



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Stephanie Berry  
703-416-4888 Ext 104  
awards-events@naa.aero

---

### **United States Air Force Crew of SPOOKY 43 Flight to Receive 2016 Mackay Trophy**

**Washington, DC, August 17, 2017** – The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) is proud to announce that United States Air Force Major Alexander Hill and the crew of SPOOKY 43 flight, have been named the recipients of the 2016 Mackay Trophy.

The Mackay Trophy was first presented by Clarence Mackay in 1912 and was later deeded to the National Aeronautic Association. Administered by the United States Air Force and NAA, the trophy is awarded for the "...most meritorious flight of the year by an Air Force person, persons, or organization."

As outlined in the United States Air Force nomination, the crew of SPOOKY 43 distinguished itself while participating in sustained aerial flight as an AC-130U Gunship Aircrew, 4<sup>th</sup> Expeditionary Special Operations Squadron, Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component - Afghanistan, in support of Operation FREEDOM's SENTINEL.

On November 2, 2016, the crew of SPOOKY 43 was tasked to provide close air support and armed reconnaissance for a 55-man combined American and Afghan special operations team conducting a raid to interdict insurgent command and control nodes, senior leadership, and their networks. After the crew of SPOOKY 43 arrived overhead, the combined American and Afghan special operations force (also referred to as "friendlylies") was caught in a deadly ambush by a large insurgent force. The friendlylies were engaged by small arms, heavy machine gun, and grenade fire from multiple defensive fighting positions. The crew of SPOOKY 43 provided close air support to the friendly ground force with the 25, 40, and 105-millimeter guns, to allow the them the freedom to maneuver and provide care for casualties. In order to protect the ground team from enemy personnel, the crew of SPOOKY 43 expertly employed the 105-millimeter gun at an unprecedented 12 meters from the friendly personnel. Due to the outstanding airmanship and bravery under extremely challenging circumstances, SPOOKY 43 destroyed 10 defensive fighting positions, 27 enemy insurgents, and three enemy technical vehicles, saving the lives of 50 combined American and Afghan special operations forces personnel who would have otherwise

perished in the enemy ambush. The professional ability and outstanding aerial accomplishments of the crew of SPOOKY 43 reflect credit upon themselves and the United States Air Force.

The Mackay Trophy will be presented at the NAA Fall Awards Ceremony at a date and location TBD. For more information or to view a complete list of previous recipients, please visit [www.naa.aero](http://www.naa.aero).

*The National Aeronautic Association is a non-profit membership organization devoted to fostering opportunities to participate fully in aviation activities and to promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States. NAA is the caretaker of some of the most important aviation awards in the world, and certifies all national aviation records set in the United States. For information, visit [www.naa.aero](http://www.naa.aero).*

#####