



TROPHIES AND AWARDS 2024

Aviators Recognised for their Bravery, Outstanding Contributions and Achievements in The Honourable Company Of Air Pilots' Annual Trophies and Awards

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Seventy years of championing aviation by the US-based Commemorative Air Force (CAF) has been recognised with an 'Award of Honour' from the Honourable Company of Air Pilots. Noting the CAF's significant impact on historical, preservation, education and aviation culture, the award comes in a year when one of CAF's flagship aircraft – a C-47 Skytrain called 'That's All Brother' – was flown across the Atlantic to take part in D-Day 80th commemorative events in Normandy, France.

Founded in 1957, CAF's mission is to educate, inspire and honour through flight and living history experiences. Centred on a collection of more than 175 airworthy historic military aircraft, this makes it one of the largest and most comprehensive fleets of vintage machines in the world. CAF is funded completely by private donations and supported by an army of volunteers. A key feature of CAF's work is connecting veterans with the public to share stories and experiences.

Another long-service award this year was made for four decades of outstanding service to the Royal Air Force by Flight Lieutenant Paul Wharmby, who receives the 'Master's Commendation'. Having joined the RAF in 1983, Wharmby has logged more than 5,000 hours airborne and is currently the oldest serving pilot still flying fast jets in the UK Armed Forces.

Initially flying the Tornado GR1 during the Cold War, Wharmby flew one of the first sorties in the 1991 Gulf War, going on to record 18 combat missions. He was later posted to fly the iconic Harrier jump jet and became a Qualified Weapons Instructor. He completed ground tours in operations and at the Ministry of Defence and Joint Services Command, latterly returning to flying as a Qualified Flying Instructor. Today, as a full-time reservist, Wharmby continues to employ his infectious enthusiasm for aviation, training the next generation of RAF and Royal Navy fighter pilots on the Hawk T Mk2 jet.

The Air Pilots' Trophies and Awards are among the industry's most prestigious because recipients are selected by their peers, who have decades of experience in military and civil aviation around the world. The awards are traditionally presented at London's Guildhall on the last Thursday of October.

Bravery and selfless dedication to duty were a highlight of this year's Trophies and Awards nominations, with three candidates in particular standing out.

The eagerly anticipated 'Prince Philip Helicopter Rescue Award' this year goes to the crew of HM Coastguard's Rescue 936 for their great determination, skill and bravery during a successful rescue in a difficult location, whilst also facing extremely challenging flying conditions at night with strong, turbulent airflow. The helicopter crew of Captain David Kenyon, Co-pilot James Stewart, Winch Operator Richard Taylor and Winch Paramedic Steven Thomas were tasked to rescue two climbers who had become trapped on a small, heavily sloping grassy ledge amid large vertical cliffs at 2,700ft in the mountains. Without the crew's intervention, the climbers would have remained on the cliff for many hours and faced extremely poor weather conditions. Mountain Rescue Team intervention would have been challenging and lengthy – a dangerous task for all involved.

During February 2023, Cyclone Gabrielle, a severe Category 43 tropical cyclone, hit the North Island of New Zealand, devastating parts of the Northland, Auckland and East Coast and Hawkes Bay regions. It created record rainfall of 400mm in the first 12 hours, wind gusts of 140km/h and waves as high as 11m along the coast. This National State of Emergency resulted in the mobilisation of the New Zealand Defence Force, including No. 3 Squadron, Royal New Zealand Air Force. The sole tactical rotary unit of the NZDF, it has a domestic role for Search and Rescue, natural disasters and occasions of national significance.

High intensity operations followed – the RNZAF NH90 helicopters breaking global flying rate records, flying a total of 302.9 hours during the response, 198.5 hours of which were flown in the first week. From dynamic rescues of people from the roofs of their homes, to moving essential personnel and supplies, No. 3 Squadron's efforts in the days and weeks following Gabrielle represented an outstanding team effort which in turn ensured the preservation of multiple lives. For their outstanding courage and devotion to duty in the air, the Squadron is awarded the 'Barry Marsden Memorial Award' for its outstanding contribution to the preservation of life during a natural disaster.

This year's 'Sir Barnes Wallis Medal', which is awarded in recognition of an innovative and exceptional contribution to aviation, is awarded to Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance pilot Captain Mario Caretta OBE. He was nominated for his exemplary airmanship, flying more than 1,000 missions since arriving at the unit. But Caretta's unfaltering dedication to patients' needs stands above many others in the role, whilst his professionalism and innovative ideas have benefited not only those across the two counties the air ambulance serves, but patients across the UK.

Chief among the citation's highlights were Caretta's efforts to support patients during the Covid-19 pandemic, including flying on patient transfer services throughout and testing personal protective equipment and cockpit isolation barriers that would allow patients to be flown safely to hospital. He continues to innovate, more recently with introducing Performance Based Navigation and Point in Space approaches in the industry, which would enable more patients to be reached by air on more days of the year in more diverse weather conditions – undoubtedly saving more lives.

More information:

For further information please contact the Honourable Company of Air Pilots at:

+44 (0)20 7404 4032 or pr1@airpilots.org

A full list of awards recipients is available at: <https://www.airpilots.org/what-we-do/trophies-and-awards/>

Notes to editors:

1. The Honourable Company of Air Pilots 'The Air Pilots' was established as the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators in 1929. It is based in London but has an internationally based membership of professional and private pilots. The principal activities of the organisation are centred on developing action and activities to ensure that aircraft are piloted and navigated safely by aviators who are highly competent, self-reliant, dependable and respected.
2. The Air Pilots support the education and training of pilots from the initial instruction of young pilots to specialist training at the highest levels. Through its charitable activities, education and training, technical committees, aircrew selection, scholarships and sponsorships, advice and recognition of the achievements of fellow aviators worldwide, the Honourable Company keeps itself at the forefront of the aviation world.
3. The Air Pilots also provides expert, impartial input to regulators, government and media on areas including aviation and the environment, airport capacity in South East England, aircrew flight time limitations and the maintenance of piloting skills in increasingly automated aircraft. Air Pilots experts are also available to all media on request, to ensure accurate and fully informed reporting of any aviation events. If you need our assistance, please contact us on the number or e-mail addresses above.

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