



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
MARINE LIGHT ATTACK HELICOPTER SQUADRON 169  
MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 39  
3D MARINE AIRCRAFT WING  
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1650  
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17 Dec 09

From: Commanding Officer, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169  
To: Commandant of the Marine Corps (ASM)  
Via: (1) Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group 39  
(2) Commanding General, Third Marine Aircraft Wing  
Subj: NOMINATION FOR THE MARINE CORPS AVIATION ASSOCIATION ALFRED A. CUNNINGHAM AWARD (AVIATOR OF THE YEAR)  
Ref: (a) MCO 1650.29G  
Encl: (1) Description of Action  
(2) Biography  
(3) Proposed Citation  
(4) Photographs and Captions  
(5) One Compact Disk

1. Per the reference, the enclosures are submitted in support of [REDACTED]'s nomination for the Alfred A. Cunningham Aviator of the Year Award for the period 1 Jan 2009 to 31 Dec 2009. Enclosures (1) through (5) are submitted in support of this nomination.

2. In combat, while deployed, and in garrison, [REDACTED] has been instrumental to the unrivaled success of Marine Corps Aviation and the Global War on Terror.

3. HMLA-169 point of contact: Lieutenant Colonel Thomas P. Dolan, [REDACTED] email: [REDACTED]@usmc.mil.

[REDACTED]  
T. P. DOLAN

██████████'s Description of Action

██████████ is enthusiastically recommended for the Alfred A. Cunningham Award for his outstanding contribution to Marine Aviation while serving in two separate theaters of combat as a UH-1N pilot and Quality Assurance Officer, Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169 (HMLA-169) from 1 January 2009 to 31 December 2009.

██████████ graduated from the Weapons and Tactics Instructor Course in October of 2008, returning to the squadron with his vast experience and enthusiasm to instruct. His immediate attention to effective training prepared all UH-1N co-pilots, flight leaders, and instructors for their duties during combat in the extremely challenging theaters of Iraq and Afghanistan.

On 12 February 2009, ██████████'s abilities were put to the test when his UH-1N tail rotor lost a component causing a complete loss in tail rotor effectiveness while transitioning to landing in an unforgiving and dusty Forward Arming and Refueling Point. He quickly recognized the situation and immediately made corrective inputs, allowing a safe and otherwise uneventful landing. With only seconds to react, his calm demeanor, quick thinking, and appropriate control inputs saved an aircraft and all four crew members from a potentially deadly situation.

With plans constantly changing, the Squadron had learned it would no longer be assuming the usual OIF rotation and would be deploying to OEF almost three months earlier than anticipated. Assigned to accompany two UH-1Ns to Iraq, the original intent for ██████████ was to remain only to test the aircraft then continue on to Afghanistan with the main body of HMLA-169. When the decision to send UH-1N "Hueys" to Afghanistan was cancelled, he remained in Iraq and augmented HMLA-369. Operating out of Al Asad Airbase, he led numerous combat sections in support of OIF. He then rotated further north to continue flying in combat missions in Sal Sinjar. Upon rotation back to Al Asad, he arrived in time to make the Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority with HMLA-169's arriving OIF detachment smooth and seamless. He quickly began leading sections and training the newly arrived HMLA-169 copilots.

As the tempo of combat operations increased in OEF and the need to unite HMLA-169 as a full squadron was realized, the OIF detachment prepared for another move to the main base in Afghanistan. ██████████ arrived in Afghanistan and immediately began leading sections in a completely new and different theater of combat and he did

Enclosure (1)

it superbly. During countless named operations working with Marine, British, Special Operations, and other International Security Assistance Force units, he was consistently selected by the Commanding Officer to plan, brief, and lead sections in these large-scale missions.

█'s tactical judgment and decision-making abilities as a combat leader were exemplified when he was called on to conduct the tactical recovery of two fellow downed pilots. In deteriorating visibility due to blowing dust and haze, the dash two aircraft in a flight of two AH-1W "Cobras" impacted the ground during evasive maneuvers. The flight leader assumed the role of On-Scene Commander and immediately established communications with HMLA-169 base. At the same time, █'s UH-1N was on-deck receiving a hot refuel when the information was relayed to his section. He received permission to launch immediately to assist the On-Scene Commander and potentially employ the utility role of the UH-1N by conducting the tactical recovery of personnel. While enroute he communicated with the On-Scene Commander to establish altitude and lateral deconfliction and rapidly build his situational awareness.

Arriving on scene as quickly as possible, █ immediately began to assess the situation by orienting on any personnel or areas that could pose as potential threats to the downed aircrew. He then ordered a smoke grenade be employed to aid in calculating the wind speed and direction. Once the landing area was assessed as tenable, he did not hesitate and immediately prepared to land on the shore line near the AH-1W wreckage. Safely on deck, he ordered both crew chiefs to disembark the aircraft and recover both downed pilots while he and his copilot scanned the gathering crowd of Afghani locals on the opposite shore no more than 200 meters away for any potential threats. Once certain both pilots were safely recovered in his aircraft, he departed to the hospital aboard Camp Bastion. Unfamiliar with the medical pads, he coordinated with tower for the most expeditious recovery of both injured pilots. This coordination saved precious minutes and allowed for the speedy recovery of the injured pilots to the hospital.

█'s flight leadership, courage, and daring initiative directly saved the lives of two critically wounded fellow Marines. His ability to read the tactical situation as it developed and subsequent preparation for any situation illustrates the level of professionalism and dedication of this individual. Due to his conduct both in and out of the cockpit, █ has preserved the highest standards of the Marine Corps.

[REDACTED]'s Biography

[REDACTED] was born in Houston, Texas on 26 January 1979. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Distribution Engineering from Texas A&M University in May 2002 and then attended Officer Candidate's Course from January to March of 2003. He then received his commission as a Second Lieutenant and was assigned to The Basic School. Upon completion of The Basic School in October 2003, Second Lieutenant [REDACTED] reported to Aviation Pre-flight Indoctrination at Naval Air Station (NAS) Pensacola followed by flight school at NAS Corpus Christi and NAS Pensacola and was designated a Naval Aviator in June 2005.

After receiving his wings, [REDACTED] reported to Marine Helicopter Training Squadron 303 at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, California for initial training in the UH-1N "Huey". In December 2005, [REDACTED] reported to Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169 (HMLA-169). In March of 2006, [REDACTED] deployed with HMLA-169 in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF). [REDACTED] was promoted to Captain in July 2007. [REDACTED] deployed with HMLA-169 again in support of OIF in October 2007 and after redeploying attended the Weapons and Tactics Instructor course in the fall of 2008. [REDACTED] deployed for the third time with HMLA-169 (Det A) in support of OIF in March of 2009 and in July 2009, joined the full squadron in Afghanistan in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. [REDACTED] served HMLA-169 as the S-6A, Pilot Training Officer, Quality Assurance Officer, and Squadron UH-1N Weapons and Tactics Instructor.

[REDACTED]'s personal decorations include the Air Medal with combat distinguishing device and Air Medal Strike/Flight with numeral 11. In January 2010 [REDACTED] will report to Headquarters & Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station Yuma to serve as a Search and Rescue pilot Operations Officer.

██████████'s Citation

██████████ made outstanding contributions to Marine Aviation while serving as the Quality Assurance Officer and UH-1N Weapons and Tactics Instructor for Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 169 during Operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

While on deck at FOB Dwyer, Afghanistan, ██████████ received communications from a squadron mate engaged as the On-Scene Commander for his own fallen dash two AH-1W aircraft on a river bank. Quickly receiving permission to launch, he departed directly to the area of the downed aircraft while building his situational awareness with the On-Scene Commander. Arriving on scene, he immediately evaluated the situation by orienting on any personnel posing as potential threats to the downed aircrew. Once the landing area was assessed secure enough to land, ██████████ was directed by the HMLA-169 Commanding Officer to recover the pilots. Once safely on deck, he ordered both crew chiefs to disembark and recover both downed pilots while he scanned the growing crowd of Afghani locals on the opposite shore for any potential threats. The determined crew chiefs had both downed pilots back in the Huey and ready for departure in less than one minute. Once certain both pilots were safely recovered and stable in his aircraft, he departed to the hospital aboard Camp Bastion. ██████████'s flight leadership and daring initiative directly saved the lives of two critically wounded fellow Marines.

Due to his conduct both in and out of the cockpit, ██████████ has upheld the highest standards of Naval Aviation. His personal pride and total devotion to duty reflected credit upon himself and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Marine Corps.

[REDACTED]'s photo captions and POC

Photograph Captions

(1): Taken while on detachment to Sal Sinjar, Iraq while temporarily augmenting HMLA-369. [REDACTED] is standing with the military working dog that was later a passenger aboard his UH-1N during a combat mission.

(2): [REDACTED]'s individual Squadron photo, taken in front of the UH-1N "Huey" helicopter he commands. This photo is has been displayed in the hallways of HMLA-169 since December 2005, signifying that he is a current "Viper" pilot and instructor.

(3): Piloting (in right seat) the UH-1N on a combat mission in support of 2nd Battalion 3rd Marines in the vicinity of Combat Outpost Delaram, Afghanistan. "Spider Mountain" is in the distance.

(4): Teeing off from the rooftop of the smoke pit in Al Asad, Iraq.

(5): Proudly displaying the colors in front of the UH-1N.

Point of Contact Information

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