



# Civil Air Patrol

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Winchester Composite Squadron

## News Release

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### **Retired Air Force Pilot, Civil Air Patrol Member Receives Distinguished Flying Cross Award from USAF Chief of Staff**

Berryville, VA – General Norton A. Schwartz, Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, presented the Distinguished Flying Cross Award to retired Lieutenant Colonel George Thompson during a Memorial Day celebration in Berryville, Virginia. The award comes forty years after then-Captain Thompson's flew a mission over Laos which recently become declassified.

The Distinguished Flying Cross award, the nation's fourth highest military award, is a medal presented to any officer or enlisted member of the United States armed forces who distinguishes himself or herself in support of operations by "heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight, subsequent to November 11, 1918." The first Distinguished Flying Cross recipient was Charles Lindbergh and the first female recipient was legendary aviatrix Amelia Earhart.

"I was elated," said Colonel George Thompson, retired Air Force pilot and current Deputy Commander for Senior Officers at the Winchester Composite Squadron. "To think the Air Force sees fit to recognize this mission forty years after the fact, well, it is very special." Colonel Thompson learned of the Distinguished Cross Award nomination after receiving a letter from Senator John McCain. Among other committees, Senator McCain currently serves as the Ranking Member of the Armed Services Committee.

The other six members of Thompson's aircrew all received Air Medal nominations. Reflecting back to his time with his aircrew on Spooky 3 Colonel Thompson continued, "I knew some of the men better than others but they were all fine folks. I am thankful for this nomination and if I had one wish it would be that the entire crew be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross."

Colonel Thompson's Distinguished Flying Cross Citation reads;

Captain George W. Thompson distinguished himself by extraordinary achievement while performing in aerial flight as the Instructor Pilot of an AC-47 Gunship, on a classified mission near Lima Site 50, Phu Cum, Laos on 7 April

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1969. On that morning, Captain Thompson willingly risked his life in order to save friendly Hmong tribesman and their families whose position was being overrun in a siege Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops. Captain Thompson's decision to stay in the fight during daylight hours to direct intense firepower upon the enemy saved many lives and turned the tide of battle in favor of the allied troops. Flying in Laos in daylight hours exposed his extremely vulnerable aircraft to multiple locations of enemy AAA positions. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Captain Thompson reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

"This is a very impressive acknowledgement of Colonel Thompson's service to his country," said Lt Colonel Charles Gittins, Squadron Commander at the Winchester Composite Squadron. "It's great that his service and that of his crew is being recognized."

When asked his feelings about the cadets in the Civil Air Patrol Colonel Thompson paused before responding. "These cadets are getting a fine indoctrination in aerospace education. Those who choose a military career will get along quite well in today's military but beyond that, they are building a foundation that will help them be successful in any profession the choose."

The Civil Air Patrol is the official Auxiliary of the United States Air Force, and conducts over 90 percent of the nation's inland air and ground search and rescue operations for the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center. In addition, they provide aerial imagery; damage assessment, communications relay, and limited cargo haul support to Federal, State, and local officials. They maintain a vibrant cadet program focused on developing the nation's emerging leaders, and strive to develop a better understanding of aviation and space exploration contributions to society.

The Winchester Composite Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with members from the surrounding counties. Resources include qualified ground and air crews, CAP aircraft, ground vehicles and communication equipment, distributed across the Greater Winchester Area for immediate deployment. CAP volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counterdrug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The squadron also performs other community service such as providing Color Guard for ceremonies, sports events and parades and helps at community events. The Squadron also educates groups and schools in drug free activities for a better way of life.

For Winchester Composite Squadron inquiries, please contact the Lt Colonel Charles Gittins, Commander at 540-662-9036, e-mail [cgittins@aol.com](mailto:cgittins@aol.com) or Major CJ Muncy, Deputy Commander of Cadets at 540-551-9968, or e-mail [cjmuncy@earthlink.net](mailto:cjmuncy@earthlink.net).

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