

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Date _____

I urge your intervention to approve the requested combat valor awards for the nine crew members of the 18th Special Operations Squadron's AC-119K Gunship Stinger 41 crew, as outlined in the package submitted in 2023 and endorsed by, former Secretary F. Whitten Peters, and twenty-four General Officers. This action is necessary to correct a profound and enduring injustice caused by procedural failures and flawed judgments within the Air Force Decorations Board. The initial April 2022 Board review was demonstrably insufficient, completing its adjudication in a mere nine days, a fraction of the required standard leading to an unsubstantiated denial of six decorations, two downgrades, and one deferral. The subsequent 2023 reconsideration request was wrongly dismissed by the same leadership that oversaw the flawed 2022 process, failing to give due weight to the compelling expert and eyewitness testimony, including that of Lt Gen (Ret) Waskow, who observed the shoot-down and participated in the rescue.

The evidence confirms that the Stinger 41 crew met and exceeded the threshold for valor and gallantry. Expert analysis confirms their heroism, including accepting a high-risk mission and repeatedly engaging a target under heavy enemy fire. Tragically, Stinger 41 was shot down initiating one of the largest search and rescue operations of the war in South Vietnam. Critically, the Board's denial ignores the clear precedent set by the Manta 75 mission two weeks prior in the same area, where all six crew members of a downed C-130 survived and received the Silver Star. The failure to recognize similar or greater valor by the Stinger 41 crew, particularly the inconsistency of withholding recognition from the co-pilot whose actions saved seven lives despite the pilot receiving the Air Force Cross is unacceptable and unjust.

Approving these awards, as originally requested, will uphold the Air Force's solemn commitment to honor exceptional bravery and correct the historical record. The current Board adjudications have disregarded expert input, ignored historical precedent, and applied unjust standards, compounding the original loss of the 1972 package. Your approval is essential to rectify these systemic failures, validate the sacrifices of these brave Airmen, and reinforce the faith of all Air Force members in the integrity of our decorations process. I strongly recommend you grant the requested combat valor awards for the Stinger 41 crew as written, without further delay. View full story at: <https://www.stinger41.com>

Sincerely,

(Signature)

Name

Title

Email address