproved that recommendation and awarded nothing. In total, six of the nine crew member award recommendations were disapproved, two were downgraded and one was deferred. These award determinations are not consistent with the awards given to the Manta 75 crew members who served in similar positions.

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<sup>31</sup> See Thomas Ward, *How 9th Cavalry Hueys Save a Downed Crew at An Loc*, Historynet.com (5/4/2022).

### **ATTACHMENT 3**

The award packages submitted in 2022 are resubmitted (Attachment 4 link) with a request for reconsideration. The current status of the nine Stinger 41 aircrew members' awards is as follows:

- 1Lt Jim R. Barkalow, Copilot (Deceased)  
Recommended for the Silver Star  
Award disapproved (2022)
- Capt David R. Slagle, Navigator (KIA)  
Recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross w/Valor  
Award downgraded to an Air Medal (2022)
- SSgt Allen W. Bare, Flight Engineer (Deceased)  
Recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross w/Valor  
Award disapproved (2022)
- Lt Col Byron J. Taschioglou, Navigator/FLIR (Deceased)  
Recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross w/Valor  
Award disapproved (2022)
- 1Lt Larry D. Barbee, Navigator/NOS  
Recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross w/Valor  
Award disapproved (2022)
- SSgt Francis J. Sledzinski, Lead Gunner  
Recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross w/Valor  
Award disapproved (2022)
- SSgt Delanor E. Iman, Gunner  
Recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross w/Valor  
Award disapproved (2022)
- A1C Richard C. Corbett, Gunner  
Recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross w/Valor  
Award deferred (2022)
- SSgt Kenneth R. Brown, Illuminator Operator (KIA)  
Recommended for the Silver Star  
Downgraded to a Distinguished Flying Cross (2022)

**ATTACHMENT 4**  
**STINGER 41 AWARD SUBMISSIONS**

SECDEF AWARDS PACKAGE

RESPONSE FROM AIR FORCE  
PERSONNEL CENTER

FEBRUARY 2025



**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
HEADQUARTERS AIR FORCE PERSONNEL CENTER JOINT BASE  
SAN ANTONIO-RANDOLPH TEXAS**

Air Force Personnel Center  
550 C Street West  
JBSA Randolph TX 78150-4703

The Honorable Mark Kelly  
United States Senate  
1661 N. Swan Rd, Suite 238  
Tucson, AZ 85712

Dear Senator Kelly:

This is in reply to your inquiry on behalf of retired Colonel Roy Davis, regarding his desire for award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) to Airman First Class Richard C. Corbett.

As previously noted, officials at the Air Force Personnel Center forwarded the nomination package for Airman First Class Corbett to the Secretary of the Air Force (SecAF) Personnel Council (SAF/PC) for consideration by the SecAF Decorations Board. The Board convened on April 25, 2024, and again on October 8, 2024, to consider the award of the DFC request for Airman First Class Corbett, as well as reconsideration for awards for the entire Stinger 41 crew. The nomination packages that were submitted included reconstructed recommendations, which were supported by proposed citations, eyewitness statements from three members of the Stinger 41 crew, four other affidavits, limited excerpts of military personnel records, copies of photographs, and links to video testimonials of some members of the crew. When the Board considered the original submission for the Stinger 41 crew, it was precluded from obtaining the customary written advisory from the Air Force Historical Research Agency (AFHRA) due to the proponent's emphatic request for rapid adjudication in time for the 50th Anniversary Commemoration of the events under review.

The Board thoroughly reviewed the recommendations, and all supporting evidence submitted. The Board also reviewed relevant excerpts of the available official military personnel records of the nominees, relevant case files from previous SecAF Decorations Board decisions, as well as the criteria in effect at the time for the Silver Star Medal, DFC, and Air Medal (AM).

The analysis focused on the three primary affidavits, which could corroborate the actions of the individual crew members described in the recommendations. Unfortunately, the affidavits mostly describe the



nominees' own accounts of their individual actions with very little corroboration or attribution of the actions of other members of the crew. The Board concluded that these actions did not meet the criteria for the Silver Star Medal, DFC, or AM.

Former Secretary of the Air Force, the Honorable F. Whitten Peters, requested reconsideration of the original award nomination package for the Stinger 41 crew, which included the DFC recommendation for Airman First Class Corbett. In addition to the matters originally submitted by the proponents, the reconsideration request included an unofficial 7-page summary [unknown author] of An Loc operations, the Stinger 41 mission at An Loc, and an overview public record information about decorations awarded at An Loc. No other new direct evidence was provided which could shed any light on the actions of the individual crew members. While the new submission did include the noted unofficial historical overview, due diligence required the Board Staff to request an official AFHRA advisory opinion. At the same time, the Board Staff also secured complete copies of all military personnel records (including those of Airman First Class Corbett) from the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC).

The Board thoroughly considered the entire submission anew, carefully reviewing the complete evidence of record related to its original decision, the request for reconsideration and accompanying materials, the newly acquired AFHRA advisory opinion, and the military personnel records of all nine crew members under consideration. The Board considered the arguments of the proponents who believe the DFC recommendations were lost due to the fog of war and decommissioning of the 18th Special Operations Squadron. However, the Board determined that the military personnel records of the nominees and the information detailed in the AFHRA advisory opinion indicate it is more likely than not the entire crew of Stinger 41 was duly considered for recognition in real time. Specifically, military personnel records indicate six members of the crew received AMs, where the award period included the events of May 2, 1972. Two crew members were each awarded the DFC, one for a mission on April 30, 1972, the other for a mission on May 1, 1972. Additionally, all ten Stinger 41 crewmembers were awarded Purple Hearts for injuries sustained on the May 2, 1972, mission. Finally, references to this mission were included in various performance reports.

After concluding it was unlikely the recommendations were lost and despite the lack of independent affidavits or evidence, the Board compared the stated acts with Silver Star Medal and DFC awards made during the Vietnam conflict to determine if there had been clear error or injustice in considering the awards. Even in the light most favorable to the members under consideration, the acts did not meet the requirements for award of these decorations.

The Board also considered the contention (raised in the historical overview) that the Board's previous decision is not consistent with the awards given to crew members in similar circumstances. Specifically, proponents argue the crew of Stinger 41 is similarly situated to the crews of Manta 75 (April 18, 1972) or Spare 612 (date not specified) which proponents indicate were downed near An Loc and were awarded various valor decorations. However, the only evidence provided supporting this notion is a footnote referring to a history.net article describing the Army's decision to award DFCs to members of a helicopter crew for rescuing the Manta 75 crew after it crashed. Because the submission lacked any substantiating documentation relating to the

decorations bestowed to these members (e.g., excerpts of personnel records, copies of decoration citations, etc.), the Board determined the evidence was not sufficient to conclude that the crew of Stinger 41 was not fairly considered (in real time or by this Board in 2022) for recognition when compared to purportedly similarly situated members.

The Board originally concluded there was sufficient evidence to support the award of the DFC to Staff Sergeant Brown and AM to Captain Slagel of the Stinger 41 crew, but concluded the evidence was insufficient to bestow any additional recognition, to include award of the DFC to Airman First Class Corbett. After a thorough review of the complete evidence of record available in this case, to include the newly available AFHRA opinion and complete copies of the nominees' military personnel records, the Board determined there was no basis to disturb the original decision. Therefore, award of the DFC to Airman First Class Corbett is not approved. This decision in no way diminishes the Board's sincere gratitude for the Stinger 41 crew's service to the Nation.

We trust this information is helpful.

Sincerely

STEVEN N. HARRIS, GS-13, DAF  
Director of Complaints Resolution

## **STINGER 41 CREWMEMBERS KILLED IN ACTION (KIA)**



Capt Terrence F. Courtney - Pilot  
Recommended for the Medal of Honor  
Received the Air Force Cross (1972)



Capt David R. Slagle - Navigator  
Recommended for the Distinguished Flying Cross w/Valor  
Downgraded to an Air Medal (2022)



SSgt Kenneth R. Brown, Illuminator Operator  
Recommended for the Silver Star  
Downgraded to a Distinguished Flying Cross (2022)