



SULLENBERGER AWARD FOR COURAGE

Grads honored during 32nd NCLS

The Hon. Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger ’73 presented the Sullenberger Award for Courage during the Challenge Ceremony at the 2025 National Character and Leadership Symposium.

Capt. Logan Cowan ’18, Capt. Claire Eddins ’18, Capt. Carla Nava ’18 and Capt. Kyle Abraham ’19 received the recognition for their actions in response to the Oct. 6, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel.

Following the terrorist attacks that day, tensions in the Middle East escalated, leading to a deployment of the 494th Expeditionary Fighter Wing (the Panthers) to deter Iranian threats. In April 2024, following Israeli strikes on Syrian targets, Iran launched drones, ballistic missiles and cruise missiles toward Israel, a U.S. ally.

On April 13, 2024, Cowan, Eddins, Nava, Abraham and their teams were part of the Panthers’ response. The F-15E pilots and weapon systems officers were tasked with intercepting and destroying Iranian drones despite facing darkness, missile fire and limited fuel. Abraham destroyed four drones, while Nava coordinated refueling and successfully engaged five. Nava and Eddins made history that night, becoming the first female modern-day aces. And Cowan pursued a drone across an international border to prevent collateral damage.

According to their nomination packets, their exemplary bravery and skill ensured the destruction of nearly 99% of the inbound weapons, in what the U.S. Air Force called its “largest air-to-air engagement in over 50 years.” All four received the Distinguished Flying Cross for their pivotal roles in preserving regional stability and protecting civilian lives. 

Scan the QR code to listen to a *Long Blue Leadership* podcast special episode with the 2025 recipients of the Sullenberger Award for Courage.



LEFT: Ambassador Chesley “Sully” Sullenberger ’73 presents this year’s winners with the Sullenberger Award for Courage. Awardees, from left, are: Capt. Logan “Batman” Cowan ’18, Capt. Kyle “Royal” Abraham ’19, Capt. Claire “Atomic” Eddins ’18 and Capt. Carla “Guns” Nava ’18.

ABOVE: The Sullenberger Award for Courage winners appear on the *Long Blue Leadership* podcast with Bryan Grossman, *Checkpoints* managing editor.