

SPEECH BY
CHIEF OF AIR FORCE
AIR MARSHAL DAVIES, AO, CSC
PRESENTATION OF MERITORIOUS UNIT CITATION
TO NO 5 FLIGHT
AMBERLEY, 12 SEPTEMBER 2016

Your Excellencies, Admiral Johnston, Mrs Jennifer Howard, Member for Ipswich, Councillor Pisasale, Mr Daniel Lipshut of Israeli Aircraft Industries, Wing Commander Matthew Bowers, Commanding Officer No 5 Flight, current and past members of No 5 Flight, ladies and gentlemen.

As we have heard from our Governor General, this is both a very special and a very rare event in our Air Force history.

I am privileged and honoured to have one of our newest units, No 5 Flight, awarded a Meritorious Unit Citation in recognition of their outstanding achievements while deployed to Afghanistan over the period 2010 to 2014.

This award sets an historical standard to which future generations can aspire. This Meritorious Unit Citation acknowledges the operational mastery of No 5 Flight, the significant impact they had on the mission in Afghanistan and the fact that they introduced Heron while deployed on operations.

For Air Force it is very rare to establish an entirely new capability while on deployment for overseas service. This has occurred only three times previously: the introduction of the Iroquois gunship by No 9 Squadron in Vietnam, the conversion from the piston-engine Mustang to the jet-powered Meteor fighter by No 77 Squadron in the Korean War and the establishment of the Australian Flying Corps operational conversion wing in the UK during World War I.

In the years to come, our Air Force will look back on 2010 when No 5 Flight established the Air Force's first unmanned aircraft system, not in the peaceful surroundings of an Australian air base, but in the high tempo and dynamic deployed battlespace of Afghanistan. Be in no doubt that the professionalism and dedication of our No 5 Flight crews and support personnel over a sustained period on operations led directly to many ADF, coalition, Afghan National Security Forces and civilian lives being saved. I was in Darwin to welcome home the last No 5 Flight detachment and whilst I could feel their sense of accomplishment, the most common call was 'but who is going to watch over the soldiers now?'

I would also like to recognise the tremendous contribution of the families of our No 5 Flight and Task Group members. Your support, understanding and personal sacrifice, epitomised by that of the Case family, is vital to our success both as an Air Force and as an Australian Defence Force, and I warmly thank you.

To all past and present members of No 5 Flight, you can rightly claim the laurels of an elite outfit and wear your unit citation with justifiable pride.

Congratulations to you all.