The AC-119 Gunship Association

FLASH

6 OCTOBER 2026

STINGER 41 LOST AWARDS



Here is an executive summary and update on the Stinger 41 lost awards process. **The Association would like you to send the Secretary of the Air Force and/or your Congressional representative a copy of the attached letter(s).** Go to ***this website*** to find your Senator or Representative's contact information.

3 Attachments

1. Stinger 41 Lost Awards Summary
2. SECAF Letter
3. Congressional Letter

Stinger 41 Lost Awards Effort

Executive Summary

After more than five years of advocacy, the AC-119 Gunship Association continues to seek fair consideration of Stinger 41's lost valor award recommendations and a full accounting of the Air Force's decisions. The Air Force lost the original recommendations; we believe it has a responsibility to help resolve the consequences for the crew and their families.

On 2 May 1972, the all-black AC-119K gunship Stinger 41 flew a rare daylight mission over heavily defended An Loc, South Vietnam. Shortly after entering the target area, the slow-flying aircraft was struck by enemy 37mm antiaircraft fire and crashed. Three crew members were killed. The remaining seven escaped by parachute and were rescued from hostile jungle deep in enemy territory.

The crew's extraordinary actions prompted recommendations for valor awards. The aircraft commander was nominated for the Medal of Honor and posthumously awarded the Air Force Cross. The other nine crew members were recommended for the Silver Star or Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor. Their recommendations were forwarded to higher headquarters but lost during the final years of the war and the deactivation of their unit.

In 2021, the recommendations were reconstructed under Title 10, U.S.C. § 1130, endorsed by a U.S. Senator, and submitted to the Air Force. In 2022, a Secretary of the Air Force Decorations Board downgraded two recommendations and disapproved seven. We believe the Board acted without all the necessary evidence and did not adequately consider the circumstances of the mission.

A former Secretary of the Air Force subsequently prepared a comprehensive Review and Reconsideration Package, endorsed by twenty-four general officers, including four former Air Force Chiefs of Staff. A second Board, chaired by the same Board President, reviewed the package but declined to change the original decisions despite the additional relevant facts presented.

The Association had to submit a Freedom of Information Act request to obtain the Board's results memorandum, dated 22 November 2024. On 1 April 2026, **we received a heavily redacted copy.** We then submitted a second FOIA request seeking an unredacted version. As of this update, the surviving crew members and the families of those killed in action or since deceased still lack a full accounting of the Board's findings.

I also appealed to **President Donald J. Trump**. Having grown up in the same area of Queens, New York, I hoped that our shared background and love of country would help convey the importance of this case. He **personally responded, expressed appreciation for my advocacy, and stated that his staff would look into the matter.** The White House referred the matter to the Air Force's Legislative Liaison Directorate (SAF/LL). SAF/LL's response did not address the substance of the President's request. I have sent SAF/LL a response explaining our concerns.

This effort began in June 2021. **After more than five years, we still remain committed to securing a fair review and the recognition the Stinger 41 crew deserves.** More than fifty years after the mission, we still have reason to hope.

Perhaps, after more than fifty years, there is still hope!

Roy A. Davis, Col (Ret), USAF
Chair, AC-119 Gunship Association Awards Committee
(253)549-2044

The Honorable Troy E. Meink
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330-1670

Date: _____

Subject: Request for Your Personal Intervention—Stinger 41 Combat Valor Awards

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I urge your personal intervention to approve the requested combat valor decorations for the nine other members of the AC-119K Stinger 41 crew. Your office already possesses the AC-119 Gunship Association's rebuttal package and approximately 70 pages of evidentiary appendices. I write to express my support for that request.

On May 2, 1972, Stinger 41 was struck by enemy fire during a daylight combat mission near An Loc, South Vietnam. As the crippled aircraft descended, members of the crew deliberately delayed their own escape to help others survive. Both pilots fought to keep the aircraft airborne while fellow crewmembers assisted the bailout. Three airmen died; seven escaped and were rescued. Captain Terry Courtney received the Air Force Cross. The requested recognition for the other nine crewmembers remains unresolved after five years of renewed efforts.

The package before your office identifies substantial factual errors, shortcomings in the review process, and inconsistencies in the treatment of corroborated eyewitness testimony and comparable Vietnam-era awards. Former Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters and Lieutenant General Thomas C. Waskow, an eyewitness to the shoot-down, have joined the Association in seeking correction of these decisions.

These concerns deserve a substantive answer. The surviving crewmembers and the families of those who died have waited more than half a century. They should not have to continue bearing the consequences of lost recommendations and unresolved deficiencies in the subsequent review process.

I respectfully request that you review the submitted case and approve the requested decorations. If further review is necessary, please direct an independent evaluation outside the leadership responsible for the challenged decisions, with written findings addressing the evidence and each requested award.

Your personal intervention can bring this longstanding effort to a just conclusion and ensure that the courage and sacrifice of the Stinger 41 crew receive the recognition they deserve.

Respectfully,

Signature: _____

Printed name: _____

Association affiliation, if applicable: (i.e., crew position, spouse, family member, etc.)

Email: _____

Optional handwritten sentence:

_____

Date: _____

Subject: Request for Congressional Involvement in Stinger 41 Combat Valor Awards

Dear Senator/Representative _____:

I am your constituent, and I request your assistance in securing combat valor recognition for the nine other members of the Stinger 41 crew whose original award recommendations were submitted and lost in 1972. A complete package was subsequently submitted under Title 10 U.S.C. § 1130. The Air Force Decorations Board's 2022 and 2024 decisions left the requested recognition unresolved despite five years of renewed efforts.

On May 2, 1972, Stinger 41 was struck by enemy fire during a daylight combat mission near An Loc, South Vietnam. As the crippled aircraft descended, members of the crew deliberately delayed their own escape to help others survive. Both pilots fought to keep the aircraft airborne while fellow crewmembers assisted the bailout. Three Airmen died; seven escaped and were rescued. Captain Terry Courtney received the Air Force Cross.

The Office of the Secretary of the Air Force has received the AC-119 Gunship Association's rebuttal and supporting evidence identifying substantial factual errors, shortcomings in the review process, and inconsistencies in the treatment of corroborated eyewitness testimony and comparable Vietnam-era awards. Former Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters, Lieutenant General Thomas C. Waskow, an eyewitness to the shoot-down, and twenty-four general officers have supported efforts to secure the crew's recognition.

These concerns deserve a substantive answer. The surviving crewmembers and the families of those who died have waited more than half a century. They should not have to continue bearing the consequences of lost recommendations and unresolved deficiencies in the subsequent review process.

I respectfully ask you to contact the Secretary of the Air Force, support approval of the requested decorations, and seek a written response addressing the Association's rebuttal. If further review is necessary, please request an independent evaluation outside the leadership responsible for the challenged decisions, with written findings addressing the evidence and each requested award. Please also ask the Air Force to identify the official responsible for this review and provide an anticipated completion date.

Your involvement can help bring this longstanding effort to a just conclusion and ensure that the courage and sacrifice of the Stinger 41 crew receive the recognition they deserve.

Respectfully,

Signature: _____ Printed name: _____

Mailing address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Association affiliation or connection to the crew, if applicable: _____

Email: _____

Optional personal message: _____

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