A-10 PILOT WINS 2006 MACKAY TROPHY
FOR LIFE-SAVING HEROISM IN AFGHANISTAN

Captain Scott L. Markle, an A-10 pilot with the 81st Fighter Squadron, has been selected as the recipient of the Clarence Mackay Trophy. The Mackay Trophy is awarded annually by the National Aeronautic Association and the Air Force for “the most meritorious flight of the year.” Captain Markle’s name will be engraved on a shield on the silver trophy — permanently displayed at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC — in recognition of his heroic flight in the airspace over southern Afghanistan on June 16 in support of troops in combat during Operation Enduring Freedom.

According to the award citation submitted to General T. Michael Moseley, United States Air Force Chief of Staff, Markle’s support mission was re-tasked on takeoff to support a U.S. Special Forces team in contact with Taliban fighters along the Afghanistan- Pakistan border. “Captain Markle arrived on scene to find the team engaged in hand-to-hand combat and expecting to be overrun by the enemy,” according to the citation. “Unable to employ weapons due to the close proximity of the team, he flew a dangerously low pass over the enemy while dispensing self protection flares. After the ground controller noted the effectiveness of the pass in momentarily ceasing the enemy’s fire, Captain Markle performed three additional passes, allowing the team to pull back farther each time.”

Under Captain Markle’s protection, the entire Special Forces team – outnumbered on the ground by three to one – egressed the “kill zone” with zero casualties. “The distinctive accomplishments of Captain Markle reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force,” as stated in the citation. Using a 30-millimeter gattling gun at danger-close range, Captain Markle is credited with destroying three machine gun nests and killing 40 Taliban fighters during the flight which was confirmed during a battle damage assessment survey the next day. According to the nomination narrative, the ground commander and his team personally thanked Captain Markle and credited him for saving the lives of the 15 members of the U.S. Special Forces team involved in a pre-planned Taliban ambush.

The Mackay Trophy was created in 1912 by aviation enthusiast, philanthropist, and telegraph-cable industrialist Clarence Mackay and was later deeded to the NAA. The trophy is administered by the United States Air Force and NAA. The historic trophy rests on a large mahogany base and features four pusher-type bi-planes surrounding a large silver cup.
Captain Markle will receive a gold medal at the Mackay Trophy presentation ceremony on October 29, 2007 at NAA’s Fall Awards Banquet in the Washington, D.C. area.

*The National Aeronautic Association is a non-profit, membership organization devoted to fostering America's aerospace leadership and promoting public understanding of the importance of aviation and space flight to the United States.*

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