

Seven 41st Air Rescue Men Awarded Decorations

Seven Vietnam returnees of the 41st Air Rescue Squadron were decorated at the unit's December Commander's Call. The medals were awarded to them for risking their lives "That Others May Live".

Decorated at the 41st ARS special ceremony were A2C Michael R. Donegan, Capt. John R. Holm, Capt. George E. Glaeser, Capt. Thomas O. Tomtan, SSgt. Charles J. Reaney, SSgt. Hubert G. Stenkamp and MSgt. Lenote Vigare. Lt. Col. Cortez C. Brown, Commander of the 41st ARS, presented the awards to the seven rescuemen.

A2C Donegan, a member of the unit's Pararescue Section, received the Silver Star, one of the Nation's highest awards for "gallantry in action". While serving as a crew member on a HH-43 Huskie, he volunteered to be lowered from the helicopter in a hoist harness into a Viet Cong-infested jungle area to search for a downed American pilot. Upon locating the pilot, he exchanged fire with the enemy until the pilot and he were safely aboard the helicopter.

Captain Holm was awarded the 1st Oak Leaf Cluster to the Distinguished Flying Cross and Captain Glaeser received the Distinguished Flying Cross for "extraordinary heroism" on an air strike in Vietnam. Captain Holm and Captain Glaeser, his co-pilot, and their crew were called on to assist an American pilot who was downed in the midst of heavily fortified enemy positions deep in hostile territory. When they arrived at the scene of the crash, their HU-16B Albatross came under heavy enemy fire and Captain Holm was wounded. However, they continued their search for the downed pilot

and also plotted hostile automatic weapon sites in the area. Finally, they were forced to leave the area by intense ground fire but not before they succeeded in directing an air strike on the enemy gun emplacements.

Other members of the Albatross crew who received awards were Captain Tomtan, the navigator; Sergeant Reaney, the radio operator and Sergeant Stenkamp, the flight mechanic. They were decorated with the Air Medal.

Sergeant Vigare, a pararescueman, was awarded the 1st thru 10th Oak Leaf Clusters to the Air Medal for his contributions to the successful completion of many important air rescue support missions in Vietnam. He participated in these missions in the presence of enemy fire while a crew member on HH-43 Huskie helicopters. In addition, he received the Air Force Commendation Medal for his participation in a mission near Da Nang Air Base in the Republic of Vietnam. On this occasion, he spent two hours at the site of an aircraft accident under the threat of an attack by enemy forces in the area.