

## **1LT Leon Mack Wessel, Jr ( Class 9-66)**

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918 (amended by act of July 25, 1963), takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross to First Lieutenant (Field Artillery) Leon Mack Wessel, Jr. (ASN: 0- 5429361), United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in action in connection with military operations involving conflict with an armed hostile force in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2d Battalion, 320th Artillery, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division.

First Lieutenant Wessel distinguished himself by exceptionally valorous actions on 15 May 1967 while serving as artillery forward observer for an airborne infantry battalion on a search and destroy mission near Duc Pho. His platoon was savagely attacked by an estimated North Vietnamese battalion firing automatic weapons, mortars and grenades from well-fortified positions. He immediately called for artillery strikes on the enemy positions to allow the platoon leader to withdraw to a more secure position. The platoon leader was seriously wounded, but Lieutenant Wessel quickly assumed command and called for intensified strikes on the hostile onslaught. Ignoring his own safety, he moved through the withering enemy barrage to rally his men and call for air support. Time after time he exposed himself to the enemy weapons to direct helicopter strafing runs on the hostile fortifications. He repeatedly moved into the open during the five-hour firefight to inspire his men to fight furiously against the numerically superior North Vietnamese unit. He was ordered to withdraw in the face of the intense attack and unhesitatingly braved the savage fire to secure a landing zone in the bullet-swept jungle and direct rescue ships to his position. Heedless of the intense fire, he moved to within fifty meters of the hostile lines and directed 43 artillery strikes to cover the extraction operation. He remained on the ground until he was sure that all of his men were loaded. First Lieutenant Wessel's extraordinary heroism and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

**Headquarters, U.S. Army, Vietnam, General Orders No. 5789  
(November 10, 1967)**