

USO OFFICIALS HONOR 5 AIR FORCE MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENTS by Andrea Knudson Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

December 14, 2009 - NEW YORK (AFNS) -- Officials of the Metropolitan New York USO held their 48th Annual Armed Forces Gala and Gold Medal Dinner and honored the only five living Air Force Medal of Honor recipients Dec. 9 in New York City.

The USO's Distinguished Service Award was presented to Col. Bernard F. Fisher, Col. James P. Fleming, Col. Joe M. Jackson and Col. Leo K. Thorsness.

Col. George E. Day was also honored, but was not on hand for the event. A video presentation was shown depicting the men's stories from the battlefield.

NBC's Brian Williams, who co-hosted the event with retired Army Col. Jack A. Jacobs, a Medal of Honor recipient for his actions in Vietnam, said of the five, "these are the best Americans there are."

The USO's Distinguished Service Award was also awarded to Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the top U.S. commander in Iraq; network cable giant HBO for its outstanding military-themed programming; and Bruce Whitman, president and CEO of FlightSafety International, Inc., and co-chairman of the Medal of Honor Foundation.

Capt. Justin Conelli was named the USO Airman of the Year and received the George Van Cleave Leadership award. The award is presented to members of each of the armed services in recognition of distinguished service, accomplishments and demonstrated leadership while deployed overseas.



Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno presents the George Van Cleave Leadership Award to Capt. Justin Conelli at the USO of Metropolitan New York's 48th Annual Armed Forces Gala and Gold Medal Dinner, Dec. 9, 2009 in New York City. General Odierno is the top U.S. commander in Iraq, and was awarded the USO's Distinguished Service Award. Captain Conelli is assigned to Air Force Special Operations Command's 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C. (U.S. Air Force photo/Andrea Knudson) <<<<<

Captain Conelli, assigned to Air Force Special Operations Command's 21st Special Tactics Squadron at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., was recognized for his skill, bravery and selfless service in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The USO's Distinguished Service Award is USO's premiere award that recognizes exemplary leadership and service to the armed forces. The mission of the USO of Metropolitan New York is to positively contribute to the morale and personal welfare of U.S. military personnel and their families who reside in, are stationed in, or are visiting the tri-state area. The organization helps channel the American public's desire to give back to those who serve the country into programs and services that enrich their lives.

NOTE: This online-only information was added to the CCT history after publication of *The Eye of the Storm – A history of Combat Control Teams*.