NOMINATION FOR AWARD

AWARD	CATEGORY *(If Applicable)*	AWARD PERIOD
2016 General Jerome F. O'Malley Award	RC-135V/W	1 Jan 15 - 31 Dec 15

RANK/NAME OF NOMINEE *(First, Middle Initial, Last)*	MAJCOM, FOA, OR DRU
RC-135V/W Crew of PYTHON 71	ACC

DAFSC/DUTY TITLE	NOMINEE'S TELEPHONE *(DSN & Commercial)*
N/A	(b)(6)

UNIT/OFFICE SYMBOL/STREET ADDRESS/BASE/STATE/ZIP CODE
55 WG / CC / 201 Looking Glass Avenue / Offutt AFB / NE / 68113

RANK/NAME OF UNIT COMMANDER *(First, Middle Initial, Last)/COMMANDER'S TELEPHONE (DSN & Commercial)*
(b)(6)

SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS *(Use single-spaced, bullet format)*

The 55th Wing Commander, (b)(6), proudly nominates the crew of RC-135V/W RIVET JOINT, callsign PYTHON 71, comprised of professional aviators from the 38th Reconnaissance Squadron, 45th Reconnaissance Squadron, 97th Intelligence Squadron, 338th Combat Training Squadron, 390th Intelligence Squadron, 55th Operations Group and members from the Royal Air Force's 51 Squadron for the Air Force Association General Jerome F. O'Malley Award. This crew demonstrated superior airmanship and tenacity while conducting sustained combat operations in support of coalition forces as a part of the 763d Expeditionary Reconnaissance Squadron in the USCENTCOM theater of operations. Their outstanding contributions ensured dedicated airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) coverage was available to support American and Coalition forces conducting combined operations in Iraq.

On 12 November 2015, the crew of PYTHON 71 launched their aircraft planning to conduct a routine ISR mission in support of Operation INHERENT RESOLVE. They were tasked to conduct intelligence preparation of the operating environment provide indications and warning to United States and Coalition forces and detect and report patterns of life of opposition forces.

Prior to completing takeoff preparations, PYTHON 71 encountered several critical maintenance issues. The crew was forced to delay engine start for one hour and forty-one minutes due to an antenna failure. This outage caused a complete inability to pass near-real time reporting, which prevented the crew from meeting minimum launch criteria. The Airborne System Engineers (ASE) attempted to resolve the issue by cannibalizing parts from the sole spare aircraft. Following the failure of the replacement parts, the ASEs ultimately devised a solution granting the crew a fifty-percent functional reach-back system with which to perform their mission. Prior to taxiing, the reserve brake accumulator failed to hold sufficient hydraulic pressure, nearly causing the mission to cancel yet again. The Aircraft Commander (AC) recognized this critical issue and coordinated with ground maintenance to troubleshoot the issue and ensure the system would allow for at least one engagement of the brake despite the gradual pressure bleed off, as well as ensure the brakes would hold during engine start. Following the resolution of all maintenance problems, PYTHON 71 launched to fly its full on-station duration per the direction of the Combined Air Operations Center's Senior Intelligence Duty Officer. Within 20 minutes of reporting on-station, PYTHON 71 detected elements of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Fallujah, Iraq, noting the presence of Fallujah-based ISIL air defense artillery coordinators directing target engagements. Directly contacting the American ground task force advising Iraqi Army units in the area, the Information Integration Officer (IIO) passed the imminent threat warning (ITW). This ITW led to the diversion of two Iraqi Army helicopters currently within the weapons engagement zone, saving all friendly lives aboard. The IIO proceeded to collaborate with the Joint Operations Integration Office using national technical means in order to geolocate one of the ISIL air defense coordinators. After compiling this locational data, the IIO reported this intelligence to the task force, who utilized it for strike preparation in conjunction with the Iraqi Army.

When PYTHON 71 arrived at its planned orbit for the day, in addition to providing battle damage assessments for air strikes that occurred four hours earlier, it quickly became apparent that the crew would dynamically support the American-backed, Kurdish-enacted operation to liberate the city of Sinjar. Immediately the mission aircrew began identifying ISIL elements and reporting their locations and activity to the American forces and Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC) on scene advising the Peshmerga. Maintaining constant communication with the Special Operations Forces, the IIO tipped a total of 45 real-time Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) reports. The JTACs in turn utilized these tips to finish the kill chain by corroborating SIGINT with imagery from five supporting remotely piloted aircraft (RPA). This intelligence fusion resulted in PYTHON 71 providing direct support to 27 dynamic airstrikes, resulting in 135 enemies

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RANK/NAME OF NOMINEE *(First, Middle Initial, Last)*
RC-135V/W Crew of PYTHON 71

SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS *(Use single-spaced, bullet format) (Continued)*

killed in action (EKIA), along with the destruction of 26 defensive fighting positions, 11 ISIL staging points, and five ISIL transport vehicles. Finally, PYTHON 71 identified the location of ISIL's retreating ground forces and relayed this intelligence for further operations.

. . . While supporting the Sinjar liberation operation, the crew of PYTHON 71 continued to collect against its remaining tasking. Through the cooperation of the Electronic Intelligence (ELINT), Cryptologic Operator, and Special Signals compartments, PYTHON 71 captured unprecedented collection revealing an adversary's new tactics, techniques, and procedures using advanced signals. Additionally, the Data Link Operator voiced 29 tactical reports (TACREP), alerting all United States and Coalition aircraft to airborne threats in the Iraqi operating airspace and the adjacent AOR airspace. In addition, two ELINT TACREPs were passed to the E-3 AWACS, resulting in the collaborated amplification of two suspected air tracks.

. At the conclusion of PYTHON 71's overwatch of the Kurdish operation in Sinjar City, it proceeded south over Iraq to return to base when the IIO alerted the Airborne Mission Supervisor (AMS) to a troops-in-contact (TIC) event declared via military Internet Relay Chat in Albu Hayat in central Iraq. The task force commander of the American unit advising Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) declared the TIC on behalf of the ISF ground forces commander. ISF units were pinned down in defensive positions by effective sniper fire, as well as receiving fire from ISIL heavy machine guns, SPG-9 recoilless rifles, and small arms. The AMS, working with the Tactical Coordinator, Navigator, and AC quickly established a new orbit area, directing the aircraft's sensors towards the TIC and confirmed the disruption of ISIL's C2 network by ISF units. PYTHON 71 reported this intelligence to the American task force who passed it to their Iraqi allies. Pursuant to this report, the JTAC in turn called in a kinetic strike, resulting in 5 EKIA and the destruction of an ISIL compound.

. . . Over the entirety of PYTHON 71's mission, its crew passed 45 near-real time threat tips to American and Kurdish ground forces, published 105 perishable Klieglight reports, alerted strike aircraft to 19 insurgent locations, reported 88 ELINT signals over tactical and strategic data links, and collected three priority ELINT signals. The actions of PYTHON 71 not only fulfilled USCENTCOM tasking, but also aided a dynamic CFACC mission set and national tasking requirements, all while maintaining a constant and accurate air and ground picture. Their outstanding contributions ensured dedicated airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance coverage to no less than three distinct ground forces with over 7,500 troops, seven manned aircraft, and 19 RPAs.

. . . The singularly distinctive accomplishments of PYTHON 71's diverse, multi-national crew merit the award of the prestigious General Jerome F. O'Malley Award and warrant honoring them as the single "Best Reconnaissance Crew in the Air Force" for 2015.

PYTHON 71's crewmembers are as follows:

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