



# Spectre Gunner: The AC-130 Gunship

*David M. Burns*

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## **Spectre Gunner: The AC-130 Gunship** David M. Burns

This is the true story of Master Sergeant David M. Burns, an aerial gunner assigned to the deadliest squadron in air force history. Aboard the AC-130 Spectre gunship, he flew a total of 287 combat missions over Laos, South Vietnam, and Cambodia, in pursuit of the truck traffic coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. His squadron destroyed more than fifteen thousand trucks loaded with war munitions destined for South Vietnam and Cambodia. Despite heavy and constant anti-aircraft and missile fire, the loss of six aircraft and the lives of fifty-two men, the crew never wavered in its dedication to the mission.

Master Sergeant Burns has a distinguished military career that began in 1951 at the age of fifteen. He served one tour of duty in Phan Rang, South Vietnam, in 1967, and four tours of duty in the 16th Special Operations Squadron in Southeast Asia as an aerial gunner, lead gunner, and instructor gunner. He served in both the United States Navy and Air Force, earning three Distinguished Flying Crosses for heroism, twenty-seven Air Medals, as well as a Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Presidential Unit Citation, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, Vietnam Service Medal with nine battle stars, and other decorations from the Korean War. He was wounded twice and is credited with saving the lives of fourteen crewmembers.

This is his story.

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