



Photo by Todd Berenger

Maj. Kevin Churchill, 551st Special Operations Squadron, holds the Cheney Award he won.

58th Special Operations Wing officer wins Cheney award

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Public Affairs

An officer from the 58th Special Operations Wing won the 2002 Cheney Award for saving two critically injured crewmembers of the yacht, the Persuader, when he was stationed in England.

Maj. Kevin Churchill, now the 551st Special Operations Squadron's executive officer, and Capt. Sean Leroy from Mildenhall Air Base, England, responded to an ocean rescue on May 21, 2002.

"We were preparing to fly training lines that night," Churchill said. "I was on the hover pad performing hover checks and Leroy had just gotten into his seat running the checklist on his aircraft when the 21st Special Operations Squadron asked us to shutdown and come inside for a possible rescue mission."

Both the pilots planned and executed the 11-hour mission consisting of two MH-53M helicopters, two British Nimrod Surveillance aircraft, two MC-130P refueling tankers, one KC-135 tanker, two international freighters and three pararescue teams. It turned out to be the longest non-stop over water rescue launched from the British island in the last 12 years.

"The yacht was somewhere between 450 and 500 nautical miles off the southwest tip of England and had been rolled over by a wave," Churchill said. "On deck, a civilian sailor had been washed overboard and nearly drowned. Beneath the deck, the ship's cook was buried under various equipment and suffered a broken collarbone, among other injuries. Both

sailors appeared to have undetermined head injuries."

The rescue unit out of Keflavik Naval Air Station, Iceland, had been notified but was more than 900 nautical miles away. Since the RAF does not maintain aerial refueling helicopters or tankers, the yacht would not be in its range for at least two more days.

"Since the true extent of the injuries was not known, it was imperative that we launch to recover the sailors immediately, knowing that even with our capabilities, we were nearly six hours away," said the major.

Gen. Michael Moseley, Air Force vice chief of staff, gave Churchill and Leroy the award at the Pentagon in August. Secretary of the Air Force James Roche attended.

"Overall, just an awe-inspiring event," Churchill said. "To be in front of a group of people I have long respected and admired for their own actions in various operations throughout the world and to be recognized in this manner was truly something very special for me. Especially since my mother, wife and children were able to be there. It was very humbling to realize that, though I was one of 22 men on for that mission on that night, it was the sacrifices of my family during all those long TDYs and all those late training nights that prepared me to be there."

The Cheney Award was named after 1st Lt. Willam Cheney, who was killed in an aircraft training accident in Italy in 1918. The award recognizes an act of valor, extreme fortitude and self-sacrifice connected with an aviation event.

Veterans Day events start at VA, continue to memorial

Medical Center celebrates veterans

The Albuquerque Veterans Affairs Medical Center observes Veterans Day, Nov. 11, with an Avenue of Flags and a parade. Both are free and open to the general public.

The Avenue of Flags, with more than 100 American flags, is exhibited on the VA campus 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

The Veterans Day parade features the Military Vehicle Preservation Association's antique military vehicles.

The parade route is through the medical center grounds 8:45-9 a.m., entering the San Pedro gate to the facility and exiting at San Mateo Gate, as it heads to the New Mexico Veterans Memorial Park.

Veterans Memorial Park ceremony

Kirtland AFB is participating in the New Mexico Veterans Memorial, Veterans Day ceremony, Nov. 11.

Musical prelude and chorale performance is 9-10 a.m., and the ceremony, 10-11:30 a.m.

The ceremony includes an address by Congresswoman Heather Wilson, music by the 44th Army Band, Sandia High School chorales and bagpiper retired Army Col. Craig Chamberlain.

The Defense Threat Reduction Agency Color Guard with members of all services performs along with a 21-gun salute by American Legion Post 49.

The park's visitor center closes Nov. 12 for six months of construction. The rose garden and amphitheater remain open for ceremonies and functions.

Call 256-2042 or 256-2046.

Carlisle Gate closed, all others open regular hours on Veterans Day.

2 picked for chief promotion

The Air Force 2003 chief master sergeant promotion board selected Senior Master Sgts. **Jeffrey B. Amos**, 58th Maintenance Operations Squadron and **Mark A. Hall**, Air Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center for promotion along with 526 others. See the complete list: www.afpc.randolph.af.mil.

The board, considered 2,649 senior master sergeants and selected 19.86 percent—6.86 percent above the minimum promotion rate objective of 13 percent. Last year's selection rate was 19.93 percent.

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**Kirtland AFB
Chief of Staff
Survey
participation**

40%

**126
TEAM
KIRTLAND
members
are
deployed**

**NUCLEUS
Supplement**
www.kirtland.af.mil

**Force Protection
Condition
ALPHA
Straight Talk
853-4636**