



NEWS ADVISORY

United States Air Force

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AIRMAN EARNS DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas – The commander of Air Education and Training Command, Gen. Edward A. Rice Jr., will present the Distinguished Flying Cross with valor to Lt. Col. Gregory A. Roberts, 19th Air Force, during a ceremony here at 4 p.m. Nov. 10.

As an air advisor to the Afghan Air Force in July 2010, Roberts piloted an Mi-17V5 helicopter and lead a combined U.S. and Afghan team to rescue more than 2,000 people from severe flooding in the Nangahar and Kunar provinces. The same floods that devastated Pakistan that year, also killed more than 60 people in Afghanistan – but the toll could have been much higher without Roberts and his team’s quick response.

On July 28, 2010, Roberts was the U.S. Air Advisor to the Afghan Air Force’s Brig. Gen. Mohammed Barat, Kabul Air Wing commander. Barat received the mission to render aid to a nomadic group who needed help as floodwaters were rising. He decided to fly the mission himself and hand-selected the team of Afghan flight engineers and crew chiefs to accompany him. Roberts and U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Bernard M. Willi flew with the team as none of the Afghans had completed familiarization with the new aircraft they were about to employ. And since no Afghans had yet been trained to operate a new internal rescue hoist, U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Kevin R. Fife volunteered to join the team as the hoist operator.

“The weather was not too bad at mission notification time,” Roberts said. “But everyone knew the weather in the mountains surrounding Kabul would be treacherous.”

Within an hour, two aircraft were in the air headed north up the Kabul River. The air advisors guided the Afghan crews into a routine picking up flood victims and transporting them to safe ground. By the end of the first day the crews had rescued 380 people.

Heavy weather and crew fatigue led Roberts to keep the teams in the local area overnight. By 5 a.m., they were in the air again. Taliban activity was reported nearby throughout the day in an

area known for being an insurgent “hotbed.” But the two rescue crews worked tirelessly. By the end of the second day, they moved more than 2,000 people to safety.

-30-

MEDIA ADVISORY: Media members planning to attend the medal presentation are asked to call Master Sgt. Rebecca Danét, AETC/PAO, at (210) 652-4400 by Nov. 9.

Photos and video of the rescue for which Lt. Col. Roberts is being decorated are available upon request and will be available at the medal presentation if requested ahead of time.