

CITATION
TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF THE
KOREN KOLLIGIAN, JR., TROPHY

Captain Jonathan D. George, 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing, Beale Air Force Base, California, distinguished himself by heroism and exceptional airmanship while participating in aerial flight as a U-2 pilot on 24 May 1986.

Captain George was flying his first U-2 operational mission at a forward operating location of the 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing when his aircraft experienced a full nosedown runaway trim condition at an altitude in excess of 60,000 feet. This malfunction caused the nose of the aircraft to pitch down abruptly and the maximum allowable airspeed to be exceeded. Although this is a critical condition in the U-2 aircraft, Captain George was able to pull the aircraft out of the dive through a combination of strength and pilot finesse. However, the trim remained in the full nosedown position. This required Captain George to apply constant control pressure, ranging from 70 to 200 pounds, for the duration of the 50 minute descent to the recovery base resulting in extreme fatigue and muscle cramping. Three times Captain George was close to abandoning the aircraft but each time he summoned the strength and courage to remain with the aircraft. Nearing the brink of exhaustion, Captain George continued to exercise exceptional flying skill, strength, and heroic determination, safely landing the aircraft. With the aircraft stopped on the runway, Captain George was literally pulled from the aircraft.

The outstanding airmanship and courage of Captain George prevented the loss of a valuable national asset and reflect great credit upon himself, the Strategic Air Command, and the United States Air Force.

Jerry Welch

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USAF SAFETY AWARDS BOARD

RECOMMENDATION FOR THE KOREN KOLLIGIAN, JR., TROPHY

1. In accordance with AFR 900-26, the USAF Safety Award Board evaluated 12 nominations submitted by five major commands for the Koren Kolligian, Jr., Trophy for 1986. The board recommends Captain Jonathan D. George, 9th Strategic Reconnaissance Wing (SAC), Beale AFB CA, as the winner.
2. Captain George was nominated for coping with a critical aircraft emergency in a U-2 aircraft on 24 May 1986.
 - a. Captain George was on his very first operational mission at a forward operating location in Korea when his aircraft experienced a full nosedown runway trim condition at an altitude in excess of 60,000 feet, causing the nose of the aircraft to pitch down abruptly.
 - b. Because of the sudden nosedown attitude, the maximum allowable mach was quickly exceeded. This is a critical condition in the U-2R which, being a subsonic aircraft, is subject to nose tuck and airframe buffet as well as extreme flight control forces at mach limit airspeed. The U-2R flight manual warns that if high speeds are developed, the force required to control the aircraft may exceed the pilot's strength, and previous incidents during which the mach limit was exceeded resulted in structural failure and loss of the aircraft.
 - c. With less than 2.5 g's available to maneuver the aircraft and given the extremely critical overspeed condition, the dive recovery required the tight-rope combination of strength to correct the attitude and finesse to avoid stalling the aircraft.
 - d. With his airspeed under control, he attempted to retrim the aircraft, but the trim remained in the full nosedown position.
 - e. Captain George then proceeded to hand-fly the aircraft from an altitude of 58,000 feet back to Osan Air Base. For 50 minutes, he flew with constant yoke pressures later estimated by engineers to have been from 70 to 200 pounds. Each attempt to change aircraft configuration or radio frequency required additional effort to prevent the aircraft from diving out of control, and performing normal cockpit duties was impossible due to the necessity of using both hands to counter the high control pressures.
 - f. Three times he was close to abandoning the aircraft as the agonizing physical and mental exertion took him to the limit of endurance, but each time he summoned the strength and courage to remain with the aircraft.
 - g. Even with normal trim, the aircraft requires skillful handling during final approach and landing. With its 104-foot wingspan and "bicycle" landing gear, the U-2R must be brought to a full stall within 2 feet of the runway and then "flown" down the runway until it comes to a complete stop.

h. Nearing the brink of physical exhaustion, Captain George exercised exceptional flying skill, strength, and heroic determination and safely landed the aircraft. With the aircraft stopped and shut down on the runway, Captain George was literally pulled from the aircraft and taken to the flight surgeon.

i. By determination, level-headed calculation of risks, emotional and physical strength and superior airmanship, Captain George's heroic efforts saved an aircraft valued in excess of \$50 million.