Air Force Dedicates C-17 to Medal of Honor Recipient

The U.S. Air Force today dedicated a Boeing C-17 Globemaster III to Sgt. John L. Levitow, the only Air Force enlisted person to receive the Medal of Honor for actions during the war in Vietnam.

Gen. Walter Kross, Air Mobility Command (AMC) commander, presided during the afternoon ceremony at the Boeing C-17 assembly facility here. The ceremony honoring Levitow is an initiative under AMC's Year of the Enlisted Force, an effort to create a legacy of attention to the backbone of the command -- the enlisted force.

Levitow, then an Airman First Class, was awarded the Medal of Honor for actions on Feb. 24, 1969, near Long Bihn, Vietnam. A crewman on an AC-47, a gunship variant of the Douglas Aircraft C-47, his action saved the airplane and its crew from certain destruction.

Despite severe shrapnel wounds from a mortar shell that struck his aircraft moments before, the 23-year-old Levitow managed to cover a live magnesium flare with his body, crawl to a doorway of the partially out-of-control plane and toss it out an instant before it ignited.

On Armed Forces Day, May 14, 1970, President Richard Nixon presented the Medal of Honor to John Levitow in a ceremony at the White House.

This C-17, now known as The Spirit of Sgt. John L. Levitow, is the 37th delivered to the Air Force. It will be based at Charleston Air Force Base, S.C.

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