FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 16, 2005

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ARLINGTON, VA. – Two United States Air Force HH-60G helicopter crews known as Jolly 11 and Jolly 12 won the prestigious Mackay Trophy for their outstanding service during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2004.

The Mackay Trophy is administered by the United States Air Force and the National Aeronautic Association. It is awarded for the “most meritorious flight of the year” by an Air Force person, persons, or organization each year.

The crews of Jolly 11 (Capt Bryan Creel (AC), Capt Joseph Galletti, TSgt Thomas Ringheimer, SSgt Vincent J. Eckert, SSgt John Griffin, SSgt Patrick Ledbetter.) and Jolly 12 (Capt Rob Wrinkle (AC), 1Lt Gregory Rockwood, TSgt Michael Preston, TSgt Paul Silver, SSgt Matthew Leigh, SSgt Michael Rubio, SSgt Edward Ha.) distinguished themselves on April 16, 2004, during a rescue operation near Kharbut, Iraq. On that date, the two crews were sent to the location of a U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter that crashed in a sandstorm with near zero visibility. The conditions left the crews’ infra-red and night vision goggles ineffective, making navigation in the air extremely difficult and the rescue attempt much more dangerous. All five survivors of the crash were located and rescued, but the crews still had to deal with attacks by multiple surface-to-air missiles. Using evasive maneuvers Jolly 11 and Jolly 12 avoided the missiles, and the crews were able to evacuate the combat zone unharmed. The citation that accompanies the award reads: “Their gallantry and devotion to duty reflect great credit upon themselves and the United States Air Force.”

The crews of Jolly 11 and Jolly 12 are based at Moody Air Force Base in Georgia and are a part of the 41st and 38th Rescue Squadrons, respectively.
The Mackay Trophy was first presented by Clarence Mackay in 1912 and deeded to the National Aeronautic Association; the original trophy is on display at the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum.

NAA is a non-profit organization devoted to promoting understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States. It is the custodian of many of the most prestigious awards in aviation. Marking its 100th anniversary in 2005, NAA is the oldest national aviation organization in the country.