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MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
HONOURS AND AWARDS
AIR FORCE DEPARTMENT

Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB.
12th July 1983.

The QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the following award:

Air Force Cross

Squadron Leader Graham Eric STIRRUP (8020760D),
Royal Air Force.

On 7th March 1983 Squadron Leader Stirrup, a flight commander on No. 226 Operational Conversion Unit R.A.F. Lossiemouth was conducting a student progress check from the rear seat of a Jaguar aircraft at low level when there was a bang followed by severe vibration and his forward vision became completely obscured by blood and bird remains. As Squadron Leader Stirrup was unable to see or communicate with the front cockpit and did not know if his student was conscious, he immediately took control and started to climb. All radios and the navigation system were inoperative so he jettisoned his external stores into the sea. He then headed for Royal Air Force Leuchars

carrying out low speed handling checks which revealed a flap control restriction. At the same time the vibration increased and the temperature of one engine rose rapidly; he closed the throttle to idle and prepared for a single engine approach. With no forward visibility Squadron Leader Stirrup crossed the calculated centreline of the runway before turning to fly parallel with it. Once he could see the approach features he gradually aligned the aircraft with the runway. About 3 miles short of touchdown the idling engine began to burn but could not be shut down because, if it had seized, the resulting increased drag would have proved catastrophic. Squadron Leader Stirrup would have been justified in abandoning the aircraft, but still unaware if his student was conscious or not he elected to attempt to land. The debris and flames from the engine set fire to the ground beneath the aircraft which was at a height of 100 feet when he first glimpsed the corner of the runway threshold and managed to land straight ahead. After touchdown the braking parachute deployed. The only control is in the front cockpit and this indicated that the student was conscious. Squadron Leader Stirrup turned off the runway; the damaged engine was still burning when he and his student vacated the aircraft. Throughout this difficult and dangerous recovery, Squadron Leader Stirrup displayed outstanding flying skills, airmanship and courage which not only saved a valuable aircraft but also would have saved the life of his student had he proved unable to eject.

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