

AC-119K GUNSHIP AIRCREW;

Captain Allen Olson, Aircraft Commander.

Captain James Curran, Co-Pilot.

Captain Ronald McCurdy, Navigator-Safety Officer.

Captain Raymond Galindo, FLIR Operator.

Lieutenant Carlos DosSantos, NOS Operator.

Technical Sergeant William Snyder, Flight Engineer.

Technical Sergeant Howard Fackrell, Lead Gunner.

Staff Sergeant Robert Fretz, Illuminator Operator.

Sergeant Jeffrey Walls, Second Gunner.

Airman First Class Kenneth Preston, Third Gunner.

This aircrew distinguished themselves by extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight as an AC-119K gunship crew in the AShau Valley, Republic of Vietnam the night of 30 April 1970.

On that date, Captain Olson's crew flew an interdiction sortie (mission #6872) against enemy truck routes in the AShau Valley (at the time refereed to as Golf route). Arriving in the area at 2025L, Capt. Olson rendezvoused with his fighter escorts and began search procedures.

Capt. Galindo and Lt. DosSantos, on sensors, located the first truck at 2046 hours. The attack was initiated on this target and within minutes a secondary explosion was obtained. Continuing to search for trucks the sensors were adept at providing another target at 2127 hours consisting of three trucks. Capt. Olson resumed the attack and succeeded in obtaining secondary explosions from each truck, which were left burning. Another target was sighted at 2153 hours, again consisting of three trucks. It was at this time that the air crew began drawing anti-aircraft fire. After two passes enemy anti-aircraft fire became intense and accurate. Capt. Olson calculated to withdraw from the target and allow his F-4 fighter escorts to expend on the gun positions. Once the escorts had completed their bombing passes, Capt. Olson resumed the attack and succeeded in destroying the trucks. Several secondary explosions, in addition to three sustained fires were sighted. But before the crew had accomplished this, they once again began to draw anti-aircraft fire, receiving ten rounds of 23 millimeter, ten rounds of 37 millimeter and approximately one hundred rounds of ZPU (14.7mm). After the

third target, no attacking pass was accomplished without enemy anti-aircraft weapon harassment.

It should be noted at this time that Capt. Olson had elected to remain on target beyond his fragged time because of the existing fuel and ammo load. So with clearance from the proper agency to remain in the area, Capt. Olson proceeded to attack and destroy two final targets. At 2220 hours another truck was sighted and destroyed while the aircrew received forty rounds of accurate 37 millimeter anti-aircraft fire. The sensors once again sighted two more trucks. SSgt. Fretz and Sgt. Walls, at the rear of the aircraft, kept the pilot informed of accurate gun fire from the enemy while the sensors succeeded in maintaining positive identification of the target.

At the gun stations in the aircraft, TSgt. Fackrell and A1C Preston were keeping the 20 millimeter Vulcan cannons loaded and free of jams. Their exceptional skill cannot be over looked in the during the whole of the mission a gun was always available for firing. These gunners, it might be added, work in a blackout condition.

TSgt. Snyder, meanwhile, was working with Capt. Curran to maintain airspeed, proper bank and altitude in addition to monitoring the instrument panel. Fuel control is critical and Tsgt. Synder has been a leader in efficient management of fuel.

Again ten rounds of accurate 23 millimeter was observed, Capt. Olson banked away and then back into the target area for one last burst. A secondary explosion was seen from one truck and the other damaged.

One crew position yet to be spoken of is the navigator/safety officer. His function can to likened to the heart of any complex system. Capt. McCurdy handles radios, directs the plane to target areas, monitors all activities of the sensor operators and keeps the aircraft location current. Capt. McCurdy's job is a constant flurry of duties that are accomplished efficiently.

It is largely due to an outstanding degree of crew coordination that on the night of 30 April 1970, out of ten enemy vehicles sighted, Capt. Olson was able to claim the destruction of nine and the damaging of one. Also at missions end, the crew of the AC-119K gunship left the area with six large sustained fires. The total trucks destroyed set a record for the 18th SOS FOL-A in the AShau Valley for one sortie.

Capt. Olson left the area at 2240L for a total of two hours and fifteen minutes of target time. Out of thirty six hundred (3600) rounds of ammo carried aboard the aircraft, thirty one hundred (3158) rounds were expended. The high degree of professionalism and exemplary courage and dedication to duty displayed by Capt. Olson and his crew denied the enemy vital movement and this seriously hindered his efforts to supply enemy positions in the Republic of Vietnam.

In summary, despite an extremely hostile and hazardous environment, Capt. Olson and his AC-119K gunship crew accomplished the exemplary performance desired of all gunship crews. In total they attacked ten trucks, destroying nine and damaging one. This was accomplished despite active and accurate enemy anti-aircraft fire totaling approximately two hundred rounds of 23mm, 37mm and ZPU. While little mention has been made of some crew members, it should be noted that it is only through a high degree of crew coordination and dedicated teamwork that a gunship crew can effectively perform in the hunter/killer role. The aircraft commander must be an exceptional instrumental pilot and leader, while the co-pilot and flight engineer must be constantly working to maintain the proper airspeeds and altitudes so essential to firing accuracy. The navigator/safety officer is always working to keep the gunship in position that will allow the sensor operators to search the roads for trucks. For these reasons, and because their accomplishments were truly outstanding, Capt. Olson's crew is definitely worthy of being awarded the DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS for their achievement on the night of 30 April 1970.