

Two Hurlburt airmen among first to receive new Air Force Combat Action Medal

[Mladen Rudman](#)

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HURLBURT FIELD — Two Hurlburt airmen are among the first group of Air Force personnel to have received the new Air Force Combat Action Medal.

Capt. Allison K. Black, an AC-130H gunship navigator, and Master Sgt. Byron P. Allen, who mans machine guns or miniguns aboard MH-53s, are assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field.

They were part of a group of six who were the first to receive the medal, which the Air Force created to recognize airmen involved in combat where they risked their lives in an enemy engagement.



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Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley awards the Air Force Combat

Action Medal to Master Sgt. Byron Allen at the Air Force Memorial in Arlington, Va. Allen, who is assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, was one of the first six airmen to receive the medal.

The Combat Action Medal is the Air Force's equivalent of the Army Combat Infantryman Badge. Black, Allen and the other airmen received their CAMs from Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. T. Michael Moseley at a ceremony in Arlington, Va., this summer.

"When I found out, I was kind of taken aback. To be one of six is an honor," said Allen. "It's doing your job. I just got lucky."

One of the requirements for earning the medal is to come under fire or fire at the enemy.



On April 12, 2004, Allen, then a technical sergeant, helped save another Pave Low crew. Their helicopter was shot down in Iraq during a resupply mission. Allen's MH-53, under heavy fire, risked all to pick up the downed airmen.

Allen's commendation notes that he "returned accurate fire and spotted the downed aircraft and talked his pilot to a flawless approach. ... (Allen) directed the recovery effort by setting up a perimeter and covering Special Forces (troops) recovering the other crew."

Allen and Black dismissed their actions as anything unusual. They said other airmen perform similar missions with the same zeal all the time in the Middle East.

Black's CAM was for action near Kandahar, Afghanistan on Dec. 4, 2001. Her Spectre gunship was providing cover fire for a Special Forces team and Northern Alliance unit holding a bridge.

"Under large-caliber enemy antiaircraft artillery fire, (then-1st Lt.) Black continued the assault at below minimum altitude, destroying enemy personnel

and equipment, and leading to the eventual capture of the last Taliban and al-Qaida stronghold in Afghanistan,” her citation reads.

Black, married and a mother of two young children, was enlisted for 6½ years before receiving a commission.

The navigator is keeping tabs of her exploits. Her children are too young to understand what she does, but she plans to keep a written record. Her CAM will be featured prominently in the family’s history.

“That is a once-in-a-lifetime thing,” said Black. “It’s an honor. It really is an honor. I didn’t realize how big of a deal it was going to be.”

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Kudos By: talexander - 06:08:57 am on September 7, 2007.

Kudos to the DOD and AF leaders for finally putting such recognition in place. Airman have been on the front line, and more recently "at the tip of the spear" for many, many years. Army Soldiers wear the CIB as a badge of honor and now, finally, our Airmen brothers and sisters can do the same.

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