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The U.S. Army Parachute Team, the Golden Knights, to be Honored with the 2022 Bruce Whitman Trophy

Washington, DC, February 15, 2022 – The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) is pleased to announce that the U.S. Army Parachute Team, the Golden Knights, have been selected as the recipient of the 2022 Bruce Whitman Trophy.

The Bruce Whitman Trophy was established by the Board of Directors of NAA in 2019 to honor the late aerospace executive and philanthropist. Whitman was posthumously named as the first recipient of the trophy the same year, followed by General J.R. “Jack” Dailey in 2020 and Erin Miller in 2021.

The trophy is awarded to “... outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to aviation or aerospace in the United States, and who by working with museums and other institutions have promoted an appreciation by students and the broader public of the sacrifices and legacy of members of the military service.” A deserving nominee is put forth annually by the Chairman of the NAA and approved by the NAA Executive Committee.

For more than 60 years, members of the U.S. Army Parachute Team, nicknamed the Golden Knights, have been marking milestones of achievement and an evolution of excellence serving as the “Ambassadors of the Army.” The more than a hundred men and women who make up the Golden Knights conduct worldwide parachute demonstrations, competitions, and a tandem orientation program to connect the U.S. Army with the American public and enhance the Army’s recruiting efforts, while simultaneously providing technical expertise in support of military free-fall programs.

Serving under the leadership of the United States Army Recruiting Command and Marketing Engagement Brigade, the Golden Knights are separated into five sections - the Black and Gold demonstration teams, a tandem team, a competition team, a headquarters section, and an aviation detachment that flies hundreds of sorties annually to directly support the various parachuting teams.

The Golden Knights annually reach a third of our nation by performing spectacular live parachute demonstrations for the American public. The team has performed more than 21,000 shows in all 50 states and 48 countries, reaching and inspiring more than 20,000 people per show. The team has won an impressive record of more than 460 national championships and more than 100 world championships, earning the Army 2,148 gold, 1,117 silver, and 693 bronze medals in national and international competition. These achievements have made them not only the most successful Department of Defense sports team, but also the most successful parachute team in the world.

The women and men who wear the distinctive black and gold uniform of the United States Army Parachute Team represent the 'Band of Excellence' and the "Warrior Ethos" continually demonstrated by all Army Soldiers world-wide. Traveling across the nation and around the world, serving as ambassadors of the U.S. Army, the Golden Knights represent not just precision parachuting, but the historic legacy and bravery of members of the military service.

"The U.S. Army Parachute Team is completely surprised and humbled to have been considered, let alone selected, to be the recipient of the Bruce Whitman Trophy," stated Lieutenant Colonel Russell Forkin, Commander of the U.S. Army Parachute Team. "We are proud to join the distinguished line of recipients of this prestigious award."

"For six decades the U.S. Army Golden Knights have been thrilling and inspiring Americans of all ages with their daring and their dedication to serving their country," said NAA President, Greg Principato. "They do this not for recognition but out of a dedication to service. They were recommended by aviation leaders and legends Patty Wagstaff and Marion Blakey who know a thing or two about excellence. It will be an honor to present the Bruce Whitman Trophy to the Golden Knights. I know Bruce would be happy and proud."

NAA will present the Bruce Whitman Trophy to the Golden Knights at the Army Aviation Association of America's Annual Summit in Nashville, TN on April 5, 2022. For more information or to view a complete list of previous recipients, please visit 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.

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