



Distinguished Flying Cross Award Citation

First Lieutenant Jason W. Havel is awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight as navigator, KC-135R, Task Force 24, Task Force Sword, while deployed in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM on 19 October 2001. On this day, Lieutenant Havel and the crew of Python 51 were the lead crew launched in support of the first concentrated airborne special operations assault of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and employed the first KC-135s as receivers in combat since Operation JUST CAUSE. Using night-vision goggles and communications-out procedures, Lieutenant Havel repeatedly directed the aircraft to multiple precision join-ups with completely blacked out C-130 aircraft at extremely low altitudes well below the surrounding terrain. Upon entering the area, the copilot spotted anti-aircraft artillery tracer rounds and heard via radio of a surface to air missile launch only two miles east of their tract. With complete disregard for their safety, the crew remained on the planned air refueling track, guaranteeing accomplishment of this highest priority mission. By monitoring secure radio transmissions, the crew realized that the air refuelings would have to be significantly altered to accommodate timing changes in the Special Operations Forces mission execution checklist. While under the direct threat of enemy fire, Lieutenant Havel's situational awareness proved vital in the successful mission changes for over four dozen aircraft. The crew flew an astounding over fifteen hours and proved key in enabling the Special Operations Forces to complete one hundred percent of the airdrops and critical close air support for the insertion of the first ground forces into Afghanistan. The professional competence, aerial skill, and devotion to duty displayed by Lieutenant Havel reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.