

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE SILVER STAR MEDAL

TO

GREGORY D. THORNTON

Captain Gregory D. Thornton distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States, near Baghdad, Iraq on 6 April 2003. On that date, while flying in an A-10 attack aircraft supporting Advance 33, a ground forward air controller attached to Task Force 2nd and 69th Armor Battalion, Capt Thornton observed the Task Force's lead element taking fire from enemy tanks and armored infantry fighting vehicles entrenched on the eastern approach of a bridge spanning the Tigris River. With complete disregard for his personal safety, and while continually providing his element crucial defensive mutual support despite heavy anti-aircraft fire, Captain Thornton overcame extremely reduced in-flight visibility caused by a sand storm, and attacked the battalion sized armor element dug in on the East side of the north Baghdad bridge. For 33 minutes, Captain Thornton and his leader braved the ever-increasing hailstorm of anti-aircraft fire to kill and demobilize three T-72 tanks, six armored personnel carriers and multiple utility vehicles, all within striking distance of the friendly ground forces. Captain Thornton repeatedly maneuvered his aircraft to within 3,000 feet of enemy forces to bring his 30-millimeter Gatling gun to bear. This courageous and aggressive attack, while under withering fire and in poor weather, along with Captain Thornton's superior flying skills and true attack pilot grit, allowed Task Force 2 and 69 Armor to cross the Tigris River with minimal combat losses and successfully accomplish their objective of linking up with coalition forces completing the 360-degree encirclement of Baghdad. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Captain Thornton has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.

