



**MAJOR
LEWIS D. BELL**

CLASS 50-54

Major Bell was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam.

Major Bell distinguished himself on 5 March 1966 while serving as the Pilot of a UH-1D helicopter. He learned that the perimeter of an infantry unit was surrounded and under heavy attack by a regimental-sized Viet Cong force. The defenders had begun to run critically short of small arms ammunition. Realizing that delivery of ammunition into the middle of a raging jungle battle was extremely hazardous and called for exposure to withering Viet Cong machine gun fire, Major Bell and his crew voluntarily undertook to deliver the explosive cargo into the battle area. On approach to the landing zone the helicopter and crew were hit time and time again by heavy machine gun and small arms fire. Major Bell and his crew ignored their own wounds and personal safety and continued through the heavy fire to the landing zone. Though the entire crew had been seriously wounded by Viet Cong fire, all the ammunition was successfully unloaded and Major Bell managed to fly the helicopter out of its untenable position. Moments later the helicopter was shot down by a deadly cross fire of .50 caliber machine guns, killing all aboard. The heroic actions of Major Bell and his crew supplied the needed ammunition to turn the tide of battle and save numerous American lives. Because of this the heavily outnumbered infantry units completely routed the insurgents, killing over 200 Viet Cong. Major Bell's conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity, at the cost of his life, above and beyond the call of duty was the mainstay of the successful camp defense. His actions were an inspiration to the American defenders. Although wounded, he never relented from his determined effort to re-supply the heavily beleaguered infantry units.

His courage and determination, in the face of overwhelming firepower, were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.