

# ACTS OF VALOR



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# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## ROBERT GUTIERREZ

### AIR FORCE CROSS

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, takes pleasure in presenting the Air Force Cross to Staff Sergeant Robert Gutierrez, Jr., United States Air Force, for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States in Heart Province, Afghanistan, on 5 October 2009. On that date, while assigned as a Combat Controller of the 21<sup>st</sup> Special Tactics Squadron, to an Army Special Forces Detachment, Sergeant Gutierrez and his team conducted a high-risk nighttime raid to capture the number two Taliban leader in the region. During the initial assault, the team was attacked with a barrage of rifle and heavy machine-gun fire from a numerically superior and determined enemy force. Sergeant Gutierrez was shot in the chest, his team leader was shot in the leg, and the 10-man element was pinned down in a building with no escape route. In great pain and confronting the very real possibility that he would die, Sergeant Gutierrez seized the initiative and refused to relinquish his duties as Joint Terminal Attack Controller. Under intense fire, he engaged Taliban fighters with his M-4 rifle and brought air power to bear, controlling three "danger close" A-10 strafing runs with exceptional precision against enemy forces just 30 feet away. After the first A-10 attack, the team medic performed a needle decompression to re-inflate Sergeant Gutierrez's collapsed lung, allowing him to direct the next two strafe runs which decimated the enemy force and allowed the team to escape the kill zone without additional casualties. Throughout the four-hour battle, Sergeant Gutierrez's valorous actions, at great risk to his own life, helped save the lives of his teammates and dealt a crushing blow to the regional Taliban network. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Sergeant Gutierrez reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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## CALVIN MARKHAM

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star Medal to William "Calvin" Markham, Master Sergeant, U.S. Air Force, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action while serving with the 23d Special Tactics Squadron in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, near Kabul, Afghanistan, from 14 October to 30 November 2001. On 21 October 2001, within 48 hours of the detachment's arrival in Afghanistan, Sergeant Markham planned, organized, and led a close air support reconnaissance mission to within two kilometers of the Taliban front line in order to identify potential observation posts from which his team could execute missions. Almost immediately upon arrival, Sergeant Markham's team came under direct enemy fire from tanks, mortars and artillery. Despite heavy incoming fire, in which numerous rounds impacted within 50 to 75 meters of his position, Sergeant Markham instinctively and successfully directed multiple close air support sorties against key Taliban leadership positions, command and control elements, fortified positions, and numerous anti-aircraft artillery sites. Throughout this highly successful mission, Sergeant Markham skillfully directed multiple air strikes involving over 175 sorties of both strategic and attack aircraft resulting in the elimination of approximately 450 enemy vehicles and over 3,500 enemy troops. The resulting close air support operations were decisive in supporting the Northern Alliance ground offensive, which resulted in the successful liberation of the capital city of Kabul and led to the eventual surrender of hundreds of al Qaeda and Taliban ground forces. Master Sergeant Markham's valor and calmness under enemy fire were a constant source of inspiration to his detachment and General Fahim Khan's Northern Alliance forces. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Markham has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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## RICHARD HUNTER

### AIR FORCE CROSS

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, takes pleasure in presenting the Air Force Cross to Staff Sergeant Richard B. Hunter, United States Air Force, for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States as a Joint Terminal Attack Controller, 23d Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron, Combined Joint Special Operations, Air Component-Afghanistan in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan from 2 November 2016 to 3 November 2016. During this period, while assigned to a Special Forces Team, Sergeant Hunter displayed extraordinary bravery as his team assaulted an insurgent safe haven. As they moved in a narrow alley, Taliban fighters ambushed them with grenade and heavy machine gun fire. With no regard for his own life, Sergeant Hunter placed himself between the enemy and his team, shielding the wounded with his body while providing suppressive fire with his rifle. To allow his team to withdraw from the kill zone, he positioned himself at the rear of the element, closest to the threat to prevent fratricide, and directed multiple danger-close air strikes to within 20 meters; well inside the 190-meter danger-close distance for 105 millimeter rounds. With the team still under persistent enemy fire, Sergeant Hunter and four teammates cleared a compound to gain cover, preventing further casualties. Upon hearing a call for help, he again exposed himself to fire, rushing outside the compound to drag a wounded teammate 30 meters to safety. For the next two hours he controlled four AC-130U and AH-64D aircraft, continually directing fire on enemy positions, including 105 millimeter rounds to within 13 and 16 meters of his location. He courageously assumed greater risk by occupying the best vantage point to inflict devastating effect on the enemy, preventing the team from being overrun. During exfiltration, he called for air strikes to suppress heavy enemy fire, he bravely exposed himself in a field during daylight to mark a landing zone with smoke. Throughout the eight-hour assault, Sergeant Hunter alternated between firing his weapon at the enemy and controlling air assets, directing 1.787 munitions in 31 danger-close engagements, most to within 90 meters, resulting in 57 lives saved and 27 enemy killed. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Sergeant Hunter reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



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## ZACHARY KLINE

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Staff Sergeant Zachary A. Kline, United States Air Force, for gallantry in action in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force near Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan, on 23 April 2011. On that date, Sergeant Kline was part of a rescue team tasked to recover two United States Army pilots downed in the Allasay Valley, an insurgent controlled area east of Bagram. While descending on the rescue hoist, Sergeant Kline's team took effective fire that damaged the aircraft and seriously injured one crew member. The aircraft was forced to depart leaving Sergeant Kline and his team on the ground. At the wreckage, Sergeant Kline directed his teammate to assess the patient and conducted a search to recover sensitive items. Soon after, Sergeant Kline began taking effective fire at his position next to the aircraft. With Pedro no longer overhead, the insurgents voiced their desire to move to the crash site and take coalition forces hostage. Sergeant Kline coordinated by radio with aircraft to engage enemy troops. He coordinated AH-64s on to targets in the high ground and calculated reverse azimuths to identify threats located on low ground behind his position. One incoming round ignited fuel within the wreckage and the crash site erupted in flames. Sergeant Kline pushed through enemy fire to an alternate hide site and continued to guide overhead weaponry onto fighting positions. Sergeant Kline showed great heroism over the six-hour rescue mission and risked his life during an overwhelming volume of enemy fire and enabled the recovery of one United States Army Soldier from enemy territory. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Kline has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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## JOHN CHAPMAN

### MEDAL OF HONOR

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pride in presenting the Medal of Honor (Posthumously) to Technical Sergeant John A. Chapman, United States Air Force, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty. Technical Sergeant Chapman distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism as an Air Force Special Tactics Combat Controller of the 24<sup>th</sup> Special Tactics Squadron, attached to a Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) Team conducting reconnaissance operations in Takur Ghar, Afghanistan, on 4 March 2002. During insertion, the team's helicopter was ambushed causing a teammate to fall into an entrenched group of enemy combatants below. Sergeant Chapman and the team voluntarily reinserted onto the snow-capped mountain, into the heart of a known enemy stronghold to rescue one of their own. Without regard for his own safety, Sergeant Chapman immediately engaged, moving in the direction of the closest enemy position despite coming under heavy fire from multiple directions. He fearlessly charged an enemy bunker, up a steep incline in thigh-deep snow and into hostile fire, directly engaging the enemy. Upon reaching the bunker, Sergeant Chapman assaulted and cleared the position, killing all enemy occupants. With complete disregard for his own life, Sergeant Chapman deliberately moved from cover only 12 meters from the enemy, and exposed himself once again to attack a second bunker, from which an emplaced machine gun was firing on his team. During this assault from an exposed position directly in the line of intense fire, Sergeant Chapman was struck and injured by enemy fire. Despite severe, mortal wounds, he continued to fight relentlessly, sustaining a violent engagement with multiple enemy personnel before making the ultimate sacrifice. By his heroic actions and extraordinary valor, sacrificing his life for the lives of his teammates, Technical Sergeant Chapman upheld the highest traditions of military service and reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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## THOMAS CASE

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Staff Sergeant Thomas E. Case, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States as a member of the 17<sup>th</sup> Air Support Operations Squadron, 18<sup>th</sup> Air Support Operations Group, in action near western Iraq, from 31 March 2003 to 5 April 2003. During this period, while serving as an Enlisted Terminal Attack Controller for Company B, 3d Ranger Battalion, his company began receiving heavy direct and effective small arms fire, ZPU-23s, rocket propelled grenades, mortar and artillery fire. Though the situation was bleak and the small force was in danger of being overrun, Sergeant Case reacted quickly. While engaging the enemy with his personal weapon, often within 30 meters of his position, he simultaneously directed air strikes. After three days of continuous firefight, they began receiving heavy and accurate artillery fire, over 300 rounds within eight hours. With complete disregard for his own safety, Sergeant Case exposed himself to this unrelenting attack to control close air support while fragments of concrete and shrapnel from the blasts punctured his rucksack and often knocked him to the ground. At one point he controlled 14 aircraft simultaneously. Refusing to be relieved until the objective was secure, Sergeant Case was responsible for more than 300 enemy casualties and the destruction of 29 tanks, three heavy cargo trucks, nine S-60s, 14 anti-aircraft pieces, nine 155-millimeter artillery, 22 82-millimeter mortar, six 60-millimeter mortars, eight ammunition caches and 10 enemy boats. His situational awareness, skill as a controller, and courage under fire were decisive in the battle and ensured mission success and the safety of 152 Rangers. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Case has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



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## THOMAS CASE

**SILVER STAR** (1<sup>st</sup> BRONZE OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

Master Sergeant Thomas Case, United States Air Force, heroically distinguished himself through gallantry as a tactical air control party in Afghanistan for a Classified Special Operations Task Force from 16 July 2009 to 17 July 2009. During one mission Sergeant Case and his platoon conducted a nighttime operation deep into the Khowst-Gardez Pass in order to capture or kill an enemy combatant and to destroy mountain camps utilized by insurgent forces in the area. Due to weight restrictions on the helicopters used to insert Sergeant Case's platoon, his platoon was inserted approximately 30 minutes after the lead platoon's insertion. With the helicopter landing zone at 8,500-foot mean sea level, they began an arduous five kilometer foot-movement toward the target area located at 8,842-foot mean sea level. As the platoon maneuvered to the target area, Sergeant Case maintained control of the aircraft supporting this operation. He utilized an AC-130 gunship and manned intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft to maintain sensor coverage of the target area as well as the infiltration route. After moving nearly 1,000 feet up mountainous terrain, Sergeant Case realized they were off their planned route and notified his ground force commander in order to get the assault force moving in the right direction. At that time the platoon came into decisive contact with an enemy machine gun position approximately 15 meters away and perched above them in the high ground. Pinned down in the center of the platoon's formation, Sergeant Case recognized they needed to employ close air support. With machine gun rounds impacting the ground and trees within two feet of him, Sergeant Case remained exposed to enemy fire so he could locate the enemy position. Unfortunately, the wires on his radio were seriously damaged making it nearly impossible for him to communicate with their supporting aircraft. After identifying and troubleshooting the problem, Sergeant Case was able to hold the wires together and request immediate close air support from the gunship. With the gunship in an offset orbit for noise mitigation and needing approximately two minutes to reposition in order to support, Sergeant Case requested an intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance update from the aircraft supporting overhead. After he was told the enemy was approximately 15 meters away, Sergeant Case stood up while under enemy fire in order to take charge of five support personnel attached to the platoon. With enemy gunfire continuing to impact within feet of his position and whizzing by his head, he laid down suppressive fire with his M4 rifle and expertly directed the five enablers to move behind cover. Afterwards, Sergeant Case briefed his close air support plan to the ground force commander and then employed his damaged radio to call for danger close AC-130 engagement on the enemy position. Due to the extreme close proximity of friendly forces to the enemy, and with bullets still hitting within feet of his position, he again willingly stood up while under fire in order to make sure the rounds from the AC-130 hit the correct target area. After the second danger close

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## THOMAS CASE

**SILVER STAR** (1<sup>st</sup> BRONZE OAK LEAF CLUSTER)

mission Sergeant Case saw two enemy fighters, armed with AK-47s, bounding down the hill and shooting at him and the ground force commander. As they closed within 15 meters of their position, Sergeant Case literally placed himself between the enemy personnel and the ground force commander in order to protect him from their gunfire. Employing his M-4 rifle and directing the ground force commander to take cover, he then killed both insurgents, both of whom turned out to be highly trained foreign fighters. As the fighting continued, the enemy repositioned to even higher terrain and began to throw hand grenades down the mountain slope. One grenade exploded approximately 10 meters from his position, damaging his helmet and wounding two rangers. After directing six more danger close engagements, Sergeant Case realized that he needed to link up with the lead element in order to have his eyes on the entrenched enemy position and to continue pushing the enemy back. With the dust and haze from the air strikes bring visibility to near zero, he climbed 50 meters up a 60-degree embankment to reach the fire team leader, all while under enemy fire. Once there, he rendezvoused with the lead fire team, quickly fixed his radio, and directed four AC-130 air strikes on three enemy personnel that were approximately 100 meters away. Shortly afterward, he and the lead element engaged two enemy personnel who flanked their position within seven meters. With the enemy located in the trees, Sergeant Case threw a grenade into their position and then followed up with his M-4 rifle to assure both insurgents were dead. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Case has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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## KEARY MILLER

### AIR FORCE CROSS

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, takes pleasure in presenting the Air Force Cross to Technical Sergeant Keary J. Miller, United States Air Force, for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force while serving with the 123d Special Tactics Squadron, during combat operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, near Marzak, Patkia Province, Afghanistan, on 4 March 2002. On that proud date, Sergeant Miller was the Air Force Combat Search and Rescue Team Leader assigned to a Quick Reaction Force tasked to recover two American servicemen evading capture in austere terrain occupied by massed al Qaida and Taliban forces. Shortly before landing, his MH-47E helicopter received accurate rocket-propelled grenade and small arms fire, severely disabling the aircraft and causing it to crash land. Sergeant Miller and the remainder of the assault force formed a hasty defense and immediately suffered four fatalities and five critical casualties. Despite intense enemy fire, he moved throughout the battlefield, crossing open danger areas on numerous occasions, in order to assess and care for critically wounded servicemen. As the battle drew on, Sergeant Miller removed M-203 and 5.56 rounds from the deceased and, in multiple acts of extraordinary courage, proceeded through some of the day's heaviest rocket-propelled grenade, mortar, and small arms fire, while distributing the ammunition from position to position. Shortly thereafter another attack erupted, killing one Pararescueman and compromising the casualty collection point. Sergeant Miller braved the barrage of fire in order to move the wounded to better cover and concealment. His intrepidity and skill led to the successful delivery of 10 gravely wounded Americans to life-saving medical treatment and to the recovery of seven servicemen killed in action. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Miller has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

*NOTE: Technical Sergeant Miller was federalized from the Kentucky Air National Guard. During the 17-hour engagement called the "Battle of Robert's Ridge," two Airmen were posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross, and Keary Miller was one of EIGHT Airmen awarded the Silver Star. During the 17-hour engagement called the "Battle of Robert's Ridge," he was one of TWO PJs awarded the Air Force Cross. Twelve other Airmen received Silver Stars for this action. The battle was so-named because it followed an incident in which Navy Seal Neil Roberts fell from a helicopter as it attempted to land on a mountaintop controlled by al Qaeda fighters, initiating an intense and heroic rescue effort.*

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## TIM WILKINSON

### AIR FORCE CROSS

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, United States Code, takes pleasure in presenting the Air Force Cross to Technical Sergeant Timothy A. Wilkinson, United States Air Force, for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an opposing armed force as a 24<sup>th</sup> Special Tactics Squadron Pararescueman in the vicinity of the Olympic Hotel, Mogadishu, Somalia, during Operation Restore Hope from 3 October 1993 to 4 October 1993. During that period, in response to an incident in which a United States helicopter had been shot down by a rocket propelled grenade, Sergeant Wilkinson conducted a fast rope insertion into the crash site and came under extremely heavy enemy fire from three directions. In the initial rescue effort, he repeatedly exposed himself to intense small arms fire and grenades to clear debris, provide emergency medical treatment to the survivors, and extract dead and wounded members of the crew from the wreckage. On his own initiative, Sergeant Wilkinson broke cover on three separate occasions to locate and provide emergency medical treatment to three Ranger casualties. In doing so, he ignored all concern for his personal safety to cross a 45-meter wide open area blanketed with intense fire from small arms, and rocket propelled grenades. Sergeant Wilkinson's medical skills and uncommon valor saved the lives of multiple gravely wounded American soldiers in the longest sustained fire fight involving United States combat forces in over 20 years. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Sergeant Wilkinson reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

*NOTE: When Timothy Wilkinson earned the Air Force Cross he became the first enlisted man to earn the award since 1975. His mission was supporting Task Force Ranger during a 15-hour firefight, the longest sustained firefight by U.S. forces since the Vietnam War, and a battle that was subsequently made into the movie "Blackhawk Down." Two Army Special Forces Soldiers, Randall Shughart and Gary Gordon, were posthumously awarded Medals of Honor for this mission, and more than 40 Silver Stars were awarded for heroism in that same action.*



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## **WILLIAM PITSENBARGER**

### **MEDAL OF HONOR**

For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty. Airman First Class Pitsenbarger distinguished himself by extreme valor on 11 April 1966 near Cam My, Republic of Vietnam, while assigned as a Pararescue Crew Member, Detachment 6, 38<sup>th</sup> Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron. On that date, Airman Pitsenbarger was aboard a rescue helicopter responding to a call for evacuation of casualties incurred in an ongoing firefight between elements of the United States Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division and a sizable enemy force approximately 35 miles east of Saigon. With complete disregard for personal safety, Airman Pitsenbarger volunteered to ride a hoist more than 100-feet through the jungle, to the ground. On the ground, he organized and coordinated rescue efforts, cared for the wounded, prepared casualties for evacuation, and insured that the recovery operation continued in a smooth and orderly fashion. Through his personal efforts, the evacuation of the wounded was greatly expedited. As each of the nine casualties evacuated that day were recovered, Airman Pitsenbarger refused evacuation in order to get more wounded soldiers to safety. After several pick-ups, one of the two rescue helicopters involved in the evacuation was struck by heavy enemy ground fire and was forced to leave the scene for an emergency landing. Airman Pitsenbarger stayed behind on the ground to perform medical duties. Shortly thereafter, the area came under sniper and mortar fire. During a subsequent attempt to evacuate the site, American forces came under heavy assault by a large Viet Cong force. When the enemy launched the assault, the evacuation was called off and Airman Pitsenbarger took up arms with the besieged infantrymen. He courageously resisted the enemy, braving intense gunfire to gather and distribute vital ammunition to American defenders. As the battle raged on, he repeatedly exposed himself to enemy fire to care for the wounded, pull them out of the line of fire, and return fire whenever he could, during which time he was wounded three times. Despite his wounds, he valiantly fought on, simultaneously treating as many wounded as possible. In the vicious fighting that followed, the American forces suffered 80 percent casualties as their perimeter was breached, and Airman Pitsenbarger was fatally wounded. Airman Pitsenbarger exposed himself to almost certain death by staying on the ground, and perished while saving the lives of wounded infantrymen. His bravery and determination exemplify the highest professional standards and traditions of military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Air Force.

*NOTE: Airman Pitsenbarger has also been awarded the Airman's Medal, two Purple Hearts, Air Medal, Good Conduct Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Bronze Palm medal and the Republic of Vietnam Medal of Military Merit.*



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## BLAKE LUTTRELL

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star (Army Award) to Captain Blake O. Luttrell, United States Air Force, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action. Captain Luttrell distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous conduct in the face of the enemy of the United States as Joint Terminal Attack Controller, Task Force One Panther, Mazar E Sharif, Afghanistan, The Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. During a clearing operation on 9 January 2012, Captain Luttrell's partnered element of Afghan Commandos became overwhelmed by intense small arms fire from hardened insurgents fighting from fortified positions within caves. The initial engagement resulted in two Commando casualties, including one who died immediately from his wounds. Captain Luttrell maneuvered with his element through heavy enemy fire to recover the casualties. Captain Luttrell calmly identified enemy positions and provided precise terminal guidance to supporting air weapons teams to neutralize the enemy fortifications by multiple air-to-ground engagements as the assault force continued to advance. The element recovered the wounded commandos as enemy fire focused on the maneuvering assault force. Captain Luttrell continued to control air weapons team fires to neutralize enemy positions within the cave complex to cover the element. The devastating effect of the precision fires on the enemy created a momentary lull and enabled the assault force to move the casualties to a safe location for extraction. Captain Luttrell subsequently directed an inbound medical evacuation helicopter through arduous terrain to make a safe landing to evacuate the friendly casualties, and then returned to continue the assault. The assault force continued maneuvering on the enemy fortifications, and cleared a compound to take cover from intensifying enemy small arms fire to prepare for a final assault. When the medic within his element became critically wounded while protecting the assault force and women and children found near the enemy position, Captain Luttrell deployed a smoke grenade into the main cave fortifications, returned fire, and courageously moved through continued incoming fire to assist his comrade. Captain Luttrell continued to engage the enemy from extremely close range as he assisted with moving his critically wounded teammate behind a covered position to begin medically treating him. Captain Luttrell again directed the medical evacuation helicopter to extract the critically wounded medic, and immediately returned to continue the assault. Captain Luttrell quickly ensured all members of the assault force remained in covered positions and immediately provided terminal guidance for a decisive, precision strike by supporting close air support platforms to neutralize the fortified enemy. The assault force subsequently repositioned reinforcement to assist with the assault to destroy the remaining enemy within the cave complex. Captain Luttrell courageously took the fight to the enemy in the face of extreme danger. Captain Luttrell's actions are in keeping with the finest traditions of military heroism and reflect distinct credit upon himself, the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan, and the United States Army.

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## CHRIS BARADAT

### AIR FORCE CROSS

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Staff Sergeant Christopher G. Baradat, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States in Sono Valley, Sheltan District, Kunar Province, Afghanistan, on 6 April 2013. On that day, while attached to a United States Special Forces Team, Sergeant Baradat displayed extraordinary bravery and complete disregard for his own safety as he and his teammates responded as a quick reactionary force for a pinned down coalition element. Upon notification, Sergeant Baradat, his Special Forces Team and attached Afghan forces sprang into action entering the treacherous Sono Valley, a known sanctuary for Taliban and Al Qaeda militants. As Sergeant Baradat and his team moved through the tight valley on foot, they came under heavy enemy attack as they closed to within 800 meters of the pinned down element. Sergeant Baradat charged through a hail of enemy gunfire, engaging insurgent positions with 30-mm gun runs from an A-10 aircraft before taking cover in a small compound with a handful of his teammates, approximately 400 meters from the pinned down element. Once in the compound, both ridgelines bordering the valley erupted in gunfire, attacking both Sergeant Baradat's location and that of the pinned down element. As he and his team hunkered down behind cover against the heavy onslaught of enemy firepower, Sergeant Baradat realized he could not effectively communicate with overhead aerial assets from his protected position. With complete disregard for his own safety, Sergeant Baradat moved to the center of the compound into direct enemy fire in order to communicate with orbiting aircraft. Ignoring repeated shouts from his teammate to take cover, over the next three hours Sergeant Baradat calmly directed lethal engagements from A-10 and AC-130 aircraft onto 13 enemy fighting positions consisting of over 100 fighters, while ignoring enemy machine gun rounds impacting all around him, spraying him with dirt. When all friendly forces consolidated and egressed the valley, Sergeant Baradat once again showed incredible bravery when he purposefully jumped onto the running board of the vehicle where he was continuously exposed to enemy fire so he could maintain communications. With rounds again impacting all around him, he continued to control AC-130 and A-10 strikes to destroy the enemy attempting to cut off the coalition forces. Sergeant Baradat's heroic and selfless actions directly resulted in over 50 enemy fighters killed, while saving the lives of over 150 friendly personnel. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Baradat has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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**IVAN RUIZ**

**AIR FORCE CROSS**

The President of the United States of America, authorized by section 8742 of Title 10 U.S.C., takes pleasure in presenting the Air Force Cross to Master Sergeant Ivan M. Ruiz for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States as a Pararescue Craftsman, 22 Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron, Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component-Afghanistan, in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, on 10 December 2013. On that date, Sergeant Ruiz attached to a team of Army Special Forces personnel and Afghan Commandos conducting a raid in denied terrain. After a point blank engagement with four insurgents, Sergeant Ruiz's team continued to clear a small compound of resistance while maneuvering toward neutralized insurgents to search their remains. Isolated from the 14-man element, Sergeant Ruiz and two teammates encountered a vicious insurgent crossfire, sweeping the courtyard with small arms fire and throwing hand grenades from barricaded strongpoints. Sergeant Ruiz eliminated one enemy fighter with well-aimed carbine fire, while enemy fire wounded his two comrades, rendering them immobile and exposed to enemy fire. Alone in the courtyard, Sergeant Ruiz completely disregarded his personal safety and refused to withdraw to cover. Single-handedly suppressing enemy fire until reinforcements arrived, Sergeant Ruiz pressed ahead under intense fire to reach his wounded comrades. Drawing fire from the enemy and returning fire to prevent the insurgents from maneuvering, he was gradually driven into a prone fighting position by the sheer volume of enemy fire. His refusal to leave the courtyard prevented enemy fighters from engaging his wounded teammates with direct fire weapons, though enemy grenades impacted within five meters of Sergeant Ruiz's position. Eventually joined by teammates, Sergeant Ruiz advanced through a hail of machine gun fire and grenades to drag a wounded teammate back to a position of relative cover and concealment. While still dangerously exposed to gunfire raking the compound, Sergeant Ruiz administered life-saving trauma care to his teammates while wearing night vision goggles. Sergeant Ruiz's heroic actions through intense enemy fire saved the lives of two teammates and contributed to 11 insurgents killed. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Sergeant Ruiz reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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## MATT MCKENNA

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Technical Sergeant Matthew P. McKenna, United States Air Force, for gallantry in action in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States while serving with the 22d Special Tactics Squadron in the Murza Kalay Village, Afghanistan, on 21 September 2013. On that date, Technical Sergeant McKenna excelled as a Joint Terminal Attack Controller on a combined team of Army Special Operations Forces and Afghan 3d Special Operations Kandak conducting a raid in denied terrain. Shortly after infiltration, Sergeant McKenna controlled air and ground sensors to execute air strikes on 10 insurgents in fighting positions preventing a catastrophic ambush. The patient enemy waited for reinforcements, maneuvered, and initiated a ferocious ambush from dominant fighting positions, pinning down friendly elements. On several occasions, with no regard for his personal safety, Sergeant McKenna moved from cover, exposing himself to withering machine gun and rocket propelled grenade fire to locate friendly elements trapped by enemy fire. He then executed control of danger close precision strikes from airborne assets. The battle raged for several hours and friendly forces were burning through their supply of ammunition at a breakneck pace and were in grave danger of running out completely. Sergeant McKenna orchestrated an aerial re-supply at two locations, placing ammunition within 50 feet of distressed forces preventing what was sure to be significant casualties. While friendly forces fought for their lives on the valley floor, insurgents from the surrounding areas responded with 65 reinforcements that maneuvered toward friendly locations. Enemy forces from the high ground began closing in on Sergeant McKenna's vulnerable position nearly enveloping it and threatening to overrun them. With complete disregard for his personal safety, and ignoring his teammates' urging to find cover, Sergeant McKenna bounded away from cover further into the kill zone exposing himself to heavy fire from an advancing enemy in order to control danger close air strikes. The perfectly placed strikes provided time and space for friendly forces running low on ammunition to maneuver, ascend the mountain, and bound to the emergency exfiltration point. Sergeant McKenna's actions throughout the 13-hour battle ensured survivability of friendly forces against a formidable enemy, enabled his team to clear two kilometers of terrain, beat back three enemy counter attacks, and contributed substantially to an incredible 103 enemy killed in action. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant McKenna has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



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## MATT GREINER

### SILVER CROSS

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Technical Sergeant Matthew J. Greiner, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States while serving with the 21<sup>st</sup> Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron in Helmand Province, Afghanistan from 27 to 29 September 2014. On these days, while attached to a United States Special Forces team, Sergeant Greiner displayed extraordinary bravery and complete disregard for his own safety as he and his teammates assaulted an insurgent safe haven. Within minutes of landing on target, Sergeant Greiner used available aircraft sensors to locate groups of insurgents maneuvering through villages to engage A-10s and AH-64s and eliminate six advancing fighters before they could establish defensible positions. After destroying a massive weapons cache overnight, coalition forces came under heavy fire from an overwhelming force. With rocket-propelled grenades and machine gun fire erupting from all directions, Sergeant Greiner immediately began defensive strikes supporting the three embattled positions. He controlled multiple aircraft conducting simultaneous strikes on two radio networks, while braving heavy barrages of machine gun fire in order to maintain situational awareness of three friendly positions and over 20 enemy positions. With two observation posts in danger of being overrun by insurgents within 40 meters of their position, Sergeant Greiner focused all efforts on halting the enemy advance. He immediately destroyed two compounds housing an insurgent machine gun position and enemy strongpoints, one danger close to friendly positions, with four 500-pound bombs from a pair of F-16s. Insurgents continued to advance on friendly positions, again reaching within 40 meters. The enemy had coalition forces pinned down with machine gun fire while fighters crept through the adjacent corn fields. The enemy surged in a coordinated attack after intercepted communications stated, "Take the Americans alive." As the enemy neared grenade range, Sergeant Greiner confirmed all friendly locations and engaged at danger close distance with three Hellfires and multiple strafing runs from AH-64s. At one point, Sergeant Greiner identified six fighters with weapons approaching friendly forces on motorcycles, and he engaged with an AC-130 to decimate the enemy and stop the potential suicide attack. After 48 hours of intense fighting, 21 insurgents were eliminated, thanks to his employment of aerial assets in nine danger close engagements. Without Sergeant Greiner's expertise and skillful execution, there was no doubt in his teammates' minds that their positions would have been overrun by hostile forces on multiple occasions. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Greiner has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## DUSTIN TEMPLE

### AIR FORCE CROSS

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Title 10, Section 8742, U.S.C, awards the Air Force Cross to Senior Airman Dustin H. Temple for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States while serving with the 21<sup>st</sup> Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron in Helmand Province, Afghanistan from 27 to 29 September 2014. On these days, while attached to a United States Special Forces team, Airman Temple displayed extraordinary bravery and complete disregard for his own life as he and his teammates assaulted an insurgent safe haven. As overwhelming hostile fire continually suppressed his team, Airman Temple broke the assault on many occasions with danger close air support from F-16s, AH-1s, AC-130s and an MQ-1. Following a teammate being gravely wounded by a sniper, he put himself directly in the line of fire, and dragged his wounded teammate from the rooftop. With the evacuation helicopter inbound, Airman Temple again risked his own life to save his teammate, by carrying him across 100 meters of open terrain. Despite overwhelming and accurate enemy machine gun fire, he remained on the open landing zone, providing covering fire while his teammates pulled back. After he returned to the compound, enemy fighters surged within 40 meters after intercepted communications stated, "Take the Americans alive." Airman Temple immediately directed F-16s in danger close strafing runs, killing one insurgent and repelling the assault. As supplies dwindled, he braved open terrain again to retrieve critical ammunition from a re-supply helicopter. With continuous machine gun fire, he and a teammate sprinted into the open and dragged the supplies off the aircraft; however, unable to carry the entire load, they withdrew back to cover. Airman Temple called in danger close fires from F-16s to cover his team as they went out to retrieve the remaining ammunition. Despite the continuous machine gun fire, Airman Temple and two teammates again ran into open terrain to retrieve the remainder of the supplies for a second time. At the end of the 48-hour engagement, he controlled 28 attack helicopters and 20 fixed wing assets for a total of 26 engagements while safely employing munitions at danger close range 75 times. Airman Temple's heroic and selfless actions directly resulted in confirmed 10 enemy fighters killed, and another eight estimated killed, while saving the lives of 38 friendly forces. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Airman Temple has reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## MICHAEL BLOUT

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Staff Sergeant Michael T. Blout, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States at Wardak Province, Afghanistan, on 23 October 2012. On that day, Sergeant Blout served as the primary Joint Terminal Attack Controller assigned to an Army Special Forces Team. While conducting operation Amal Kard Sygana II, Sergeant Blout received radio traffic indicating an Army Special Forces teammate required immediate medical attention after sustaining wounds from an enemy ambush. Reacting instinctively, Sergeant Blout sprinted 1.6 kilometers toward the sounds of enemy fire to assist his wounded comrade. Coordinating with aircraft orbiting overhead, Sergeant Blout ascertained the location of wounded personnel and directed friendly maneuver elements to converge in support. Sergeant Blout simultaneously used air assets to monitor and track enemy movements. Arriving at the scene of the ambushed friendly element, Sergeant Blout raced across open ground while under direct and accurate enemy fire, placing himself between his wounded teammate and the enemy in order to return fire and protect his fallen comrade and the medic furiously working to save his life. While exchanging direct fire with the enemy, Sergeant Blout orchestrated close air support to keep the enemy at bay and coordinated for the arrival of medical evacuation assets. Hearing the rotor blades of incoming evacuation helicopters, Sergeant Blout marked an impromptu landing zone while still under heavy enemy fire, and aborted the first landing attempt due to the volume and accuracy of insurgent small arms and machine gun fire. Without regard for his own safety, Sergeant Blout placed himself between the landing zone and the enemy and urged his teammates forward, screening the landing and enabling the evacuation of friendly forces. As medical evacuation assets departed, Sergeant Blout immediately directed attack helicopter strafing runs against the enemy positions while friendly forces reconsolidated and retrograded back to covered and concealed positions. Sergeant Blout's courageous and decisive action at the hasty helicopter landing zone against superior firepower was directly responsible for rallying the quick reaction force, and preventing friendly maneuver elements from being overrun. His heroism under withering enemy fire disrupted attacking enemy forces, and prevented the loss of coalition air assets. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Blout has reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## KEATON THIEM

### SILVER STAR

Staff Sergeant Keaton D. Thiem, United States Air Force distinguished himself by exceptional gallantry in the face of an enemy of the United States as a Combat Controller attached to a U.S. Army Special Force team, 22d Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron-Afghanistan, Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component-Afghanistan during Operation Freedom's Sentinel in support of Resolute Support mission. With Pul-E Khumri District in chaos and on the verge of collapse to well-equipped insurgent fighters, the U.S. Army Special Forces team, partnered with the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Kandaks, initiated an operation near Nyazullah Village, Baghlan Province to retake key terrain and ensure the local governance stood in the face of this overwhelming threat. On 22 February 2016, SSgt Thiem, and the main effort consisting of 100+ U.S. and Afghan Partnered Forces ground convoyed to the vehicle drop off location and began the tactical foot movement to the first compound of interest (COI). Upon nearing the building, friendly forces were halted 35 meters short of the objective by highly accurate and heavy AK-47, PKM and RPG fire from entrenched enemy. Intercepted hostile enemy communications indicated that insurgents were established in prepared fighting positions and with the use of night visions devices had concentrated all fires at the Infantry Regiment strobes atop friendly forces helmets. As the main element closed in on the first compound under heavy fire, two friendly elements became pinned down and were unable to maneuver due to withering PKM fire repeatedly impacting within inches of their positions. At that moment, and for the first of many times in the ensuing fight, SSgt Thiem disregarded his own personal safety, exposing himself to heavy machine gun fire to gain the situational awareness and targeting data necessary to thread the needle with precision weapons in order to save his beleaguered teammates. SSgt Thiem then cleared two separate danger close F-16 engagements, surgically dropping two 500-pound bombs with 35 and 80 meters of friendly positions respectively to allow the element to break contact and assault the insurgent position. After neutralizing these initial threats, friendly forces regained the initiative and continued on the offensive until reaching the limit of advance (LOA). When preparing for exfiltration, insurgents once again initiated a complex ambush from fortified positions, this time concentrating heavy fire down the main route of travel toward the assembled friendly formation. The accurate machine gun, RPG, and mortar fire immediately inflicted shrapnel and gunshot wounds to eight personnel. Dislocated from the main effort and taking direct fire from murder holes and defensive fighting positions, SSgt Thiem, with no regard for his personal safety, maneuvered 100 meters through a hail of gun fire in open terrain to locate and account for a separated friendly element as he prepared for additional air strikes. He controlled F-16's on six low altitude shows-of-force providing critical time and space for friendlies to maneuver out of the immediate kill zone and scramble to relative safety. After gaining an accurate front line trace of friendly elements, SSgt Thiem controlled another danger close air strike within 80 meters of friendly elements allowing them the chance to bound back and regroup.

# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## KEATON THIEM

### SILVER STAR

As the Special Forces team worked to gain accountability and establish a hasty casualty collection point to treat their eight wounded, it was then identified that four Commando partners were missing. Still receiving accurate sniper fire, and realizing the urgency of the situation, SSgt Thiem continued to orchestrate air support, devastating the enemy with precision fires and utilizing dedicated ISR aircraft to locate three Commandos where they had been wounded by heavy enemy fire. Again, with no regard for his personal safety, SSgt Thiem coordinated an AH-64 escort and led a small recovery team 150 meters directly toward a prepared machine gun position to recover the three Commandos. While on the move, SSgt Thiem expertly targeted insurgents and controlled two additional 30-mm gun runs covering the team's movement as they made the final push to the wounded Commandos. Still under fire, SSgt Thiem controlled circling ISR aircraft and Apache Gunships while helping bear a wounded teammate on a litter, 200 meters back to the rally point. With one Commando still unaccounted for, his recovery team ran back out into the fray, but was once again pinned down. Without hesitation SSgt Thiem again controlled two more AH-64 30-mm gun runs and eight 2.75" rockets to destroy the fortified sniper position allowing the team to reach the fourth missing commando and maneuver back to the main effort. As the pace of the engagement slowed, SSgt Thiem focused his efforts on coordinating medevac lifts for injured forces while continuing to de-conflict close air support fires on several other insurgent positions threatening ground forces and medevac aircraft. If not for the courage, calm demeanor, and decisive action of SSgt Thiem, many more friendly lives would have been lost during this ferocious engagement. During 14 hours of intense combat, SSgt Thiem controlled precision fires and sensor allocation for 22 aircraft which delivered 3,000 pounds, expended 200 30-mm rounds and eight 2.75" rockets. Over the course of the intense battle to re-take Pul-E Khumri District, SSgt Thiem expertly coordinated 18 complex close air support engagements, resulting in 33 enemies killed in action and ensured the safety of 100+ US Army Special Forces personnel and Afghan partner forces. SSgt Thiem's actions are in keeping with the finest traditions of military heroism and reflect distinct credit upon himself, the Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan, the Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan, and the United States Air Force.



# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## GOODIE GOODMAN

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Senior Airman Goodie J. Goodman, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an enemy of the United States while serving with the 21<sup>st</sup> Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron in Helmand Province, Afghanistan from 27 to 29 September 2014. On these days, while attached to a U.S. Special Forces team, Airman Goodman displayed extraordinary bravery and complete disregard for his own life as he and his teammates assaulted an insurgent safe haven. Throughout the first day of the operation, coalition forces came under heavy fire from an overwhelming force in which he directly engaged the enemy while coordinating with other combat controllers for close air support from F-16s and AH-64s. While enemy machine gun fire impacted a wall within six inches of his head, he held his rooftop position in order to repel the overwhelming insurgent force. Airman Goodman and the team heroically repelled the assault after fierce fighting within 40 meters of his position, but soon after, a massive barrage of heavy machine gun, rocket propelled grenade, and sniper fire erupted from six enemy locations. With friendly forces taking fire from within 200 meters, he immediately directed AH-64 attack helicopters in multiple strikes on the closest threats while simultaneously coordinating and de-conflicting danger close mortar fire on another maneuvering enemy 300 meters away. He maintained a steady flow of fires through a choreographed alternation of aerial strikes and mortar fire, subduing the enemy attack for hours. At one point, Goodman drew the enemy out by instructing the loud, low-flying AC-130 to remain outside of audible range. When the enemy initiated a massive attack, Goodman controlled both aerial fires from the AC-130 and mortar fires from friendly ground forces until they retreated. After 48 hours of intense combat, Airman Goodman controlled 28 attack helicopters and 20 fixed wing assets for a total of 26 engagements; six at danger close range, 45 times with mortars, resulting in seven enemies killed. He also removed their ability to maneuver and fight by destroying five buildings, 14 vehicles, and nine fighting positions. Without a doubt, Airman Goodman's actions saved the lives of coalition soldiers on the ground by combining air and ground fires to repel multiple enemy attempts to overrun and capture friendly positions. By his heroic actions and unselfish dedication to duty, Airman Goodman has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## JOE LIENHARD

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Staff Sergeant Joseph M. Lienhard, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States near the Balkh Valley, Afghanistan, on 5 November 2001. On that date, Sergeant Lienhard targeted and destroyed an enemy bunker complex on 5 November 2001. His team was decisively engaged by a well-planned and executed counterattack by Taliban forces. With complete disregard for his own personal safety and despite heavy incoming small arms fire and rocket propelled grenades impacting all around his position, Sergeant Lienhard calmly remained exposed to coordinate emergency close air support. With nearly all of his host nation forces fleeing in panic and Taliban forces closing in on his position, Sergeant Lienhard instinctively and successfully directed numerous dangerous close air strikes to thwart the enemy's advance. Facing overwhelming odds, Sergeant Lienhard mounted his horse and lethally engaged the enemy with his M-4 rifle and M-203 grenade launcher providing covering fire while he repositioned another observation point. Withdrawing by fire, literally within feet of potential fatal gunfire, Sergeant Lienhard contacted a B-52 aircraft and with pinpoint accuracy targeted his previously occupied location. With devastating effectiveness, he controlled numerous bombing runs to recapture the strategically important ridgeline effectively breaking the Taliban's advance turning defeat into victory. Sergeant Lienhard's valor and calm demeanor under intense enemy fire exemplify the highest standards of bravery in the face of the enemy. His personal actions on the battlefield were decisive and instrumental in the liberation of six northern Afghan provinces and prevented a major defeat of General Dostam's Northern Alliance forces during their campaign to capture Mazar-e-Sharif. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Lienhard has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## DOUG MATTHEWS

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Technical Sergeant Douglas J. Matthews, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States near Jalrez, Wardak Province, Afghanistan on 27 November 2012. On that date, Sergeant Matthews displayed extraordinary bravery, technical skill, and a complete disregard for his own safety when his vehicle struck a command detonated improvised explosive device, immediately ejecting him from the 15-ton vehicle, and triggering a complex ambush. Sustaining head injuries and multiple lacerations from the blast, Sergeant Matthews immediately came to his feet and faced torrents of fire from 12 different enemy fighting positions, some as close as 30 meters to the beleaguered convoy. Though seriously wounded, Sergeant Matthews returned fire and immediately maneuvered back to his overturned vehicle to aid his wounded teammates. While under direct and accurate enemy fire, Sergeant Matthews discovered his team leader ejected from the vehicle and incapacitated from a traumatically amputated lower extremity. Sergeant Matthews moved the wounded soldier to safety along an embankment while still exchanging fire with enemy forces, as secondary explosions from ammunition in the burning vehicle added to the chaotic scene on the narrow road. As his Special Forces Team regrouped, Sergeant Matthews furiously coordinated close air support and a medical evacuation for his grievously injured teammates. Sergeant Matthews remained in exposed positions, despite increasing volumes of enemy fire striking all around his position, and accurately directed strafing runs to hold the attacking insurgent forces at bay. As medical evacuation helicopters arrived, Sergeant Matthews refused to be evacuated with the other occupants of the now burning vehicle, and remained on scene to direct a withering barrage of close air support that eventually broke the back of the enemy attack. Sergeant Matthews continued to engage with multiple air platforms until a quick reaction force arrived, allowing his team to break contact and return to their base. His heroism under fire while directing close air support allowed friendly forces to recover all personnel with no loss of life and maneuver out of the ambush's kill zone. Sergeant Matthews actions undoubtedly saved the lives of his wounded teammates and an Afghan interpreter. By his gallantry and devotion to duty Sergeant Matthews has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## DeLOREAN SHERIDAN

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Technical Sergeant Delorean M. Sheridan, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States in Wardak Province, Afghanistan on 11 March 2013. On that date, while attached to a United States Special Forces Team, Sergeant Sheridan displayed extraordinary bravery and complete disregard for his own safety during a coordinated insider insurgent attack. Just prior to departing for a tactical ground movement, an Afghan National Police Officer engaged Sergeant Sheridan and his American and Afghan Special Forces teammates with a truck mounted machine gun from 25 feet away. Simultaneous to this attack, 15 to 20 insurgents located 150 meters south of his position also engaged the base with heavy AK-47 and PKM machine gun fire. With rounds impacting all around him and striking teammates immediately to his left and right, Sergeant Sheridan closed the distance with the shooter and leapt into the back of an armored vehicle in order to engage him. From the turret of the vehicle, Sergeant Sheridan engaged the shooter, twice with his pistol and nine times with an M-4 rifle until the shooter was dead. With the immediate threat neutralized, Sergeant Sheridan quickly exited the vehicle, returning to the kill zone in order to extract his wounded teammates. Sergeant Sheridan maneuvered through the heavy volume of gunfire streaming into the base and grabbed his wounded Team Leader by the shoulder strap, pulling him some 20 feet out of the field of fire to medical assistance. Sergeant Sheridan then transitioned the kill zone, once again moving through heavy insurgent machine gun fire, reaching his Team Sergeant and subsequently dragged him to safety. Still undaunted by the enemy fire, Sergeant Sheridan charged into the kill zone a third time in order to retrieve the infantry squad Noncommissioned Officer-in-Charge, pulling him to the casualty collection point. Within the next 30 minutes, Sergeant Sheridan methodically sequenced six medical evacuation aircraft, assisting with the litter transfer of wounded personnel while simultaneously directing close air support and surveillance aircraft. With the medical evacuation complete, Sergeant Sheridan located and directed aircraft to engage insurgents maneuvering toward the friendly location, resulting in four additional enemy fighters killed. Sergeant Sheridan's complete disregard for personal safety and extreme calm under pressure despite grave danger to himself and others directly resulted in saving the lives of 23 critically wounded personnel. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Sheridan has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## MIKE STOCKDALE

### SILVER STAR

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Technical Sergeant Michael C. Stockdale, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States as a member of the 24<sup>th</sup> Special Tactics Squadron, from 6 December to 20 December 2001. During this period, Sergeant Stockdale excelled in multiple missions where he was directly engaged in combat actions against Taliban and al Qaeda forces. He provided surgical terminal attack control of close air support aircraft at a volume and accuracy not yet seen until this major offensive in the Tora Bora region of Afghanistan. Sergeant Stockdale volunteered to move to the forward most lines of battle to assist the local Afghan opposition group's assault on the key enemy fortified stronghold. While moving to the front, he came under heavy machine gun and 82 millimeter mortar fire as close as 25 meters. Though the other government forces stopped, he continued to press forward with complete disregard to his own personal safety. Positioned in front of the most forward troops, Sergeant Stockdale directed numerous close air support missions against the enemy dug in positions while under intense two-way direct and indirect fire. His actions rallied the other government forces and directly resulted in their most successful single day advance of 1400 meters, seizing the previously impenetrable key enemy stronghold. Sergeant Stockdale expertly controlled well over 300 close air support aircraft sorties of multiple F-15, F-16, B-1, B-52, F-14, AV-8B, and the full combat munitions expenditure of five AC-130 gunships. He skillfully ensured the pinpoint delivery of an incredible 600,000 pounds of munitions on enemy targets. In this three-day period he averaged 13 hours of uninterrupted close air support control daily, an amazing display of dedication, expertise, and deadly destruction. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Stockdale has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

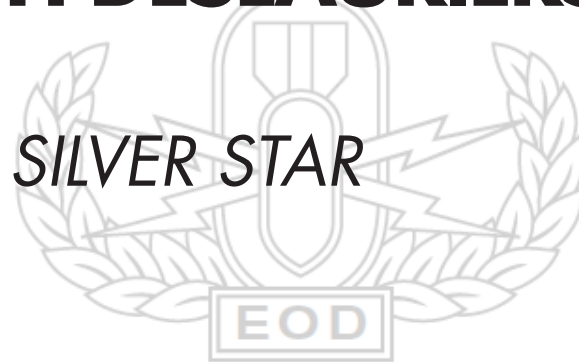


# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## JOSEPH DESLAURIERS

SILVER STAR



The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918, takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Technical Sergeant Joseph R. Deslauriers, United States Air Force, for gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States as a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> Special Operations Civil Engineer Squadron, in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, on 23 September 2011. On that date, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Sergeant Deslauriers and his 25-vehicle route clearance patrol element, in support of Operation Desert Tortise, conducted a deliberate mounted combat reconnaissance in the New Zad District. Sergeant Deslauriers' skills were instrumental to rendering safe one improvised explosive device and conducting three post blast analyses of subsequent detonations, all within a four-hour time frame. He repeatedly placed himself in harm's way with complete disregard for his safety by dismounting his mine resistant, ambush protected vehicle in an improvised explosive device infested area and cleared an extraction lane to a disabled armored vehicle in order to reach an injured United States Marine. Upon reaching the vehicle, Sergeant Deslauriers provided medical aid, used his hand held detector to clear a safe path to the medical evacuation helicopter landing zone, and assisted with carrying the injured Marine out of the danger area. Sergeant Deslauriers then ordered personnel to stay in the armored vehicles until he cleared a safe area for vehicle recovery personnel. While conducting the post blast analysis and a second sweep to clear the area, Sergeant Deslauriers stepped on a buried initiation system that activated a fifth improvised explosive device. Despite near mortal injuries and while his teammates rendered life saving aid, he continued to pass information concerning the device which was vital as his team continued the mission. His actions enabled the safe extractions of two injured Marines, two disabled vehicles and completion of the mission's objectives. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Deslauriers has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.



# — ACTS OF VALOR —



## MICHAEL SEARS

### SILVER STAR



The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress July 9, 1918 (amended by an act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Silver Star to Master Sergeant Michael F. Sears, United States Air Force, for gallantry in action in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed enemy of the United States near the village of Mostowfi Waghez District, Ghazni Province, Afghanistan, on 29 September 2012. On that date, Sergeant Sears' combat prowess and skills were instrumental in neutralizing an improvised explosive device with two separate initiation triggers in order to provide freedom of movement to his convoy. After the route was cleared, Sergeant Sears' convoy was ambushed by the enemy in a complex attack from two well-fortified positions with rocket propelled grenades and snipers. A grenade struck the Polish Command vehicle, critically wounding its driver. Sergeant Sears immediately recognized the seriousness of the developing enemy ambush and with total disregard for his own safety, made the decision to dismount his vehicle in a known improvised explosive device infested area to move to a better vantage point where he could positively identify and engage the enemy. After dismounting his vehicle, Sergeant Sears witnessed a rocket propelled grenade fly within three to five feet of his truck's turret and continue on to strike the Polish command vehicle in the driver's side door. Without hesitation, again disregarding his own safety and realizing the threat from the insurgents' rocket propelled grenades and sniper fire, Sergeant Sears left the cover of his vehicle to run through 50 feet of open terrain to the aid of the wounded Soldier. As Sergeant Sears arrived at the vehicle, the Polish Soldier fell out of the vehicle into the enemy's line of fire. Sergeant Sears instinctively reacted and caught the wounded Soldier with his left arm bearing the Soldier's entire weight, injuring his left shoulder while maintaining positive control of his M4 carbine with his right arm. Grimacing through the pain, and while still being heavily engaged, Sergeant Sears used his body to protect the driver from heavy enemy fire, and he immediately began administering lifesaving tactical combat casualty care. After directly engaging the enemy, he placed a tourniquet on the Soldier's leg and checked his vital signs before sprinting again across open terrain through heavy gunfire to retrieve a Polish medic. He continued to provide protective fire for himself and the medic while sprinting back to the wounded Soldier in order to move the Soldier under better cover for further medical treatment. During this two-hour firefight, Sergeant Sears' actions enabled the safe extraction of the injured Soldier and the disabled vehicle while ensuring the continued safety of his 33-person convoy. By his gallantry and devotion to duty Sergeant Sears has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

*Note: After graduating from HS in New Jersey in '94, Sears joined the Marine Corps where he served for four years. After his military service he went to college, earning his degree and subsequently joining the NJ Air National Guard. He is the first NJ Air National Guardsman to receive the Silver Star since WWII.*

