



SECOND SUPPLEMENT TO

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TUESDAY, 10TH MAY 1983

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

**AIR FORCE DEPARTMENT**

Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB.

10th May 1983.

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

*Air Force Cross*

Squadron Leader Derek John SHARP, (4232596), Royal Air Force.

Squadron Leader Sharp is a senior instructor on No. 151 Squadron at Royal Air Force Chivenor. On 15th February 1983 he took off from Royal Air Force Marham on a low-level navigation exercise with a student navigator. Flying at 250 feet above ground level and 400 knots about 3 nautical miles south of Peterborough, his aircraft struck a Mallard duck which entered the cockpit. The impact shattered Squadron Leader Sharp's visor, severely damaged his left eye and fractured his nose, eye socket and sinuses. His right eye was filled with blast debris, blood and bird remains. Furthermore, he could not talk to his navigator. At this stage Squadron Leader Sharp could have justifiably initiated the abandonment of the aircraft. Instead, he

climbed, reduced speed, restored partial sight to his right eye, cleared the surge in his engine and resolved a fuel pressure problem. Having decelerated to reduce buffetting he could now communicate with his passenger, but could barely monitor his instruments. The pressure to eject was still strong, nevertheless, he resolved to delay such action until clear of the Peterborough suburbs. Squadron Leader Sharp informed his passenger of their predicament and that he would have to manoeuvre the aircraft in response to his passenger's directions. He then instructed the student to broadcast a MAYDAY call. Despite continuous pain and misgivings about his failing sight, Squadron Leader Sharp flew an immaculately judged ground controlled approach at Royal Air Force Wittering and landed safely. Throughout this harrowing experience, Squadron Leader Sharp was in great pain, yet he showed courage and coolness of the highest order. His concern for public safety was such that he chose to fly away from a densely populated area although the circumstances fully justified his abandoning the aircraft. Moreover, by exposing himself to considerable personal risk he saved his aircraft and crew. Squadron Leader Sharp displayed gallantry and airmanship equal to the highest traditions of the Royal Air Force, and his performance reflected the greatest credit on the Service.