



News Release

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

437th AIRLIFT WING PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
102 East Hill Blvd., Rm. 223, Charleston AFB, S.C. 29404-5154
Phone: (843) 963-5608, 5588 or 5589 Fax (843) 963-5604

PAO email: Linda.pepin@charleston.af.mil
After duty hours, call the base operator or
command post (963-2531) & ask for a PA rep

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Team Charleston aircrews to receive Distinguished Flying Cross

CHARLESTON AFB, S.C. – Thirty-five Team Charleston aircrew members received the Distinguished Flying Cross for their contributions during Operation Enduring Freedom.

Maj. Gen. George “Nick” Williams, 21st Air Force commander, presented the medals to 19 of the airmen today in a ceremony at the Charleston Club.

The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded to any person who, while serving in any capacity of the Armed Forces of the United States, distinguishes himself by heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight.

Seven aircrew members earned their Distinguished Flying Crosses during a mission Oct. 7-8, 2001 over Afghanistan. On the first night of combat operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, these crewmembers – Maj. Corey Martin, Maj. William Spangenthal, Maj. Stan Davis, Capt. Anthony Carr, Maj. (Retired) Don Himebaugh, Tech. Sgt. Charles Irwin, Tech. Sgt. Christopher Lemons, and Staff Sgt. Kenneth Kluge – made aviation history by flying the first-ever C-17 combat airdrop, the longest continuous C-17 mission, the highest altitude airdrop, and the first use of night vision goggles in a C-17 formation.

Twenty-seven aircrew members earned their Distinguished Flying Crosses during the insertion of combat forces into the Camp Rhino Landing Zone in Afghanistan Nov. 28-30, 2001. These crewmembers were also part of setting C-17 milestones, including the first-ever combat landing on an unimproved dirt landing strip, and the first-ever use of night vision goggles to fly blacked-out approaches and landings in enemy territory.

The aircrews were responsible for carrying into battle a total of 2.9 million pounds of cargo and 481 ground combat troops. The twenty-seven individuals receiving Distinguished Flying Crosses for those missions are Lieutenant Colonels Steve Groenheim, Michael Thayne, and Matt Whelan; Majors Donald Himebaugh, Richard Sheetz and Richard Williamson; Captains Bradley Cochran, Christopher Henslee, Greg Johnson, David McDonald, Kevin Minor, William Ormiston, John Zenz, Edward Kauffman, Eric Skipper, Joseph Szucs, Joseph Sanduk and Brian Wald; Master Sergeants Scott Wetzel and John Bishop; Technical Sergeants Gary Ferguson and Christopher Schick; and Staff Sergeants Charles Lauderdale, Corey Carter, James Lewis, Toby Thompson and Jeremy Roberts.