

**CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF
THE AIR FORCE CROSS
TO
RICHARD B. HUNTER**

The President of the United States of America, authorized by section 8742 of title 10 U.S.C., awards the Air Force Cross to Staff Sergeant Richard B. Hunter for extraordinary heroism in military operations against an armed enemy of the United States as a Joint Terminal Attack Controller, 23d Expeditionary Special Tactics Squadron, Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component-Afghanistan in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan from 2 November 2016 to 3 November 2016. During this period, while assigned to a Special Forces team, Sergeant Hunter displayed extraordinary bravery as his team assaulted an insurgent safe haven. As they moved in a narrow alley, Taliban fighters ambushed them with grenade and heavy machine gun fire. With no regard for his own life, Sergeant Hunter placed himself between the enemy and his team, shielding the wounded with his body while providing suppressive fire with his rifle. To allow his team to withdraw from the kill zone, he positioned himself at the rear of the element, closest to the threat to prevent fratricide, and directed multiple danger-close airstrikes to within 20 meters; well inside the 190-meter danger-close distance for 105 millimeter rounds. With the team still under persistent enemy fire, Sergeant Hunter and four teammates cleared a compound to gain cover, preventing further casualties. Upon hearing a call for help, he again exposed himself to fire, rushing outside the compound to drag a wounded teammate 30 meters to safety. For the next two hours he controlled four AC-130U and AH-64D aircraft, continually directing fire on enemy positions, including 105 millimeter rounds to within 13 and 16 meters of his location. He courageously assumed greater risk by occupying the best vantage point to inflict devastating effect on the enemy, preventing the team from being overrun. During exfiltration, he called for airstrikes to suppress heavy enemy fire, and he bravely exposed himself in a field during daylight to mark a landing zone with smoke. Throughout the eight hour assault, Sergeant Hunter alternated between firing his weapon at the enemy and controlling air assets, directing 1,787 munitions in 31 danger-close engagements, most to within 90 meters, resulting in 57 lives saved and 27 enemy killed. Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness in the face of the enemy, Sergeant Hunter reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.