

**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF  
THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS  
(WITH VALOR)**

**TO**

**SENIOR AIRMAN ZACHARY C. HOEH**

Senior Airman Zachary C. Hoeh distinguished himself by heroism while participating in aerial flight as Guardian Angel Team Member, 46th Expeditionary Rescue Squadron, Detachment 1, 451st Expeditionary Operations Group, 451st Air Expeditionary Wing, Kandahar Airfield, Afghanistan on 26 May 2011. On that date, Airman Hoeh was sent on a harrowing rescue mission into Shorbak District, Kandahar Province, where a squad of United States Army Pathfinders had been decimated by multiple improvised explosive device attacks. He formulated a plan to perform multiple hoists over a still active minefield where a critically wounded Soldier, two isolated Soldiers, and 10 killed in action were stranded. Airman Hoeh assisted the aircrew in providing armed over watch for their flight lead while also searching for possible enemy improvised explosive device triggermen in the rugged terrain below the helicopter. Airman Hoeh watched as the lead helicopter hoisted two patients and lost power due to shifting winds which caused a rapid decent and emergency maneuvers to narrowly escape crashing to the desert floor. Seeing this, Airman Hoeh immediately volunteered to conduct the final hoist and recover the remaining isolated Soldier. His aircraft positioned into place and Airman Hoeh was quickly lowered down while he secured the soldier to the hoist, signaled for retrieval and extracted both himself and the patient from the hillside in under 15 seconds. Miraculously, he did not disturb the explosive laden soil surrounding their position. Once onboard the helicopter, the patient exhibited signs of advanced shock and Airman Hoeh assisted in evaluating and treating the Soldier as the formation sped back to Kandahar Airfield. The outstanding heroism and selfless devotion to duty displayed by Airman Hoeh reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

