

CITATION

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

Captain Kenneth J. Vantiger, 27th Tactical Fighter Wing, Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, distinguished himself by exceptional airmanship while participating in aerial flight as an F-111 pilot on 13 February 1988.

Captain Vantiger was entering initial approach for landing at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida, when his aircraft experienced a flight control malfunction. After the crew regained control of the aircraft, they climbed out and flew away from the field to analyze their situation. The stick was deflected full right and, with maximum coordinated effort, could not be moved past center. The aircraft was barely controllable, with rudder alone available for directional control. Captain Vantiger was later faced with violent pitch oscillations as he configured the aircraft for landing. These pitch oscillations continued through the approach, and the full-right stick deflection made aircraft control difficult. At 50 feet over the runway, the right wing dropped again, but a quick rudder input brought it up. Captain Vantiger landed the aircraft and brought it to a stop without any damage.

The outstanding airmanship, extraordinary skill, alertness, and decisiveness of Captain Vantiger prevented the loss of a valuable national asset and reflect great credit upon himself, the Tactical Air Command, and the United States Air Force.

USAF SAFETY AWARDS BOARD
RECOMMENDATION FOR THE KOREN KOLLIGIAN, JR., TROPHY

1. In accordance with AFR 900-26, the USAF Safety Awards Board evaluated 10 nominations submitted by five major commands for the Koren Kolligian, Jr., Trophy for 1988. The board recommends Captain Kenneth J. Vantiger, 27th Tactical Fighter Wing (TAC), Cannon Air Force Base, New Mexico, as the winner.

2. Captain Vantiger was nominated for coping with a critical aircraft emergency in an F-111 aircraft on 13 February 1988.

a. Captain Vantiger was entering initial approach for landing at Eglin AFB when he felt the control stick pulse momentarily, then the stick moved full right, and the aircraft rolled rapidly in the same direction.

b. Both Captain Vantiger and his WSO applied full left stick and stopped the roll at 80-90 degrees of bank. The control stick would not move past the center position and rudder was required to get the aircraft's wings level.

c. When the crew reacquired aircraft control, they pointed the aircraft away from the field, and with the WSO maintaining full left stick pressure, Captain Vantiger turned off the flight control dampers and placed the flight control disconnect switch to override, but the full right stick deflection persisted.

d. Captain Vantiger nursed the aircraft to 6,000 feet over the water and through a left 5-degree rudder turn to prepare for a controllability check. The stick now began jumping movements in pitch. These pitch oscillations increased at gear extension, then dampened out. At flap extension, 8 to 10 violent pitch oscillations of plus/minus 15 degrees occurred and nearly put the aircraft out of control. The full right stick deflection increased the difficulty of pitch control until the pitch finally stabilized.

e. Captain Vantiger flew the final approach with minor pitch oscillations, making glide slope and airspeed control difficult, and only rudder for runway alignment.

f. At 50 feet above the runway threshold, the right wing made an uncommanded drop of 10-15 degrees, and a quick rudder input brought it up. The aircraft drifted to the left edge of the runway, but upon touchdown, Captain Vantiger was able to carefully guide it back to the runway centerline with directional braking, and he completed the recovery without any damage to the aircraft.

g. The time-critical decision making and superb airmanship demonstrated by Captain Vantiger in the face of a grave and unpredictable mechanical difficulty prevented the loss of a valuable combat resource.