



CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS
TO
STAFF SERGEANT THOMAS H. CULPEPPER

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 2, 1926, takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Flying Cross with Combat “V” to Staff Sergeant Thomas H. Culpepper, Jr., United States Air Force, for heroism while participating in aerial flight as Guardian Angel Team Leader, 46th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron, Detachment 1, 451st Expeditionary Operations Group, 451st Air Expeditionary Wing, Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan on 26 May 2011. On that date, Sergeant Culpepper was sent on a harrowing rescue mission into Shortal District, Kandahar Province, where a squad of United States Army Pathfinders had been ambushed by multiple improvised explosive devices. Despite the ground commander’s warning that the area was still extremely dangerous with live explosives, Sergeant Culpepper volunteered to be hoisted into steep terrain only 25 meters away from a known improvised explosive device. Once on the ground, he and his teammate immediately began emergency medical treatment to the wounded Soldiers at the site. Sergeant Culpepper then directed the most severely wounded patient be hoisted up first with his teammate. After their evacuation, Sergeant Culpepper began his hoist with the next patient. At this time, 20 feet from reaching the cabin, the helicopter experienced a sudden loss of power and plummeted into a rapid descent forcing the pilot to call for the hoist cable to be sheared. The flight engineer continued the hoist, assisting Sergeant Culpepper as he pulled himself and the patient into the cabin. He secured the patient from falling out as the helicopter narrowly escaped crashing into terrain. As the formation flew back to Kandahar, he led his team through cardio pulmonary resuscitation as the critical patient deteriorated and eventually succumbed to his wounds. Sergeant Culpepper’s sound decision making and courage saved the lives of two soldiers. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Sergeant Culpepper reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

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