

PEOPLE

# 17th SOS captain earns airmanship award

**By Staff Sgt. Keith Hovain  
353rd SOG Public Affairs**

The Air Force will soon recognize an officer in the 17th Special Operations Squadron with a top-level award for airmanship. Among other things, this special operations pilot dodged 20mm anti-aircraft fire, took the leadership reins when circumstances delayed a mission commander and support staff, and searched for a downed F-16 pilot.

Capt Daniel E. Flynn, an MC-130 Combat Shadow evaluator aircraft commander, earned the 1998 Col. James Jabara Award for Airmanship. He will receive the award at a homecoming parade in October. The award recognizes Flynn's performances across two squadrons with duties as pilot, instructor pilot, chief of operations, and exercise planner.

"I think he's an outstanding officer, but he's just one of the quality people I work with in special ops today," said Lt Col Michael Koster, 17th SOS commander. "His energy, enthusiasm and commitment is evident not just in our pilots and navigators, but also in every one of my enlisted aircrew positions. Special ops people like these are trained to jump into a contingency crisis at a moment's notice, and Capt Flynn has done that very well.

"If you ask him, however, this award is not just for him, but it represents the special ops aircrews and how well they come together when things start to go wrong," Koster said.

And during the Christmas season last year, things started to go wrong. Flynn volunteered to take a crew to Italy for Operation Joint Endeavor/Joint Guard, enforcing the peace process in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. Within 24 hours, Flynn and his crew arrived in Italy and either flew or were on alert status for 24 of their 25 days on the deployment.

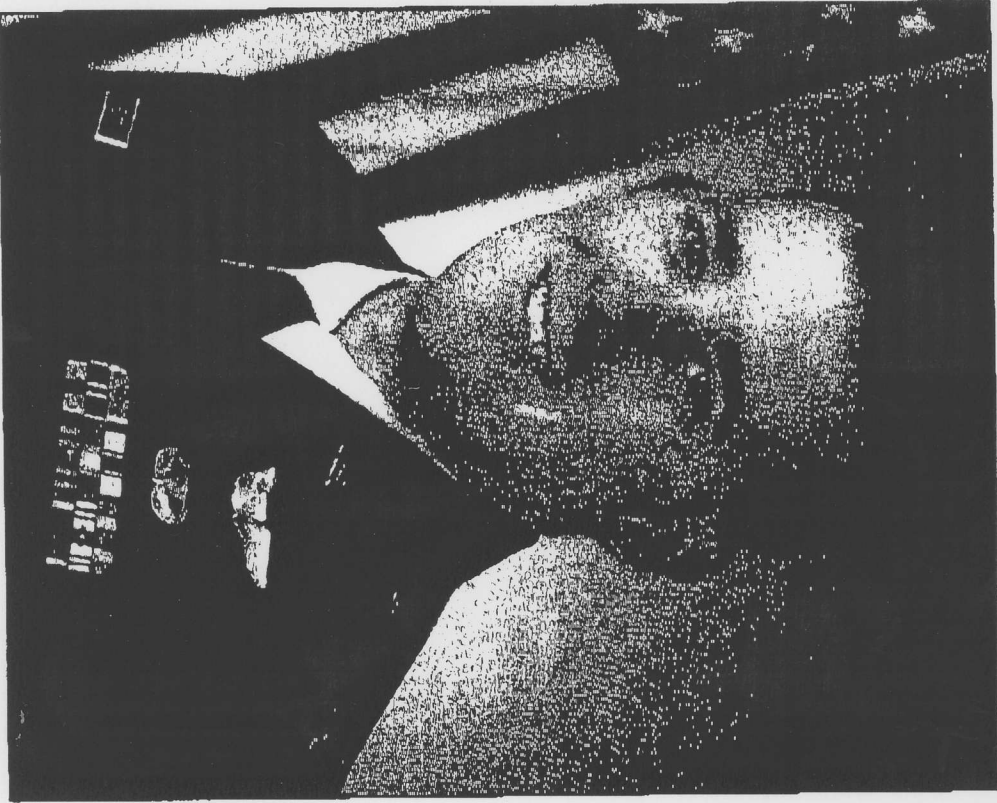
It was during this deployment that he and his crew would log the first combat time by a 17th SOS crew since the Vietnam conflict. On final ap-

proach to Sarajevo Airport, Flynn ordered a blackout of all aircraft lighting while he dodged the incoming 20mm anti-aircraft fire which was searching for his MC-130 Combat Shadow. Flynn and crew successfully evaded the fire and landed the aircraft to complete their mission.

Flynn also proved he could command more than his single aircraft when a deployment to Australia met with unexpected delays. The exercise mission commander and support staff were delayed enroute. Since Flynn was the ranking officer at the deployment location, he immediately assumed mission commander duties for 4 aircraft and 156 people. He worked well with the others to coordinate logistics and initial contingency mission planning, while ensuring lodging and food for his troops.

Flynn would then get the call to fly the lead aircraft into Thailand during Operation Bevel Edge as civil war erupted in Cambodia. Though the crews were never further tasked to perform the noncombatant evacuation they had trained for, Flynn had established 24-hour alert procedures to launch mission-ready forces at a moment's notice.

Flynn also took a turn as on-scene commander in the recent search for a downed F-16 pi-



**Capt Daniel E. Flynn**

lot off the waters of South Korea, published an article in the command safety magazine, and was named 353rd Special Operations Group Pilot of the Year for 1997.