



Neil Black was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania in 1944. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force on January 16, 1963, and was trained as a Pararescueman.

His first assignment was as a Pararescueman with the 79th Air Rescue Squadron at Andersen AFB, Guam, from October 1963 to May 1965, and then with the 41st Air Rescue Squadron at Hamilton AFB, California, from May 1965 until his helicopter was shot down over North Vietnam and he was taken as a Prisoner of War while on temporary duty in Southeast Asia on September 20, 1965.

After spending 2,703 days in captivity, Lt Black was released during Operation Homecoming on February 12, 1973. He was one of three enlisted POWs that received Presidential commissions when they returned, after having been commissioned by the POW Camp leadership in Hanoi. Lt Black was briefly hospitalized to recover from his injuries at Andrews AFB, Maryland, and entered Undergraduate Pilot Training in August 1973, receiving his pilot wings at Williams AFB, Arizona, in September 1974. He completed C-130 Hercules training in November 1974, and then served as a C-130 pilot until March 1979, when he began pilot instructor training.

Capt Black's next assignment was as an instructor pilot with the 455th Flying Training Squadron of the 323rd Flying Training Wing at Mather AFB, California, from June 1979 to September 1981. He then attended Russian Language School from December 1981 to December 1983 before serving as an Air Operations Officer with the U.S. Military Liaison Mission to the Soviet Forces in East Germany from January 1984 until his retirement from the Air Force on February 1, 1987.



The Air Force Cross Citation reads:

Airman Third Class Arthur N. Black distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an opposing armed force as an Aircrew Member of an HH-43B helicopter over North Vietnam on 20 September 1965.

On that date, Airman Black participated in an extremely hazardous attempted recovery of a downed pilot. This mission required a flight of over 80 miles, mostly over hostile controlled territory. Evaluation of the environment in which the downed pilot was located indicated that maximum performance would be demanded from each crew member if successful recovery was to be effected.

Though exposed to intensive hostile ground fire, Airman Black, with completed disregard for his own safety, performed with courage and professional precision in a supreme effort to rescue a fallen comrade. Airman Black's courageous action and devotion to duty are in keeping with the highest traditions of the American fighting man under attack by an opposing armed force.

Through his extraordinary heroism, superb airmanship, and aggressiveness, Airman Black reflected the highest credit upon himself and the United States Air Force.