

## Helicopter pilots earn Cheney Award

8/13/2004 - **WASHINGTON (AFPN)** -- For the second straight year, Airmen from the 21st Special Operations Squadron at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, England, have earned the Cheney Award for aerial achievement.

Cpts. (then 1st Lts.) Randell Voas and Craig Prather earned the award for their role in the March 26, 2003, airdrop mission of the U.S. Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade over Bashur in northern Iraq. The mission was the largest combat airdrop since the Vietnam War.

"These two took their (MH-53M Pave Low) helicopter from Greece, flew almost 700 miles to the drop area," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper.

As part of a 1,000-Soldier airdrop mission, the crew provided on-call fire support, immediate casualty evacuation, triage and recovery for 37 paratroopers. The flight was conducted at maximum wartime weight in deteriorating weather and included three aerial refuelings.

"Guys like this think these things are routine, but to those of us who don't live that life, it is very special indeed," General Jumper said. "It is a mark of our Air Force that we have officers of this caliber who are willing to sacrifice themselves, to put themselves in harm's way. The nation is blessed to have them."

The Cheney Award is presented each year in memory of 1st Lt. William Cheney, who was killed in an air collision over Italy in 1918. It was established in 1927 and awarded to an Airman for an act of valor, extreme fortitude or self-sacrifice in a humanitarian interest, performed in connection with aircraft, but not necessarily of a military nature.